

# Free Marketing with PR

## The Small Business Savior

By Celia Rocks

If you own or work for a small business, you may think marketing sounds great, *in theory*. But when you're a one- or two- or three-person operation, when it's a struggle to pay the light bill, when you are frequently a breath away from bankruptcy, the idea of a "marketing budget" is almost laughable.

I've been there myself. Small business owners generally aren't wallowing in excess cash. But there *is* a way to get the word out about your company for the very minimal cost of ink, paper and postage. Publicity, aka Public Relations, aka PR.

Let's say you've opened a small vegetarian restaurant/wine shop staffed entirely by family members. We'll call it **The Veggie Vintner**.

Needless to say, money is very, very tight. But still, you must attract customers, and so far, the market for vegetarian wine connoisseurs seems depressingly small.

Here's the good news: if you are a halfway decent writer (or if you can find a n author who will accept free meals or several bottles of good merlot in lieu of cash), you have everything you need to generate some great PR.

All you need to do is:

- 1) Periodically come up with some snappy story ideas,
- 2) Package them in the form of media kits, press releases and/or pitch letters,
- 3) Send them to any media outlet that has readers or listeners that are potential **Veggie Vintner** patrons.

Chapter 11 (ironically enough!) of *Marketing for Dummies* gives you lots of technical info on how to create and use these tools. But the first order of business is coming up with stories that editors will find newsworthy. When thinking about a few story ideas, think about your brilliance (what you do best).

Are you good at informing customers about the reason they should eat vegetarian more often? Are you the only vegetarian restaurant

that serves unusual and hard to find wines? Then here are a few hypothetical press releases:

• **Ten Ways Eating More Vegetables Improves Your Life.** This press release would be sent to all area newspapers, health and restaurant writers at all local newspapers and magazines, etc. Weave quotes from Veggie Vintner owner throughout—it makes editors more likely to cite you and your restaurant.

• **Grape Gifts: Eight Great Wines To Give for the Holidays.** Obviously, you'd send this release out around Christmas, Hanukkah and New Years Day. Tie a "wine personality" to each type you highlight. Again, quote yourself liberally and invite readers to an in-restaurant wine event.

That's the great thing about PR. It's FREE Advertising. In fact, it's better than free advertising. Why? Because when someone reads a story about you in their local newspaper, they tend to believe the paper is endorsing you.

Best of all, you can offer reprints of the clip for customers to pick up at the cash register! Don't forget that today's satisfied customer can bring you ten customers tomorrow, especially if you give them a press clipping combined with a special introductory offer on the back of your business card to pass along to their friends.

**Two free benefits.** Coverage in the local newspapers works for free for you in *two* ways if you use these methods:

First, by spreading the good news about your business to new prospective customers.

Second, by turning your current customers into missionaries who, because the media has affirmed their good taste, will gladly use your materials to convert their friends to customers too.

P.S. Stay tuned to this Web site for more "free" marketing ideas. Alex and I are currently working on a new book, which we are tentatively calling **The Free Marketing Plan**, and we will post some of the better ideas from it here on the site for our *...for Dummies* readers to try first. Best, *Celia*

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