The Publicity Kit for Penny Pinchers: Guidebooks for Promoting Your Small Business Products, Services, and Ideas in Oklahoma

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The Publicity Kit for Penny Pinchers:

Guidebooks for Promoting Your Small Business Products, Services, and Ideas in Oklahoma

by Doug Swanson

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INTRODUCTION

Every small business person wants to achieve the greatest possible success for the products or services offered by his or her business in the marketplace. Success reflects positively on the people who contribute to it, from the owner or general manager, all the way down the chain of command to the rank-and-file. When you’re successful, you have the internal satisfaction that comes from having business efforts bear fruit. You also have the extrinsic satisfaction that comes from making money and having your work recognized by others.

This book is an idea guide for those seeking business success. It deals with specific, narrowly-defined opportunities—not for blueprinting success—but for contributing to it. It’s designed for people who are willing to demonstrate extraordinary commitment and use extraordinary means to achieve success.

This book is about understanding and utilizing the resources of the free media; it is not concerned with buying media time. Anyone can purchase the opportunity to have access to the public. All you need is money. But obtaining free access to the public, often, access which is much more valuable than anything you could have purchased, takes work. You need to acquire the knowledge necessary to understand the process and manage the tools. You need to develop unique ideas tailored to your specific situation. You have to be willing to establish a positive, continuing relationship with the people who control the flow of information to the public through the media. You’ll have to develop a thick skin, too! Initial, immediate success is
unlikely, and you will have to keep hammering away to open the media doors and forge the company image that best represents everything you want to accomplish in the business world. This book is designed to help you get started in this process.

Remember, though, that use of the free media represents only one small part of your overall business success strategy—so it would be unreasonable for this book to make any guarantees of business growth.

It may be true, too, that your business is already successful, without you having ever written a news release or talked to a news reporter. Nevertheless, it's a competitive world out there, and your company won't be competitive for long if you allow yourself the luxury of overlooking any idea that has even the slightest possibility of bringing a return to you in the form of enhanced company image, greater public recognition and more sales.

Use of the free media represents only one small part of your overall business success strategy, but it's an important part, and it will grow more important as our economy experiences the wide-scale changes we're going to see over the next decade. How can you afford not to investigate every opportunity for growth?

This book will provide you with a significant amount of valuable information for using the media as a tool in your company's promotional effort. Written specifically for Oklahoma-based businesses, it has theoretical foundation in the author's twelve years of experience as a print and broadcast journalist, teacher, author, and newsroom manager. The author's real-world experience will give you specific communication principles to apply to your Oklahoma business or organization, using
media resources based in Oklahoma. (Of course, the ideas I present can be applied
anywhere—not just in Oklahoma.)

You will come away from reading this book with a greater understanding of the
media and their influence on society. You will have an enhanced respect for the
creation and maintenance of your company's business image. You will have started
developing new ideas for managing this image and keeping control of the ways the
public is informed of your company, your philosophy and your people. You will have
been presented with specific examples of ways to put your message before the
public at no cost to you. You will have learned about the intricacies of dealing with
the people who control the flow of information to the public through the media. You
will have seen examples of ways in which businesses just like yours dealt with the
media and gained a great marketplace advantage, or misused the media and
irreparably harmed their public image. You will have in your possession the
knowledge and the tools for establishing a rapport with the free media in Oklahoma.
All that will remain for you to do is to formulate your company's own individual plan...
and make use of the media resources which are provided for you.

Time's a wasting... let's get going!
CHAPTER ONE

The Communication Process

Our knowledge of the form and content of mass media stems from an understanding of the process of "communication." You can find many definitions of communication, but basically it signifies the process of transmitting ideas, or messages, from one or more people to one or more others, to achieve an intended result.

As you read this book, you are encountering a communication message that takes the form of printed words, in English, on pages. As you study the form of this message, I hope you'll achieve the result I've intended. I hope you will gain an understanding of the content, or, the meanings that I've assigned to the words, sentences, paragraphs and chapters. I hope that the form will be acceptable, and the content persuasive, so that—together—they will combine into a single message that results in your creating ideas and actions to motivate yourself to do something (in our case, to achieve greater business success for your company). I'll do my best to make the message clear; whether it becomes "communication" is up to you.

At the same time, you are being bombarded with other messages which would, if you allowed, take precedence over this one: the noise from the traffic in the street, the sound of a television in the next room, the voices engaged in conversation down the hall, the other books and magazines on the table, the chill of an air
conditioner on a setting that's too high, etc. All are cause for distraction. All could take your attention away from this message for a time, if not forever.

The purpose of communication, like my purpose in presenting this book, is to make an impression that lasts. It is to make an impression that makes a change. It is not a "one shot" deal. The people at Coca-Cola didn't sit back on their laurels after their first successful campaign. Research shows that you have to hit a consumer with a message seven times before it takes root in the memory. Your business message is no different. If you are going to engage in this effort you must plan well, set goals, get started... and then go go go. You cannot stop. The process must continue as long as your company remains in business. If you start the process this way and keep it up, chances are that (although your first efforts may be inconsequential) you will build success.

**Media, Messages, and Money**

Printer Johann Gutenberg's invention of a printing press with moveable type in 1436 heralded the beginning of the age of mass communication. With Gutenberg's moveable type, it was no longer necessary for printers to make a new set of molds for each page. The time and effort required to publish a document decreased substantially. Documents of greater length could be produced. For the first time, individuals could mass produce ideas to be delivered to a receptive public. Gutenberg opened the door for mass literacy, and for the mass dissemination of
ideas that has scholar E. J. Whetmore calls "The Technological Embrace" of the 20th century. "Archie Bunker, Elvis Presley, Devo, Richard Nixon, Shangri-La, Volkswagen, Luke Skywalker—all were brought to us whole or in part via mass communication," Whetmore reminds us. All are part of a constructed mediated reality that is essentially a portrait of real life fed back to us, except for the fact that it is fed back "... funnier, sexier, more intense, more colorful, and more violent than real life."

Just as you are faced with numerous choices, so is the public. Today there are tens of thousands of independent broadcast radio and television stations in America, and an equally large number of daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, and specialty publications. There is satellite-delivered television and cable television, community access television, "cable radio" and closed-circuit television. There are billboards and banners, bus boards and bench signs. There are product marketing video monitors in grocery stores. From the moment you awake to a morning radio "info-tainment" program till the moment you click off The Tonight Show in the evening you are bombarded with video, audio and printed media messages.

All these messages are clamoring for our attention. All seek to have influence over the way we think about things... and the way we act, based on our thinking. The way for each of these messages to be successful is to target in on each one of us as individuals... on who we are, what we are interested in and what we expect for our lives. All these messages are designed to make personal impressions so that, at some point in the future, we will have a positive disposition toward the idea, product
or service portrayed in the message. This positive disposition can result in order to fulfill our own personal expectations.

This is how the mass media survive. After all, television does not exist to bring situation comedy into our home. Newspapers do not exist to track down news stories. The mass media exist to make money. They make money by selling advertising, and they sell advertising by creating messages that lure and keep the largest possible audience.

**SUMMARY**

The communication process is a never-ending cycle. In this cycle, we as humans examine the world we perceive surrounding us, create messages about these perceptions—and then send these messages to other humans. We hope that the humans who receive our messages will, in turn, respond by sending other messages back to us that confirm our perceptions and build upon them.

This is basically how the media work. The media—television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other sources of information which are disseminated to the public—survive through mirroring and building upon our perceptions. The media (or, more correctly, the people who work in the media—"gatekeepers" for the information that goes out from it) examine the world they see that humans have created. They formulate messages about this world and send out those messages for our approval. They expect we will receive those messages, and confirm our
acceptance of them by continuing to express a desire to have messages sent to us. At the core of all this, of course, are products, services, and ideas that we are being asked (explicitly or implicitly) to purchase, use, and otherwise consume to make our lives more in line with what the media consider as the "norm" for society.

The bottom line, of course, is that the media are selling products. Everywhere you look, products of one type or another are offered for your approval (and your purchase!). Just because your business doesn't come wrapped in a cardboard box doesn't mean it's not a product, too! Your business and your ideas are unique, important products that are competing for the public's attention. That's why it's important that you're reading this book. If you want to continue successfully getting people to "buy" these products that you are "selling," you must compete with the rest of the world. You have to start today.
CHAPTER TWO
What Do The Media Want, Anyway?

What Is News?

Even after twelve years of working in the news business, it's still hard for me to define exactly what news is. Imagine how difficult it is for me to try to define it to others looking to me for the answer! There are even differing interpretations of what the word "news" means, or where it came from (some say the word "news" is really an acronym for north east west and south, indicating that "news" is a collection of stories about events from all over our environment). Regardless of where the word comes from or what exactly it means, there are some precepts that we can all agree upon about news and the content of news.

In reality, news is different things to different people. There are certain events that take place in our world that are of interest, or considered "news" by the majority of people. Just about everyone was interested in the "news" of the breakup of the Soviet Union, for example. It's was story that affected all of us because, for many of us, the Soviet Union was seen as a mortal enemy for many years, as an entity to be greatly feared, and a nation that had the potential for destroying life as we knew it. So, even those of us who had never been to the Soviet Union or met a Soviet citizen could take interest in the events happening in that nation.

There are also events that are of interest to a smaller segment of the population, stories that would not be considered "news" by everyone else. The Davis
Cup Tennis Tournament, for example, is an event considered "news" by some people (tennis fans, primarily, I would assume) and not given a second thought by others.

There are still other events that take place in the world that very few if any people care about or would consider "news." A good example of this would be a news story about yesterday's thunderstorm in Greenland. If you don't live in Greenland, and don't know anybody who does, you have little if any reason to care about the thunderstorm in Greenland. It could rain all week in Greenland, for all you care! It doesn't affect you or your perception of life in any way.

While it's hard to exactly define what "news" is, we can make a start on it by thinking about these examples of stories and considering what makes the difference between a news story that virtually everyone is interested in, one that some people are interested in, and one that virtually no one is interested in. Generally speaking, people will perceive something as "news" when it has elements that fall into one or more of these categories:

**Current.** The event being described happened just recently, or is still developing. Journalists are always looking for information that's current and they will go out of their way to bring even dated information up-to-date with a new "top" for the story. An example: when I worked as a newspaper reporter, my beat frequently involved keeping track of all the court filings in criminal and civil cases. Sometimes I'd miss an important filing, and not see the documents until they were a week or so old. Certainly I could not go to print with a story about "Big Civil Lawsuit Filed In Court Last Week." Therefore, before I'd submit my story to the editor I'd find a new
"top" for it so that it wouldn't sound old when people read it in the paper. I'd get on the phone to the attorneys in the case, and, even if I couldn't get them to tell me anything new, at least by getting a "no comment" today I could create a more current-sounding story, i.e.: "Attorneys Still Mum Over Big Suit Just Filed." It makes the story sound new, even though it's really kind of old. Of course, television news is king when it comes to re-hashing news to make it look and sound new. Example: a small airplane crashes in the late morning in a remote desert area. Search parties look for the plane without success throughout the day. The story is on the TV news at noon and 6 p.m. By the late night news, the search has not resulted in any new developments. It's "old news," right? Wrong! The savvy TV news assignments manager will send out a live remote truck and crew to the area and broadcast a "live" report in the late night news with the reporter standing out in the pitch black desert telling us of the search crews, their tireless efforts, how cold it's going to get tonight in the desert, etc., etc. We're not shown or told anything we couldn't already surmise, but the presence of the "live" report makes the story look new. It adds a visual emphasis that will carry the story on into the next day, when it may disappear entirely from newspapers and radio for lack of "new" developments.

**Conflict and Controversy.** The Random House Dictionary defines conflict as "a battle or struggle... an incompatibility or interference" and it defines controversy as "a prolonged public argument or debate." Taken together, they provide the spark that most stories need to be considered "news" by most people. Take a look through your daily newspaper. You'll see almost every story has some sort of conflict or
controversy in it, even though it may not immediately be apparent. A story about a
new landfill isn’t as much a story about trash as it is a tale of conflict between
environmentalists and urban planners. A story about new public school textbooks
isn’t as much about the content of the books as it is about the conflict between
religious groups and proponents of secular education. On the national level, the
debate over abortion rights is the ultimate controversial story. Although the story may
have started out as a medical story, a debate over whether or not the medical
procedure of abortion should be allowed, it has turned into a moral, ethical, religious,
emotional issue steeped in controversy. It is so controversial, most people say there
is absolutely no way to reconcile the opposing factions. This tells you that abortion is
destined to continue as a story in the news regardless of any ruling the Supreme
Court makes on the issue. Of course, a story doesn’t have to involve a "current"
issue to have an element of conflict. Even the best feature stories have conflicting
elements in them: "Local Artist Battles Back From Brain Tumor to Create Prize-
Winning Portraits" (the conflict between a talented, aspiring artist and the medical
crisis that nearly ended her career). I guess it’s just human nature that we love to
see people engaged in conflict. We enjoy being spectators in the battle of life. We
enjoy reading stories of conflict because we like to feel part of the group, and that we
share ideas which other people also share.

Commiseration stories are, in a sense, like conflict stories. A commiseration
story is a news item about somebody just like us... somebody who has to go through
some particular bad situation which is similar or identical to something we may have
encountered in the past. What makes the story unique may be the unusual way the person is dealing with the problem, the severity of the problem, or just the particular outlook that the person has that helps them get through the rough-and-tumble of circumstances day by day. We like to read and hear news stories like this because they show us that there are other people out there in the world who have the same problems and conflicts we do and that they can work through them. We see that we could work through our problems, too. We're made to feel better by "sharing" the experience. Every now and then you read or hear of the commiseration story where some unlucky guy or gal is victim of a computer foul-up and gets a $5,000 telephone bill. Now, you and I may never have gotten a $5,000 telephone bill, but we have ended up on the wrong end of a billing mistake every now and then, and when we see some guy with his $5,000 telephone bill in hand, it makes that $15 error on our credit card statement seem not nearly so disastrous after all.

**Cooperation.** Unfortunately, we see all too few cooperation stories in the news media, which is too bad. A cooperation story is a story about two people or groups of people who would otherwise be opposed to each other. Through some new understanding or through some accident of fate they are brought together, and low and behold, they come up with an idea or a plan that helps solve each other's problems. Some good examples of cooperation stories are stories about Habitat For Humanity (a group of volunteers which builds homes for needy people), stories about down-and-out people who get stranded while travelling and are helped out by the locals in a community, or the stories you see every now and then about old
automobile tires being recycled into useful products. A cooperation story makes you feel good when you read it or see it on TV. It makes you believe there really is hope for this world we live in; that we really will be able to get along here together after all.

**Community.** Community stories have a special attraction because they are stories that happen close to where we live, or to people who share with us membership in a community, a group, or an association. We're all familiar with these kinds of stories; you hear them on the local radio station and see them on the front page of your community newspaper every day. They're stories about the race for mayor, the sales tax increase and the parking problem at the community college. They can also be stories about the new pastor at the community church, the fire at the Elk's Lodge, or the new Cub Scouts leader. They're stories that involve (or have the potential for involving) us, our families, and our neighbors and friends.

**Clockwork.** Stories that fall into this category are stories that rely upon a certain time frame for a particular emphasis or reference. One kind of clockwork story is the holiday feature story that shows up without fail in the newspaper a week or so before every major holiday. You've seen them all. There's the "First Thanksgiving" story that shows up around the third week in November; the "Pearl Harbor Survivors" story that shows up early in December; the "Year in Review" story that comes out right after Christmas; the "Boating Safety" story that comes out right before everybody takes off on Labor Day summer trips, etc. We see these stories as news because they're publicized in the media at the time when we're likely to be thinking about the kinds of topics and issues they discuss. We're in the mood to

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hear about them; they heighten our awareness of and involvement with the subjects they cover.

Another kind of clockwork story is the story that involves an individual or group of people, placing them in a special perspective in relation to the passage of time. "City Clerk Retires After 25 Years"; "16-Year Old Begins Medical Internship"; "Fifth Generation Farm Family Sells Out to Developers"; these are the kinds of news stories that attract our interest because they profile unique people responding in unusual ways to the passage of time and its influence on their lives.

News stories don't necessarily have to fall into one or more of the above categories; but, honestly I can't think of a news item that would be of any interest to anybody that doesn't. News stories that fall into these categories interest us because:

- They have the potential for altering the environment in which we live through new planning, action and development.

- They have the potential for changing our role within the environment. They show us how our lives may change as the result of the event(s) portrayed in the news story.

- They affect us emotionally by showing us how other people's lives are changing in our community.
• They trigger our emotions by reminding us of our humanity and our connection to other people in the environments in which we live and work.

Finally, these stories interest us because they support the overall message of the medium in which we find them. A good example of this is the national newspaper *USA Today*. *USA Today* has positioned itself in the marketplace to be a certain kind of newspaper. It runs short, contemporary stories written in a snappy, active style, ideal for reading by urban and suburban people with limited time, or people who are travelling. It’s bright, colorful, and relies strongly on its graphics and charts because it’s designed to be a quick-read paper for people on the go. Stories that appear in *USA Today* are limited to a certain range of topics of interest to the largest portion of the national, middle-to-upper class working audience. The news stories in the newspaper support the overall message of the paper itself. They appear with the type of form and content we expect from *USA Today*. If we were to pick up a *USA Today* and see a complete half-page news story entitled "*Milo Farmers Outraged Over Commodity Support Application Deadlines*" interspersed with black-and-white photographs of farmers standing in milo fields, we’d be a bit perplexed! We don’t expect to read stories in *USA Today* about milo farmers. Nor would we expect milo farmers to be reading *USA Today*! We would wonder why the article was given a half-page in a nationally-distributed newspaper; why it didn’t receive graphic treatment along the same lines as other *USA Today* articles; and why it should be of
importance to us. In short, we'd realize that the story doesn't support the overall message of *USA Today*.

The end result would be that we would probably discount the story (not read it), discount *USA Today* (maybe not buy it or read it again) and perhaps look for some other source of news other than *USA Today*.

For that reason, the news media work very hard today to make sure that everything that hits print or is put on the air reflects the image they want to project. When I worked the assignments desk at a large metropolitan TV news department, I found that management consistently spent more time wrangling over whether stories met our image than whether they were "newsworthy." We even "massaged" stories to alter their content and make them fit in with the image we wanted to project for a particular broadcast. For example, we wanted our ten o'clock evening show to look very current with a nighttime, "after dark" feel. So, it was required that any news story aired in the ten o'clock news had to include video shot *after dark* regardless of when the story actually unfolded (to visually suggest that the story actually developed after dark). This was just one element of the image of our ten o'clock news, and each of our programs had many elements which contributed to their individual images. Media managers realize the importance of this kind of detail. They realize that image is what secures an audience and that the audience, through broadcasts viewed or newspapers purchased, is what in the end, pays the bills.

What kinds of news stories contribute to the image of a television news program, radio news show, newspaper or magazine? Of course, every medium
creates its own image depending on the particular audience which the creators want to capture. However, the research does substantiate eight general categories of stories that we, as humans, are most interested in seeing. They're eight things that we perceive we need the most and, therefore, are most interested in seeing and reading about in the news media:

1. Money
2. Relationships
3. Praise
4. Health
5. Leisure
6. Acceptance
7. Pleasure
8. Self-Improvement

It would be very helpful for you to keep these eight categories in mind as you go about publicizing your business through the free media. With every media contact you make, tailor your communication to the news editors so that your message helps them reinforce these areas of interest with their audience. Since you know money and relationships are important, build the subjects of money and relationships into your message whenever possible. For example, if you're writing a news release for the community theater's new summer production, don't just write about the show.
Instead, write about the additional tourism it will generate and the money it will help bring into the community to benefit everyone.

Remember, the media are always looking for distinct, unusual, unique story ideas that will work within the particular image they've developed.

What Media are Important to Me?

Before we can even begin talking about how to make contact with the news media to promote your business or organization, we first need to establish what media are important to you. That is, what media outlets--newspapers, magazines, and broadcasters--should you be interested in contacting, and what media outlets will you want to skip over?

Finding the Media

You'll want to begin the process by identifying the media which operate within your area of economic influence. That is, within the geographic area which you consider to be your "prime territory" for attracting customers and clients, what newspapers and magazines are people reading, and what TV and radio stations are they listening to? You'll want to create a list of all these media outlets; a job that's been made much easier thanks to the media guide I've included with this book. By turning to the media guide, you can quickly and easily identify newspapers and
magazines, radio and television stations, even campus newspapers and "shopper" newspapers. The media guide can serve as your "contact list" later, when it's time to contact the individual outlets with information about your organization.

Once you've established the list of who's who in the local media in your area, the next task is to identify the particular specialty or "niche" that each medium has established for itself. Every magazine, every newspaper, every radio and television station has some particular area in which its news or public affairs coverage is particularly strong. Every media outlet has that special "image" we've talked about. Go down the list that you've established, and find out what the "niche" is for each entry on the list. Your local newspaper might have an especially large business section on Sundays, for example, with features and columns that highlight business accomplishments. One local radio station might have a business-related call-in show, while another runs a daily "community calendar" feature that includes business news and notes. **Find out this information!** Yes, it may take some time, you'll have to read several issues of each paper or magazine, and listen to the radio stations, and watch the TV news. After a few weeks of reading, listening, and watching, you'll be able to define a particular profile for each media outlet, and you'll begin to see how they tailor their individual images. This information will be invaluable when you contact them later. You'll be able to customize your communication to them because you'll know exactly what kind of messages they like to pass along to their audience.
Survey Your Needs

Next, survey your own needs to see what is most important to your business or organization at this point in time. Do you want to build your client base? Do you want to make more sales? Do you want to change your image? Do you want to overcome past "bad press"? Or, do you simply want to have your organization’s name become more well-known in the community?

Think about the people you’re now doing business with... your customers or clients. How did they hear about you? Certainly there are more people like them "out there" in the world. How would you reach those people to tell them about your organization and your services and products? How could you reach an even broader audience, to inform people about the things you do?

Equally important, who are the people you do not do business with now? Why not? Are there certain kinds of people that you do not want to do business with? How can you communicate to potential customers that you would like their business, while not taking in business that you do not want?

Perhaps an example will help. Imagine "Jon" the owner of the small gas station and lube shop down at the corner. Jon has a successful business, but business can always be better, so he’s starting out on our little plan to promote his business through the free media. There are some things Jon does not want, however. Jon’s gas station and lube shop is a small gas station and lube shop. He wants only to serve people from his neighborhood, only. You see, Jon is not
equipped to sell as much gas or do as many lube jobs as "Harry's Lube City" across town. Jon doesn't want to invest in the equipment and renovation he would need to do a great volume of work. He wants to stay relatively small, serving people from his neighborhood, but he wants to have a consistent flow of traffic (instead of the sporadic customer traffic he has now).

So, even though Jon's media list includes newspapers and broadcasters from all over his area, he's really not interested in beginning a dialog with all of them. He couldn't possibly serve all the traffic that would be generated by a consistent, community-wide publicity effort. The local newspaper is of interest to Jon, because it has an automotive section that people from his neighborhood will read to see ads about lube service and to clip coupons for discounts at local auto repair shops. The local community college newspaper is also of interest. Jon knows that most of the students commute to campus by car, and many live in the apartment complexes near his gas station. Since students are often living on limited budgets, Jon thinks a publicity effort tying in to his weekly lube "specials" might be successful.

The community's arts and entertainment magazine is not of interest to Jon, however. The magazine concentrates on entertainment and nightlife news and runs stories about movie reviews, community theater and restaurant reviews. It is filled with ads for restaurants, theaters, beauty shops and travel agencies. Jon speculates that people reading the magazine would not necessarily have "get a lube job" at the top of their priority list.
Jon is also going to bypass the local television station. It doesn’t run any programming about auto maintenance or repair. It’s news department has no consumer reporter and Jon hasn’t seen any stories on the news having to do with auto repair. What’s more, the station broadcasts to a metropolitan area in which there are hundreds of gas stations and lube shops.

However, Jon is very interested in beginning a dialog with two local radio stations. Both stations are independently owned and each offers significant local news and public affairs programming. One station offers a weekend "auto fix-it" program, while the other employs a consumer affairs reporter who often discusses transportation and energy issues. The two stations will be high on Jon’s contact list.

**Pinpoint Your Targets**

Like "Jon", after you’ve decided what the needs are for your organization and developed your media list, you’re going to want to pinpoint your targets to see which media will be inclined to pay attention to the publicity dialog you will soon be beginning.

Remember that none of this information is set in stone. You may well decide today that:

- My business needs only more name recognition
- We want only to publicize ourselves in print
We seek a dialog only with the local newspaper

But these ambitions and goals can change quickly, as quickly as business itself changes. Be flexible; be ready to change your strategy as business conditions warrant.

SUMMARY

"News" is different things to different people. Stories that are interesting to some groups of people hold no interest for others. Still, there are some categories of "news" stories that hold strong appeal for most people. Specifically, stories about money, relationships, praise, health, leisure, acceptance, pleasure and self-improvement are among the topics most people report being interested in seeing and reading about.

Building upon what was discussed in Chapter 1, it's easy to see how new media manipulate their individual images to bring us "news" that they think effectively portrays how we perceive ourselves. Each television station in the community, for example, creates an "image" of itself—in an attempt to demonstrate to the community and the viewers that the station is interested and involved in things that are of great concern to the community. Even among the individual programs broadcast on a particular station there are established "image" guidelines that help each program target and retain viewers deemed most likely to be interested in watching.
In order to begin any publicity effort, it's important to identify the media operating in the area in which you want to do business—and identify which ones will deliver the kind of audience most likely to buy what you've got to sell. Then, pinpoint your targets; pursue those media outlets with your business' publicity message. Remember, too, that a publicity plan is never set in stone. Your ideas—and your business—could change tomorrow, either as a result of a decision you made or because of factors beyond your control. Be able to adapt to new strategies.
CHAPTER THREE

Image: Your Organization’s Most Valuable Asset

What sets your business apart from the one down the street, or the one in the next town, or the one with the ad next to yours in the telephone directory? It’s not just technical skills or sales ability or the size of your booth at the trade fair. It’s more basic than that. You can’t buy it, lease it, or rent it, but it’s the single most valuable asset your business will ever own. It’s your company’s image.

The image customers have of your company is what you allow to be created. It’s an overall public understanding of what your company or organization stands for, what you sell (or whatever your “product” that you offer to the public is) and how your products and services match people’s needs. The image people form helps them decide whether to buy from you, what to buy, and whether to refer new customers to you. The image can also result in people taking their business elsewhere if you no longer fulfill their expectations. Your technical skills and sales ability alone won’t move the products out the door. To successfully market yourself and your products, you must actively work to help the public form a unified, positive and powerful image of your business.

Many small business owners think creation and maintenance of a successful image requires the services of an expensive advertising or public relations agency. That’s not necessarily true. If you’ve got a little time and energy to devote to your
image, and a little money to spend maintaining it, you can start creating winning public perceptions of your business today!

Here’s a quick guide to start you thinking about some of the things you will need to consider when creating a successful new image, or polishing up the time-honored image you already have:

**Your Goals**

Analyze where your firm is now and where you want it to be down the road. How big have you grown to be? How big do you want to get? What resources will you need? How will the need for your products and services be different in two years... five years... ten years? Analyze your situation, set goals for yourself, and keep those goals firmly in mind. They establish boundaries for everything you do.

**Your Logo**

Your business logo is the signature that ties together all the components of your company. It should be understandable, uncluttered, modern in appearance and offensive to no one. As your signature, it needs to appear in identical form on all your company letterhead, publications, signs, vehicles, equipment, uniforms and supplies.
It should have official trademark protection, for it personalizes your business and stands for everything you represent.

**Your Written Communication**

Every letter you send out, every brochure you place in a customer's hand, and every bill for services rendered must be perfect and in complete harmony with the professional image you establish.

Shop around. Then, then make friends with a reputable printer who will provide you with the best quality paper stock and supplies at a reasonable price. The same is true for your word processing and reproduction equipment. Buy the best quality equipment you can afford and have your office, sales and support staff trained to use it correctly. Whether you use an expensive word processor or a reliable manual typewriter, everything your office produces and sends out demonstrates the value you place on customer interaction. Use nothing but best paper and the most understandable, easy-to-read forms, spec sheets and brochures, all imprinted with your logo. Copyright your printed ideas with the © so they remain your property.

I am familiar with a small service business which, for years, had personally mailed out customer account statements in envelopes, with a return-mail envelope included. New ownership took over, and in an immediate cost-cutting move replaced the statements with impersonal, computer-generated postcards mailed from another
state. Customers, many of whom were elderly and had been with the firm for years, were confused and angry. Dozens of accounts were lost. Almost overnight, a minor cost-cutting move turned into an image disaster. This kind of mistake can be avoided if you pledge right from the start to never short-cut your company's written communication to save a few dollars.

A good way to share your company's product and service message—in a form that doesn't scream "advertising"—is through a newsletter. No longer just an internal publication, today's newsletter tells a company's story and enhances its image for employees, customers, and industry professionals. Newsletters are easy and inexpensive to produce, and research shows the typical newsletter sent to one customer is read by at least two other people. Newsletters are great image boosters! (I'll cover newsletters in more detail in Chapter 5.)

Your Signs

Like your stationery and brochures, the signs that advertise your business on buildings, vehicles and equipment should be the best you can afford. Signs play an important role in image development by placing your logo in front of customers and potential customers, many of whom may not yet have a clear understanding of what you business is all about. Make sure your signs are accurate, simple, uncluttered, and firmly portray your professionalism.
Signs need to be installed on your place of business, so that the overall look of the building and grounds is one of professionalism and competency. Your organization may not be located in the "high rent district," but even a quonset hut can look better with a fresh coat of paint, some attractive shrubbery and a clean, modern sign identifying the business operating there.

If you have service vehicles, those vehicles and the people who drive them should support your image. Clean, well-groomed employees in attractive, functional uniforms driving clean and well maintained service vehicles give your firm an image of professionalism. They command respect.

Last and certainly not least, the tools you take into the field, and the equipment you leave there, need to be of the highest quality and as attractive and functional as possible. Any equipment left in a customer’s home or office should have your logo and business phone number permanently affixed. When I took over as manager of a water conditioning firm in Southern California a few years ago, I went out one day to check on rental equipment which remained in a home after the owners moved out. Upon arrival, I found the new owners of the home had decided the unlabelled equipment was theirs to do with as they pleased. They had torn it out in a remodeling project and carted it off to the dump. I learned an expensive lesson: permanently identify everything that belongs to or was sold by your company, for publicity, service reference and ownership identification.
Your Community Outreach

A most effective way to keep your company's name before the public and build on your positive image is to contribute to community affairs. Participate in charity drives. Co-sponsor civic events. Be active in community service groups. When your organization supports the community, your image will get a boost that money can't buy. When you socialize with the business people in your community, you'll be networking with people who can help your business grow as you help theirs. You can't lose.

Don't overlook the opportunity to apply (or have others nominate you) for special community awards and honors. You can obtain a lot of recognition for yourself, your company and your ideas by becoming a nominee for--or recipient of--one of the many awards handed out regularly by businesses, civic groups, charities and local government agencies. Although we were all told from an early age that good little boys and girls don't "blow their own horn" over personal accomplishments, in the real world--if you don't toot your own horn, very few people will toot it for you!

A perfect example of what I'm talking about here is the U.S. Small Business Administration's "Entrepreneurial Success Award." It's an award given out annually in each of the 50 states, to recognize individual business men and women for their business accomplishments. The award winners get all kinds of publicity for winning--along with recognition of their businesses and products. Plus, they get to go to Washington to meet the President. Not a bad deal, especially given the fact that the
only cost to you in applying for this award is getting someone to nominate you and write a recommendation packet on your behalf. Here's the nominating packet I wrote which won the Oklahoma award for Eateries, Inc. restaurant chain owner, entrepreneur and former gubernatorial candidate Vince Orza:
November 27, 1991

U. S. Small Business Administration
200 NW 5th Street; Suite 670
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please accept our strong recommendation for the nomination of

Dr. Vincent F. Orza

of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, for the U.S. Small Business Administration
"Entrepreneurial Success Award."

Vince Orza founded and is Chairman and President of Eateries, Incorporated. A publicly-held firm, Eateries (NASDAQ:EATS) owns operates and franchises 31 Garfield’s Restaurants in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Florida, Kentucky, Colorado, Alabama, South Carolina and Iowa. Two Dugout Sports Bar Restaurants in Oklahoma were recently added to the chain. Expansion plans for 1992 call for at least eight new Garfield’s in other states.

Vince Orza’s strong leadership resulted in Eateries’ 1990 systemwide revenues increasing 45%... to $20.3 million. Company revenues increased 13.5% to $11.6 million on assets of $2,402,000, with earnings of one cent per share. Cash flow from operations in 1990 doubled... to more than $367,000. But, more importantly, by year’s end, Eateries, Inc., provided good jobs for more than 800 people in ten states. 1991 estimates indicate Vince Orza’s company will see revenues increase nearly 20% to $14 million, and approximately $25 million for the entire system including franchise operations.

Vince Orza’s success as a business entrepreneur is well recognized. In 1989, Inc. magazine ranked Eateries as the 19th fastest growing small public company in the United States. Restaurants & Institutions magazine named it one of America’s "Hot Prospects." Garfield’s was nominated for the 1991 International Foodservice Manufacturer’s Association "Gold & Silver Plate Awards."

Vince Orza serves as an inspirational figure for all of Oklahoma. In his first political venture, Orza captured the 1990 Oklahoma Republican Gubernatorial Primary Election... only to lose the runoff election by one percent. His state-wide newspaper column and radio program, "Common Sense" offers his unique insight into issues facing all of Oklahoma today. Vince Orza is one of Oklahoma’s most sought-after public speakers, and travels nationally and internationally to speak on
economics, education and free enterprise. He is a director, trustee or member of 12 charitable, educational and civic organizations.

**Vince Orza**, grandson of an immigrant family, is a self-made individual who earned his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate degrees and has built an outstanding business enterprise. He is a responsible and informed citizen and a warm and caring family man. There is no better role-model for all Oklahomans and all Americans... and no more deserving individual than **Dr. Vincent F. Orza** for the SBA's "Entrepreneurial Success Award."

Sincerely,

Enclosures
Nomination Packet

Dr. Vincent F. Orza
I. Personal and Corporate Profile
Dr. Vincent F. Orza
3420 W. Britton Road
Building 2 South, Suite 202
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73120

(405) 755-3607

---

Professional Achievements

Small businessman and corporate executive... award-winning television news anchorman... university professor of marketing... candidate for Governor of Oklahoma... all describe the dynamic career of Vince Orza.

Vince Orza is founder, Chairman and President of publicly-held Oklahoma-based Eateries, Inc. In only 7 years, Vince Orza has built a ten-state, 31-unit chain of Garfield's Restaurants and The Dugout Sports Bar Restaurants.
A Recognized Authority

Vince Orza authors the popular "Common Sense" newspaper column and is host of the "Common Sense" radio program. Both are syndicated throughout Oklahoma.

As an award-winning television news reporter and anchorman for ABC affiliate KOCO-TV, Oklahoma City, Vince Orza received two United Press International broadcast journalism awards, three awards from the Oklahoma Education Association, and several prestigious Gannett Awards for broadcast excellence.

Vince Orza hosts Tax Wise, an Oklahoma Educational Television Authority program. He was moderator of the 1988 Oklahoma Department of Commerce Teamwork Oklahoma statewide broadcast on economic development.

Vince Orza has written for newspapers, magazines, journals and trade publications. In 1989, Vince Orza traveled to the Soviet Union to participate as a delegate in an international economics conference in Moscow.

Vince Orza was inducted into Who's Who of American Business Leaders in 1991 and has been a contributing editor to several business textbooks. He has written and presented numerous professional papers in marketing.

Vince Orza received numerous national fellowships in advertising and marketing as a tenured Associate Professor of Marketing at the University of Central Oklahoma.
Eateries Inc.
3420 W. Britton Road
Building 2 South, Suite 202
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73120
(405) 755-3607

Corporate Achievements

Established in 1984, Vince Orza's Eateries is acknowledged as one of Oklahoma's leading business enterprises... as well as one of the fastest-growing small publicly-held companies in the United States. With restaurants strategically located in some of the finest communities in the southeast and midwestern states, Eateries is recognized as one of the most aggressive and savvy restaurant operators in the business.

Vince Orza's Garfield's Restaurants and The Dugout Sports Bar Restaurants employ a unique marketing strategy. They welcome families to their casual, bright-colored dining rooms... where a variety of delicious menu items are offered at reasonable prices. But, at the same time... and under the same roof... they maintain a lively and entertaining pub and are recognized for their "Beer of the World" club.
Orza's marketing strategy has paid off handsomely. Despite a sluggish economy, Eateries, revenues increased 13.5% last year to $11.6 million on assets of $2,402,000. Systemwide revenues rose 45% to $20.3 million. Eateries revenues will increase nearly 20% in 1991, as systemwide sales rise 14% to $26 million. At the same time, the company will expand to new locations in several new states.
II.  Eateries Job Growth - Employment Impact
Needless to say, the restaurant business is one of the most competitive industries in the world. Additionally, it has one of—if not the highest failure rate of—both new and existing units.

In spite of these barriers, Eateries, Inc., has flourished. With no restaurant experience, company founder and now Chairman and President, Vincent F. Orza, has successfully opened a chain of 31 Garfield’s Restaurants and Pubs in eleven states. The company began its operations in November, 1984, when the State of Oklahoma was experiencing what would become the worst economic period the state has seen since the Great Depression.

During the seven years since Orza founded Garfield’s, over 125 banks have closed, real estate values have plummeted, and Oklahoma has experienced a net outflow of over 100,000 citizens from a total population of 3.2 million. Business failures skyrocketed, the state’s economy (almost totally dependent on oil and agriculture... both of which were failing as well) collapsed. Banking failures made loans nearly impossible to come by, so Orza and his cousin financed their restaurant venture personally.

Major chain restaurants capitalized on their financial strength and drove many single-unit competitors out of business. Eateries, Inc., and Garfield’s, under Orza’s direction, developed a method of doing business that built on investments, minimized costs, maximized marketing efforts and expanded to three restaurants within just the first year. Contrary to public and professional "conventional wisdom", Orza successfully completed an initial public offering of stock when the firm was only two years old and had only five restaurants. The success of that decision flew in the face
of Oklahoma's red-lining by financial institutions and markets following the collapse of Oklahoma's Penn Square Bank.

Eateries raised only $1.7 million in its offering, promising to build four additional Garfield's restaurants with the proceeds. This early expansion nearly strangled the company, but quick reaction by management slashed costs, halted expansion and improved the performance and profitability of existing units... and the company successfully weathered the storm. Indeed, the company has built 33 restaurants and has been debt-free since 1986.

Still, the early years were difficult ones. Eateries, Inc., had to deal with its bank failing, and an initial public offering of stock which was followed by the stock market crash of 1987... leading to four of the market makers in the company's stock going out of business. Two of Eateries' landlords went broke, and the banks took over the landlord roles... only to have the banks closed by the FDIC... and the RTC becoming the company's new landlord. Finally, after hiring Laventhal & Horwath, the most widely-recognized and respected public accounting firm in the hospitality industry... they failed. The first seven years were tough years... but Eateries, Inc., and Garfield's succeeded.

In 1987, the decision was made to begin franchising expansion through company development... and today Eateries operates 15 franchised and 16 company-owned Garfield's. In 1992, plans call for five additional company restaurants and an estimated four new franchised units.

During the company's formative years from 1986--89, some unit sales volumes were declining. Careful planning and action has now turned that around. In 1991,
sales have increased dramatically. In addition, for the last two years, new store sales volumes have nearly doubled that of older early units. These two positive actions are a consequence of effective market research... which identifies consumer concerns, areas of improvement needed, cost saving opportunities, market niches and store design. The dramatic improvements of Garfield's in 1991 versus 1987 confirm the company's successful management and decision making processes for both its own stores and those of franchisees.

Garfield's is one of only two or three nationally recognized restaurant chains being successfully franchised into major hotel chains to provide food service. There are currently four Garfield's in Holiday Inns, one in a Ramada Inn, and the only franchised restaurant in the Hilton Hotel chain. These hotels utilize the Garfield's Restaurant concept as their hotel restaurant and banquet facility.

The company faced all of these situations... and created all of these opportunities... in the midst of a deep recession which made price increases impossible for five straight years.
III. Eateries Sales Growth
As a small, young restaurant company, Eateries, Inc., and Garfield's were faced with a variety of problems.

In an industry as competitive as the restaurant business, the company developed an innovative and aggressive marketing strategy based around television. Contrary to industry norms, Garfield's used a continuous series of ten second commercials focusing on price and value-item strategy (essentially offers too good to refuse, i.e., $6.99 prime rib dinners; all the Alaskan Snow Crab you can eat for $9.99; ten $2.99 lunch specials; etc.).

To successfully implement these programs, the company provided intensive training to its employees. Kitchen staff had to learn to provide hundreds of means for large lunch and dinner rushes that resulted from the TV campaigns. Wait staff were trained to understand not only the food they served but the importance of complete customer satisfaction.

In addition to its aggressive sales-oriented marketing strategy, Garfield's actively pursued community and charitable opportunities. Garfield's hosted fund-raising dinners for groups helping the handicapped... supported a variety of children's activities such as scouting, high school clubs, holiday events for families... and much more.

With very limited resources, management designed and built restaurants taking advantage of competitor and landlord misfortunes. Initial Garfield's Restaurants required an investment of an average of only $100,000 or 5–10 percent of its major competitors such as Bennigan's, TGI Friday's and Chili's. The company searched out well located but failing or failed restaurants, renegotiated their leases, purchased
used equipment, and designed and remodeled the facilities without benefit or cost of architects or general contractors.

Even today, new and very competitive Garfield's require a total investment of approximately 25 percent of their major competitors... yet they have sales volume and sales per square foot which often equal or exceed that of the competition.

The company's financial strategy is--and always has been--very conservative. All start-up costs are expensed immediately rather than through the "traditional" three-year amortization approach of many competitors.

New units are built from company cash flow and with landlord contributions, thus providing Eateries a six year history of being debt free. In and of itself, this strategy helped the company survive a few very rough early years... and now provides Eateries, Inc., with an outstanding potential for continuing profitability.

Outstanding information, management and accounting have helped the company successfully manage its growth and return to profitability in 1990. After several costly formative years of building a corporate structure, company restaurants, a franchise program, and operational opening teams necessary for expansion... Eateries is enjoying new strength from significantly stronger cash flow four years in a row.

The company made significant investments in solid legal and accounting support. The company has also made use of the significant non-financial advice, counsel and support provided by the U.S. Small Business Administration and the state-wide agencies which operate under the umbrella of "Teamwork Oklahoma."
These agencies provide valuable business organization, development, management, marketing and research data. They also provide the opportunity for business entrepreneurs to take a look at the successes and failures of those who have gone before... so as to not repeat mistakes that have been fatal to others. We are fortunate to have such valuable resources on which to rely for this information and counsel.

Additionally, company founder Vincent F. Orza has been an active member and participant in numerous national restaurant and hospitality industry organizations, forums, and conventions. The relationship and contacts forged through these organizations has been instrumental in Garfield's success.

Finally, company President Vincent F. Orza has formulated a mentor management style to train new managers. The nature of the restaurant industry is such that most employees are high school students or graduates. Most lack a college degree or any significant executive training. A former university professor of marketing and economics, Orza (who holds an earned doctorate) provides managers with training and direction in management, marketing and accounting. The company provides educational national and international travel opportunities, to better acquaint managers with the industry. Managers are invited to attend national conventions to learn more about their industry... and are encouraged to continue their formal education. Much of this is provided at no cost to the employees... as a benefit and reward for a job well done.
IV. Financial Statements
PART IV

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<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>$.1M</td>
<td>$1.7M</td>
<td>$4.4M</td>
<td>$7.9M</td>
<td>$14.0M</td>
<td>$13.9M</td>
<td>$20.3M</td>
<td>$26.0M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franchised</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$4.6</td>
<td>$9.9</td>
<td>$11.4</td>
<td>$10.2*</td>
<td>$11.6</td>
<td>$14.03-.05</td>
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*Company sold a restaurant

| Earnings/Share | (.05) | (.02) | .10 | (26) | (.23) | (.06) | .01 |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of restaurants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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Annualized Sales Per Seat

| 1990 | $4,783 versus $4,728 industry average |
| 1991 | $5,200 versus $ |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Hourly Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Same stores sales 1991 versus 1990 up 2.1% (First 3 Quarters)

Guest counts 1991 versus 1990 up
1.9% (same store)
14.8% (all stores) (First 3 Quarters)

**SIX-YEAR FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS:**

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<td>Number of restaurants</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemwide revenues</td>
<td>$4.6M</td>
<td>$10M</td>
<td>$14M</td>
<td>$14M</td>
<td>$20.3M</td>
<td>$25M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company revenues</td>
<td>$4.4M</td>
<td>$7.9M</td>
<td>$11.4M</td>
<td>$10.2M</td>
<td>$11.6M</td>
<td>$14M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net income (loss/share)</td>
<td>$.10</td>
<td>(.26)</td>
<td>(.23)</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03-.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of Hourly Labor</td>
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<td>10.0%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
V. Personal and Corporate Public Service
The management of Eateries, Inc., and Garfield's recognize that their success is a consequence of the combined efforts of the company's patrons and employees. The company has always taken an active role in civic, social, and charitable events.

All Garfield's Restaurants are members of their state or local chambers of commerce, and participate in notable charitable events such as the Muscular Dystrophy Telethon, Cerebral Palsy Telethon, etc.

Employees voluntarily contribute 50 cents per paycheck to the Garfield's Community Chest, where all contributions are matched by the company and distributed as cash contributions to various charitable and educational organizations. Donations in 1991 will exceed $5,335.

Additionally, the company sponsors the Garfield's Academic Awards of Excellence program, whereby it provides public and private schools with certificates of excellence and free dinners for their outstanding students. In 1991, Eateries, Inc., will have awarded more than 15,000 free meals and certificates for outstanding students... at a value of more than $60,000.

Likewise, on Valentine's Day evening in February, 1991 (one of the restaurant industry's highest volume days of the year), an Oklahoma City-area Garfield's closed its doors to the public for a special dinner: "While Your Valentine Is Away, Let Garfield's Be Your Valentine." This was a dinner to honor the families of more than 200 people serving in the armed forces in Operation Desert Storm. Garfield's and its employees provided prime rib dinners and a collection of other valuable gifts to the families of area servicepeople absolutely free of charge. It was just one more way for
us to say "thanks" to our patrons and their families... for their support at home and abroad, and for the democracy and free enterprise system that makes it all possible.
Eateries, Inc... recognized for excellence:

*Inc.* Magazine, 1989

--19th fastest growing small public company in America,

International Foodservice Manufacturer's Association, 1991

--nominated for Gold & Silver Plate Awards

"Best of Oklahoma City" Awards, 1984 through 1991

--honors in various categories

*Restaurants and Institutions*, 1990

--"Hot Prospect" Award
Vince Orza... leading the way for a better Oklahoma:

Director/Trustee/Member:

Juvenile Diabetes Foundation
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Leukemia Society
Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Foundation
North Care Mental Health Center
The Meadows
Muscular Dystrophy Association
Junior Achievement
Oklahoma Academy for State Goals
Oklahoma Restaurant Association
Vince Orza... working with others for a brighter future.

Member:

St. Gregory's College Endowment Foundation Board of Trustees

Oklahoma Teacher Retirement System Board of Trustees

Oklahoma Vo-Tech Schools State Advisory Council

Oklahoma Department of Education Education and Business Council

Oklahoma City College Scholarship Association
At the age of 41, Dr. Vincent F. Orza has much to be proud of.

Like many members of his generation who grew up in urban neighborhoods primarily composed of immigrant families, Vince Orza was told what not to expect out of life. The messages were consistent: you're not good enough for the business world... you're not "college material"... you're not going to get a voice in society.

Vince Orza is living proof these kinds of limiting, stereotypical remarks need not crush anyone's hopes and dreams.

Vince Orza, unlike many from his generation, defied the early stereotypical expectations. He rose from his humble beginnings... to find that he was good enough for the business world. He started his own research and marketing firm. He built a multi-million dollar restaurant business that continues to grow and make a substantial impact in nine states.

Vince Orza found that he was "college material." Not only did he complete a Bachelor's degree, but he went on to earn two post-graduate degrees... and hold a tenured faculty position at a major public university. Vince Orza found, too, that his voice was needed... and his contributions rewarded... in society. As a candidate for Governor of Oklahoma... as a well-respected broadcast journalist... as a columnist and author. As a leader and contributor to numerous state panels and commissions, Vince Orza is making a difference in Oklahoma and beyond.
Vince Orza truly does play a vital role in helping our community, building our economy, and motivating our young people to see what they can do to make a difference... for today and tomorrow.
SUMMARY

These are just a few, general ideas to start you thinking about the importance of your business image. Of course, the most important thing is that you present a portrait of your business that's right for your organization, your goals, your customers and the community you serve. Allow your company to be seen as "special," providing products and services that fill a niche in the community and make you unique among all businesses of your type. Once you've done that, once you've given your customers and your community the chance to see your professionalism, your knowledge, your commitment and your positive attitude, you will have developed that perfect image you sought.
CHAPTER FOUR

Doing It Your Way

Issuing A News Release

When you wish to publicize your business and its people, products, or ideas, a great way to get the attention of the public is through a media news release. News releases (which are also referred to as press releases or media announcements) are brief, easy-to-understand documents which list the facts you're trying to impart to the public. A news release does not necessarily tell the "whole" story; rather, it's designed to "tease" the news editor into contacting you, or sending a reporter to get more detailed information about the issue.

The main thing you need to keep in mind is that the media editor to whom you are sending your news release is someone who's flooded with news releases every day. If your news release is going to survive long enough to even be considered let alone developed into a story that's printed or put on the air, it has to stand out. Your story must capture the editor's interest and somehow fulfill a need he or she has either today, or at some future point. The release must be dramatic and different, but of interest to the audience that the editor serves.

Case in point: When I worked as news assignments manager for a New Mexico television news operation, my daily pile of news releases and other mail
would cover the desk top. I didn’t have lots of precious time on my hands to go through this mail piece by piece (no one in this kind of a job does), so I typically looked it over while taking phone calls and doing my other daily business. As such, I didn’t give any one piece of mail a great deal of time... generally 5 to ten seconds maximum for anything that wasn’t a personal letter or critical correspondence. Of the 25 to 50 news releases I would receive every day, most would go straight into the garbage. Why? Because I knew what I was looking for and I knew what would work on our news. I also knew immediately whether a particular news release would work within our format, based upon the way it was written and the overall "look" of what it contained. Therefore, about 90 percent of the news releases made it into my "round file" in 10 seconds or less. The remainder, some of which would have potential and some of which would not, would be stashed away for a lengthier reading later in the day. Of those ten percent, maybe one or two percent would become a story at some point or serve as an idea for a story later.

Of course every media outlet is different and television by its very visual nature is more selective than newspapers and radio. The point is, your news release must be sufficiently unique to catch the editor’s attention and it must feature a story idea targeted to the market that the editor serves.

(Said one newspaper editor I spoke to during preparation of this book: "Please, oh, please tell your readers not to send me news releases that don’t have anything to do with the people who read my paper! It wastes their time and mine!")
Of course, news releases don’t always turn into stories right away. Many if not most end up as stories two weeks, six weeks, or several months after they’re received.

Based on my experience receiving news releases as a print and broadcast journalist, here’s my advice to you... if I were the editor to whom you were sending your news release:

**DO** send a *one page* news release whenever possible (especially to broadcast news editors). Multiple pages tend to separate and get lost and editors often don’t have the time to read through all the information anyway. If the story is for broadcast, the maximum time that could be allotted for your story on the air would be about two minutes, so don’t send six minutes’ worth of copy.

**DO** let the editor see at once why the information you’re sharing is useful, why the audience needs to know it, and why *the editor’s boss* is going to want to see it in the newscast or in the newspaper. After all, editors do have to answer to someone for what goes on the news or in print.

**DO** send information that involves real people in the audience served by the broadcaster or publisher. My TV news director in Albuquerque always yelled: "*How does this story affect people??!!*" and I agree. If I’m a news editor in Albuquerque, I want to see how this story affects people in Albuquerque, even if it affects only a few of them. The key words here: "human interest." The media thrive on it.
DO attribute all quotes and statistics in your news release. Editors throw away news releases which contain unattributed quotes. (One of my pet peeves as a journalist was the vague, worthless "officials said..." which, unfortunately, is tacked on to a lot of news stories to give them an air of legitimacy.) My feeling was and is: try to avoid un-named sources and unattributed statistical references at all costs.

DO send a little trinket of value to your news editor, if you can. If you're publicizing a big event and you're printing up t-shirts or coffee mugs or baseball caps, send one! Media editors are notorious collectors of such memorabilia and they love to feel like they're important enough to be showered with gifts. If nothing else, the coffee mug will sit on the editor's desk and a few dozen people will see it and learn of the forthcoming event it publicizes!

DO NOT call to ask whether the release was received and whether it will make print or be put it on the air. News editors are busy people. If your news release is routine--i.e., not a breaking story of major importance--they usually can't afford the luxury of discussing it with you over the phone. Moreover, they don't like to feel pressured to use your story. Send your information. If it's valuable to the editor, it will get used. If additional details are needed, the editor will call you. Or, send a postage-paid post card that the editor can return to you to indicate what happened with your story.

DO NOT try to submit the news release in person for the same reason stated above. If you must talk to the editor in person, call and make an appointment for a time that's convenient for both of you. Editors hate drop-ins.
DO NOT call the editor's boss in an effort to pressure the editor to use the release. The editor is supposed to have independent judgement about what gets used in the news and what doesn't and the boss should back him or her up on those decisions. If the boss has to put pressure on the editor to use your news release, chances are it's not worthy of being used anyway. The same holds true for the anchor person at your local TV station. Don't send a release to the anchor, hoping that there will be "star pressure" on the assignments manager to use the story. In most stations, the anchorman/woman has minimal say over what is put into his TV newscast. The anchor is not going to advocate reporting details from a news release so weak that the assignments manager wasn't interested in it.

DO NOT expect publicity for a news release that is blatant commercialism and basically just advertising your company or product. If the news release has no value to the community (the editor's audience) the editor's not going to be interested in it. Go see the sales department and buy some ad space/air time!

Finally, DO NOT FAX your news release unless it qualifies as an earth-shaking announcement! Newsroom FAX machines are reserved for sending and receiving important news copy, scripts, etc. News editors need the FAX channel of communication open for this information, and work hard to keep it that way. If an important deadline transmission is delayed by your FAX, which could just have easily been mailed in, do you think the editor is going to feel good about using it? Not a chance! One of the most irritating news release experiences I ever had as a TV assignments manager was when a script from a bureau office was delayed because
someone in a PR agency on the west coast started FAX'ing me a 25-page news release promoting a movie star's new facial cream. I cut off the FAX in mid-transmission and called the PR agency to informed them I would never, ever, use another news release from them EVER! And I haven't.

Writing Your News Release

When writing your news release, draft it in such a way that the most important information appears first. Present an immediate summary of what the text of the release is all about. This is critical for the busy editor, who has only a few seconds of time to scan the release and see whether it is applicable to his or her news operation. This information needs to be in the first paragraph of the news release, detailing who is holding the event or activity being publicized, what is involved, why the event is important to the community, when the event or activity is happening, where it is or will be located, and how the event or events will transpire. If this information is not right up front and if the editor perceives that he or she will have to hunt for it, your news release will be in a fast dash for the trash.

The remainder of the news release should feature details on the who, what, why, when, where, and how. This information (and all the copy of the news release) should be typed, double-spaced in large print for easy reading. The detail information should work down through the release like an inverted triangle--general,
broad information appears first and leads to the specifics and fine details toward the end of the news release.

Make sure the name of the contact person, the person who has all the answers to every conceivable question about the news item of interest, appears at the top of the news release, with his or her address and phone number(s). This person should be readily available to answer questions from the media upon receipt of the news release. If this person is not going to be available, or cannot answer questions, get someone else who can! Many a news story with great potential died on the assignment manager’s desk because the contact person on the press release wasn’t available or did not have the answers needed to elaborate on the facts given in the release.

Make sure any quotes you use are used appropriately. Never quote an unnamed source and make sure any source you do quote is cited correctly.

Read, read, and re-read the news release to verify every fact and claim. Then, have someone else read it. Never, never, never send out a news release with a factual error, a misspelled name, or missing information. Not only will it kill chances for a news story, but it will show the editor that you are an unreliable source for future information or story leads.

If you include a photo with your news release, make sure the photo is clear and can be reproduced without losing its integrity in the process. Identify all people who appear in the photo by writing on the reverse of the picture with a marker their names and titles. (Typically, newspapers will hold photos that are submitted with
news releases and other editorial copy. That way, if the photo is needed again in the future, it will already be on file.)

Any graphics you include should be "camera ready", that is, they are ready to be reproduced without any handiwork on the part of the newspaper editor or his staff.

One additional note about photos and graphics: You would be surprised how often I received, as a radio news director, slides, photos and graphic materials for reproduction as part of a news release package. This material all went to waste, because I very seldom ever showed slides on the air during my radio shows! Seriously, though, when it comes to sending materials to radio and TV stations, it may be very worthwhile to include a photo when the photo is designed to convince the editor that the story is interesting and has wide community appeal... but don't plan to have those photos used on the air. Even in television, if you want a "visual" story publicized, it is likely the editor will send out a camera crew to photograph the event and not use your photographs unless they portray something that can't be recreated. Remember, each news release has to be tailored to the media you're sending it to. If the purpose of your release is to publicize the 125 students who have made the Dean's Honor Roll at City College, don't send the TV station assignments manager a list of 125 names. The station cannot and will not read the names on the air so don't waste their time and your energy sending the list of names. Don't send it to the radio stations, either. Instead, send them a general release touting the fact that 125 students have made the Dean's Honor Roll, that it's the largest honor roll in history, or whatever. Make it relevant but don't bowl them over.
with information they cannot use. The local newspaper, of course, may well print all 125 names--so send them the list!

Remember, too, that your news release doesn't have to look "fancy." It's more important to be clear and legible. Type it out on plain white 8 1/2-by-11 inch paper. Or, use your company letterhead paper (as long as it's not so flashy that using it screams "advertising"). Make the release look interesting and readable. Make sure the name of the news editor or assignments manager is clearly typed on the envelope, and that the news release has the correct postage.

Finally, ask yourself whether the news release provides a good "springboard" for other stories. That is, does the potential exist for the news release to generate other stories of interest about your business (other than the story or subject matter specifically addressed in the news release)? The best news releases are the ones that tell one particular story and sow the seeds of other, future stories.

The most successful news release I've had the pleasure of circulating is the one I've reproduced here. Ironically, the "1,000 mile walk" was already over when the client gave the information which led to the a news release. Consequently, I had to write the copy for the release without coming right out and saying that the actual walk ended several weeks earlier. Still, I knew I had good material to work with--it was classic "feature story" stuff. The initial printing of the news release went out to about two-dozen newspapers across Oklahoma. Almost overnight, we started getting response. The release was featured in several newspapers, including the Daily Oklahoman. The release was printed verbatim in several others, including one
community paper where it made top-of-the-page placement in the Thanksgiving Day edition. (Think about that... top-of-the page placement where it was seen by everyone who received the paper, and others who read it through newspaper rack windows, on one of the biggest "stay at home and read the newspaper" days of the year!). The two walkers were asked to appear on a state-wide TV talk show, and their story also ran in at least one national pipeline magazine. The client paid very little for to the agency for write up and delivery of the news release, but think about how much name recognition the client got in return! As I tell everyone I talk to about this news release... "you can’t buy what this release did for Topographic Companies."
Holding a News Conference

I must admit that I've never been a sucker for news conferences. Fortunately or unfortunately (depending on the perspective you take from either being on the "giving" or "receiving" end of these news conferences) more and more media people are starting to feel as I do. As we've already seen, it's a very competitive world out there in the media business and the media manager of today just isn't willing to put in his paper or on her airwaves the same boring news conference information that everybody else has. News conferences inevitably produce dull news. They typically feature anywhere from one to three stoic, corporate types in blue suits sitting at a table answering questions. Maybe they'll throw in a pie chart or a graph, but it's still ho-hum. Dull copy for the newspapers and even duller audio and video for the broadcast folks. Obviously I'm not a real fan of news conferences, so I won't try to sell you on holding one. More often than not, unless you happen to be "Magic" Johnson, Pee-wee Herman, or the chairman of DuPont--nobody is going to show up when you call your news conference. (In such a case you'll really regret you even announced the dang thing.)

So, what do you do when you have an interesting, newsworthy item, of immediate interest, that cannot be successfully told on paper (as through a news release)? If it qualifies as an "earth-shaking announcement" go ahead and give your local news editors a call. Call as early as possible in the day, and explain briefly (in a minute or two) what's up. An alternative would be to FAX them each a one-page
summary of the details. If they’re interested, they’ll let you know, and tell you how your idea fits into their developing schedule for that day.

**The Interview**

You should be very pleased if you find yourself in the position where you are asked to interview with a news reporter or editor. Regardless of the topic, it offers the perfect opportunity for you to promote your company, your business ideas or overall philosophy. Handled well, it can be a real coup for your firm. Handled poorly, it can be an embarrassing and unpleasant experience.

Sometimes you will be asked to interview for a breaking story—with little or no time for preparation. In such a case, you can’t be expected to do a lot of preparation. Therefore, all you can do is relax, be yourself, and give your instinctive and truthful reactions to the questions asked of you. For example, on the day that the bottom fell out of the stock market in 1987, I was working as news director for a small New Mexico radio station in a community where lots of older retirees lived. Naturally, there was a lot of community concern about stock values and investments and we had to reflect that through interviews with bankers and brokers in our town. When news of the market crash came, I got on the phone to local bankers and analysts, and asked for them to comment over the phone. I tape recorded the comments for broadcast almost immediately. I explained that the short notice would not allow lengthy prose, postulation or pontification. I wanted their initial feelings;
their gut reactions. In this way, I got some great comments to use on the air to give my audience a feeling for how the situation was being seen by those "in the know" in the area.

In such a situation, when a reporter calls you for a comment there's not necessarily a need to prepare. You're in business and you have knowledge of the things that affect your business. If you feel prepared to speak on the subject, speak as a business person responding to an inquiry about business. Make brief, easy to understand remarks that reflect your immediate feeling about the question being asked. Nobody expects more than that from you in this kind of a situation and as long as you keep your head and respond appropriately, you'll do fine. (It should be noted, of course, that if you are approached to make such off-the-cuff remarks and you don't feel professionally prepared to do so... don't! As the old saying goes, "Better to keep silent and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt"!

Most of the time though, when you are contacted by a reporter or editor for an interview it will be for a non-breaking news story (something that doesn't have to be put on the air or in the newspaper right away). Typically, the arrangements will be made by telephone a day or two in advance. Most radio and newspaper reporters do this initial "leg work" themselves by calling and arranging interviews with subjects, and establishing the time and place for the meeting. Many, if not most, television reporters do not.
In the case of television news, the phone call to establish the interview is often made by the news assignments manager or producer. This person not only will want to establish who will be interviewed, where, and when but also will want to obtain information about the visual elements that can be incorporated into the story at that or other locations.

Most journalists handle themselves in a professional manner when it comes to scheduling interviews and will tell you exactly who they want to talk with, what they want to discuss and what kind of story they're trying to develop. Although the "sandbagging" interview style popularized by television's 60 Minutes makes good TV, it rarely occurs in real life. I've requested interviews from hundreds and hundreds of people over the course of my print and broadcast journalism career and there were only a handful of cases in which I had to be less than forthcoming about the subject matter I would be discussing. Usually, I've found it's not necessary to use trickery in order to get someone to sit down and talk with you. Even in cases where people haven't wanted to discuss questions I've asked, I've found it still best to be up-front and forthright. If they did not care to answer the question I posed, then I would simply say so in the story and let my audience decide who's being honest and who's not.

More often than not, this interview (if the story has to do with your company) will be set up to take place in your office, factory, or facility or at a particular job site that relates to the story at hand. You will be told what kind of information is needed,
and given a general idea of the subject matter to be covered. You will not receive specific questions on which to prepare answers ahead of time.

There are two important things you need to do to prepare for the interview. First, prepare your information. Let’s say you’re a small business owner who’s going to be interviewed by a newspaper reporter for a story on your community’s economic growth during the past 12 months. You know the reporter wants information on growth (or lack of growth). Make sure you have plenty of information on hand to document the role your company has played. Not only will you need the facts and figures (increase in customer base, net earnings increase, facility expansion data, etc.), but you will need to know that information well enough to be able to elucidate facts clearly and concisely to the reporter. Gather the information that will tell the story from your perspective--highlighting the role your company has played in the community.

As you go though this information to prepare yourself prior to the interview, throw out unfamiliar industry jargon. Prepare yourself to explain what the facts and figures mean to the layman. Prepare yourself to show the big picture and how your company fits in to it. Prepare to put your company in the best possible light.

Then relax! I can’t overemphasize the importance of this whether your interview will be with a print reporter or with a broadcast journalist. If you’re not relaxed in the interview setting, there’s a possibility you will forget something you want to say, or say something you didn’t want to say. Worse yet, if your interview is being broadcast or taped for broadcast— you could come off looking shifty,
uninformed or dishonest. Nervousness also tends to make people's voices high and squeaky. Relax!

If you don't feel you can successfully carry off the interview, by all means suggest someone else from your company who can sit in for you. You might want to ask this person to sit in on the interview with you. (Sometimes this actually works out best of all as reporters tend to shy away from corporate bureaucracy and would rather talk to someone from rank and file. If, for example, you're being interviewed about a new expansion project your company is working on, have someone who's involved hands-on in the project join you for the interview to give an "in the field" perspective to what's being done.)

Coordinating Your Efforts With Your Staff

Of course, no matter what position you hold in the company, journalists aren't always going to want to talk to you. Reporters want to find, as sources for their stories, the people most qualified to talk about the subjects at hand. For example, you may be the general manager of a nursing home which has involved its elderly residents in a unique exercise and nutrition program. You plan to send out news releases touting the importance of this program to your residents and as a model for other facilities. But wait! As general manager of the facility you have a certain area of expertise and authority which needs to be reflected in the news release but you
need to include participation from those on your staff who are involved in the "hands on" aspect of the program and are able to represent it in contacts with the media.

The point here is that there's a real difference between authority and "talking heads." If I'm an editor who has received this news release from you about your dramatic new program I will need to send a reporter who will talk to the people most involved in the program. I will want to "flesh out" my story with program participants... your residents. I also will want to talk with the employees who work with those patients and can tell me how much they've benefited from the effort. Yes, I may be interested in hearing something from you as general manager but your input is minor compared to the importance of the other people more closely involved with the topic. (In other words, I want to see people in action... and talk to them. I do not want a story built around you sitting behind your desk telling me how wonderful the program is!)

Don't forget, when you prepare a news release or any other contact with the free media you have to select the people within your organization who are best suited to represent the topic at hand. Make sure they understand your goals and objectives and are prepared to successfully represent your company with the media.

What Newspapers Want to Know

It is likely you'll have more interaction with your local newspaper editor and reporters than any other media given the fact that the newspaper reporter is more
inclined to show interest in your day-to-day business than radio or television journalists. As we've already discussed, newspapers have room for stories about personnel changes, awards, recognition, and other small news items, whereas radio and television journalists are interested mostly in big stories of great interest to the community at large.

The truth is, there's a virtually unlimited number of story ideas that should be sent to your local newspaper city editor. You should be drafting news releases when you go into business, when you expand your business, when you hire specialists, when you land big accounts, when you go back to school for training, when you lecture to the Rotary or the PTA, when long-term employees get promoted or retire, when you win industry or community awards or honors, etc., etc. Notice these are just routine events—the list doesn't even include the news releases you send out when something really dramatic happens!

In most cases, these routine news releases will be repeated verbatim (or nearly so) in the columns of text that are used as filler in business and community sections of your local paper. Most of the time you will never get a call-back from a reporter. Instead, you may just open the paper one day and find your company mentioned (perhaps with a photo if you included one).

When it comes to the "really dramatic" things I just spoke of, you are likely to be contacted by an editor or reporter if there's interest in developing a story. You see these kinds of stories in the paper every day. Often, they appear in the business section as business "profile" stories, or stories of particular business executive
accomplishments. These kinds of stories focus in on one particular business or business leader.

There are also other opportunities to get your company's name into the newspaper, although the story focuses on something that doesn't specifically have to do with your company. I'm speaking here about stories of general interest where you or your business can be cited as a source. Take, for example, an idea we've already discussed, the "economic impact" story. Every media outlet does three or four of these kinds of stories every year. Around Christmastime, everybody does at least one. Why shouldn't your business be used as a source of information for one or more of these stories? This is something you can plan in advance, earlier in the year. Take steps to contact the editors and reporters and show them how your unique perspective gives you authority to comment in such a story and how your business can serve as a special "barometer" of consumer activity in a particular way.

After you've finished this book you will be able to think of an endless list of ways to make use of your local newspaper to publicize your business and your ideas. The main thing to remember is: nothing is too small or too trivial to warrant at least consideration for the newspaper (after all, have you glanced through the pap that makes it into the gossip columns?!). The key is repetition. You must get to know your newspaper editor and start work on news releases that will not flood his desk, but show up there consistently. Once you get into this groove, you can prepare yourself and your company to be in the newspaper on a regular basis.
What Radio Stations Want to Know

I have to admit being somewhat partial to radio journalists—after all, I was one for quite a few years. Radio is a very powerful medium for expanding the reach of your company's name and ideas. Never underestimate it!

Radio is a very immediate medium. That is, it is concerned, more than any of the other media, with what is happening right now. Radio stations play the songs that are "hot" today, they give this afternoon's "up-to-the-minute" traffic reports, and they talk about what the man and woman on the street are saying this morning. For that reason, you should approach any interaction with radio in a way that will demonstrate to your radio news director that, when needed, you can provide information that will help his or her audience stay in tune with what's happening now.

Because of the "immediacy" of radio, and the fact that most of the radio stations in this country have extremely limited budgets and staffs for news and public affairs, you're more likely to find yourself in the position of becoming a source for information on a current topic of interest, rather than as the subject of a "feature" story. Most radio stations don't have a full-time news commitment (it's very expensive) and those that do often don't have the resources to do much more than basic news coverage.

The best way to get involved with radio is to get your business card into the news director's pocket and your phone number into his Rolodex. That way, when the news director needs information on something that you're familiar with (something
that involves your company) your name and phone number will be immediately at hand and you’re likely to get a phone call.

Back to my earlier example about the stock market crash in 1987. When the numbers came in over the Associated Press wire and I made the decision to make phone calls for local reaction, I went immediately to my office Rolodex. This is where I (as do most journalists) store information on contacts. I have a jam-packed Rolodex with contact names, addresses, phone numbers, FAX numbers, areas of expertise, and details that will get me the information I need on all kinds of subjects. Every successful radio news director works this way because most radio news directors don’t have the time to spend "breaking in" a new source. When a soundbite (that’s a taped comment from an authoritative source... often obtained right over the telephone) is needed, it’s needed now. That’s why, if your name and number is in the news director’s Rolodex, you’re going to get phone calls, and your name and your company’s name is going to get on the air. Best of all, it’s not going to cost you a cent.

The Special Needs of Television

Your local television station has challenges to deal with which are similar, but not identical, to those faced by radio. Even with today’s satellite technology, TV is still not as immediate as radio in that it cannot get "breaking" information on the air as quickly as radio can, but it gets pretty close.
In the news department, like radio, television is concerned with the immediate... with what happened today. Very rarely will you ever see a story on local television news that deals with something which happened more than 24 hours ago, unless there’s some new update (or a new "top" as the journalists call it) that can bring the story into a more current focus.

Television is different from radio in that it is more of a medium for the masses. There are a great many radio stations on the air, and each needs a particular "niche" for programming. There are "oldies" stations, "pop" stations, news/talk stations, even all-comedy stations and (at one time, anyway) an all-Elvis station. TV can’t do that. There are very few TV stations and they are not cheap to run. A television station costs thousands of dollars an hour to operate, and is an investment of millions of dollars in facilities and equipment. Although it certainly has competition from other stations and wants to find its own "niche", the TV station has got to find the "niche" that will bring the largest possible number of viewers.

As a result, television programming tends to have three characteristics: It is very general in nature, covering areas of interest to broad segments of the population. It tends to shy away from complex issues by simplifying and stereotyping images for mass consumption. It also tends to personalize issues as much as possible with people we can identify with.

You've seen examples of this process every night on television. TV news stories start out with a catchy cliche-filled sentence or two by the anchor (to grab your attention). Then, the reporter comes on with a brief explanation of the problem
at hand, and how someone or something is either changing the situation or making it worse. There will be an interview with a victim who is described as "typical." There may be a quick graphic or two if statistical information is needed. Finally, the reporter will be shown on camera in a "stand-up," explaining again, in broad, general language why things are either good or bad and whether they're going to get worse or better based on what we've just learned. All of this is crammed into two minutes or less of actual air time. As you can imagine, there's little time for analysis, opposing viewpoints, discussion, or contemplation of any issues involved.

Television relies heavily on visual impact. TV is, more than anything else, a medium for showing people the news. Talking heads are not good television... they're boring. The viewer wants to see pictures that portray action and tell a story. Research substantiates that there has to be almost constant motion in the television picture (a significant movement or change in image on the average of every three seconds) for the viewer to maintain interest.

That's why you see so many "live" shots in television news even when there's nothing happening "live" to show you. Just the reporter standing out at some location "live" gives the impression to the viewer that something exciting and novel is going to happen, and that the viewer should continue watching to see it when it does. TV news directors live for this kind of stuff.

Should you ever find yourself asked to appear in a "live" shot for television news - consider yourself fortunate! That's the "brass ring" of local TV journalism. In such a situation, remember to be relaxed and poised, knowledgeable but not
brimming over with facts, and talk to the reporter as naturally and comfortably as possible. Remember, brief simple sentences work best in the TV interview... 10 words or less, 10 seconds or less. I don’t know specifically what the research shows, but I’d venture a guess that the average TV viewer has the attention span of a 6-year old... what with so many channels to choose from now and a remote control channel-changer in nearly every living room. Consequently, any dialog you have with a TV news crew should be planned for quick reactions to the questions offered you. Also remember many TV news "journalists" pay very little attention to the answers to their questions, and while you’re answering they’re thinking up another question to ask. Be prepared to explain, politely of course, why you’ve already answered the question you’re being asked again.

Unlike the print media, television rarely does a good job of tracking news stories over time, in order to follow up on the progress the audience has been told to expect. This is because TV stations don’t tend to have as many reporters as the print media and TV news reporters don’t last as long in their jobs. There’s a constant move to a bigger city, a bigger market... and many TV news reporters in the smaller cities of the nation stay there less than two years before moving on. They’re not all that concerned with local issues and they don’t have the background to stay interested (and there is substantial research to document this, too). A TV reporter in a small market station is typically around 22 years old, single, right out of college, and will be moving to a bigger market in 36 months or less.
TV stations also do a poorer job of following stories due to the fact that most stations don’t use a "beat" system for their reporters. A newspaper reporter, for example, will have a "beat" to cover. He or she will get familiar with the people in power in the community and will cover stories from just a few assigned categories (i.e., city beat, schools beat, etc.). That doesn’t happen often in TV because there are fewer reporters to go around, more production work to do in getting together a TV story and less interest in the predominantly routine, non-visual stories that beats generate most often.

Of course, this is not to suggest that there is no place on television for in-depth issue-oriented programming. There is—even if such programming is seen only early on Sunday morning! Most television stations do produce at least one local interview/current affairs show and these programs do present an opportunity for good, in-depth examination of issues of importance which are not necessarily topical. When I worked in Albuquerque, I hosted our station’s "New Mexico News Conference" show, which was not in fact a news conference but a half-hour, commercial-free discussion/analysis program which examined contemporary issues. We looked at such issues as groundwater contamination, mass transit needs of the physically handicapped, funding for public school construction, etc. Such shows offer great opportunities for you to have an outlet for your ideas and opinions if you can reach the producer of the show in your area and make a proposal. These producers always have a list of future topics they’re developing and your idea might work in perfectly!
You need to realize, of course, there's a relatively small audience to be captured at 7 o'clock on a Sunday morning, but the audience you do reach tends to be more informed and interested because they've made it a point to tune in to the broadcast.

Therefore, in your dealings with television, remember that it is in many ways like radio. The news department works on stories that are of interest now. Make your initial contact with your local TV stations in a relaxed, non-threatening way. If you are the county's largest producer of widgets, and widgets (and stories having to do with widgets) are on the news a lot, get your business card and a Rolodex card with information about your company to the news department's assignments editor. Send along a nice note explaining that you would like to be of service anytime there's a need for information about widgets, or anytime the station has a reporter who's developing a story on business in general where you could be of help. Chances are, your Rolodex card will be filed accordingly and someday when you least expect it, a reporter will be contacting you for information on a widget story the station is doing.

In general, when working with, or preparing to work with, television, remember that television is:

- A highly visual medium, which tells stories with pictures...

- A medium of illustration rather than analysis...
• A medium which takes complex issues and reduces them to generalities which affect viewers...

• A medium that seeks to show how general issues affect a specific individual or individuals - as representative of the population at large...

• A medium that offers your company opportunities to interact with the community through presentation of images showing how your company serves the overall good.

**SUMMARY**

There’s no better way to begin publicizing your company than by using the free media outlets in your community. Free media exposure costs you virtually nothing to obtain; mainly you'll just need time and energy to devote to the effort. An investment of a few hours of your time can bring you much greater media exposure for your company name, products, and personnel than anything you could have purchased—at any cost. News releases to stimulate news coverage in the print and broadcast media are most effective when they are written in a crisp, clean style and get right to the point about what your firm has done or is doing that's newsworthy. The news release has to be targeted to a specific interest or need in the community,
and needs to answer all the questions editors will ask, such as **who** is involved, **when** the activity is taking place, **what** is happening, **where** it's happening, **why** it's important to the community, and **how** people can find out more information and get involved. Be prepared to answer any and all questions about the event, remembering of course that the media shy away from using news releases that are blatant attempts to advertise a new product or service. Keep in mind, also, that every medium of communication (radio, newspapers, television, etc.) is different—and each has its own information "niche" to fill. Pay attention to what's happening in your community, research your local media, and come up with a plan for consistently making use of the media when your business has stories to tell.
CHAPTER FIVE
Taking Your Story To The People

Nothing can take the place of personal, one-to-one communication as a tool for "selling" your business, your products and your ideas. You should be telling everyone you know all about your business, what you do or sell, why your company is better than the other guys (or gals!), and why people should be doing business with you instead of someone else. Statistics show this word of mouth sales ability really does work.

Your Chamber of Commerce

The first place to start is with your local Chamber of Commerce. I believe that Chamber of Commerce membership is very important for every business and every business person. Chambers provide opportunities for you to network with other business people, to get management help when you need it, to get access to legal advice, and to have a voice in local, state, and federal government actions that involve business. Chamber membership is well worth the small monthly fee. When Terri and I set up our business, we didn't spend one dime on advertising during our first six months—largely because of the "word of mouth" action that resulted when we joined the Norman, Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce. We were invited to contribute to the Chamber newsletter, to join a Chamber committee, attend "After Hours"
business socials, attend the annual banquet, and speak about our business on a local radio program. All of these opportunities came about through Chamber membership. If you haven't investigated joining your community Chamber of Commerce, you're really missing out.

Chamber newsletters and publications offer you an opportunity to tell your story to other business people. What better place to have your business name published (and your business story featured) than in a publication read by business people in your community who have joined an organization specifically designed to help them get more business? Chamber newsletters offer you the opportunity not only to get your name, photo, and business description before a large audience, but also to contribute short feature stories about your business, write business advice columns or publish other information that presents your business or your philosophy in a positive light. Here's the article about our business that was used in the Norman Chamber of Commerce *Business Journal*:

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The Swanson Group/Image • Management • Media

Doug and Terri Swanson are owners of

The Swanson Group/Image • Management • Media,

a unique Norman research, marketing and public relations firm.

"We work with businesses which have special marketing needs most P.R. agencies won’t deal with," Doug Swanson explains. "We design our services specifically for small and home-based businesses that need professional communications assistance but don’t want huge packages or can’t afford the large retainer fees charged by traditional agencies."

The Swanson Group specializes in:

News Releases - to inform the community about your business’ special accomplishments, services and ideas;

Market Research - to identify hidden growth opportunities;

Sales Brochures and Flyers - to launch or sustain inexpensive marketing campaigns;

Group Presentations - to inform people about effective business communication and motivate them to act!

"We even write correspondence and process bulk mailings," Terri adds, noting that the company’s small size makes The Swanson Group very attentive to detail work and able to respond to clients’ needs 24 hours a day.

Doug is the author of: "A Publicity Kit for Penny Pinchers: Guidebooks for Promoting Your Small Business Products, Services, and Ideas in Oklahoma."

Doug has a Master’s degree in Communication and 12 years’ experience as a newspaper reporter, radio news director and TV talk show host. He’s working on a Ph.D. in Communication at the University of Oklahoma. Terri recently earned a second Bachelor’s degree (in Personnel Management) and has extensive computer/data processing and community service experience. Their sons, Matthew, 7, and Albert, 4, are planning to launch a Swanson Group "branch office"... as soon as they learn how to type!

The Swanson Group/Image • Management • Media
can be reached at 447-4052.
New Member Feature: The Swanson Group

The new members featured this month are Doug and Terri Swanson, owners of The Swanson Group/Image • Management • Media. They describe their business as a unique Norman research, marketing and public relations firm.

"We work with businesses which have special marketing needs most P.R. agencies won't deal with," Doug Swanson explains. "We design our services specifically for small and home-based businesses that need professional communications assistance but don't want huge packages or can't afford the large retainer fees charged by traditional agencies."

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Chamber functions and meetings take place on a regular basis and offer a prime opportunity for you to get out in public, "press the flesh" and meet the people who will be your future customers. Many chambers offer "Business After Hours" mixers where people gather together either before the start of the work day or at the end of the work day, to exchange business cards, meet other people, and network for more business. There's no better time for you to get out and meet people, so don't hesitate to take advantage of these "After Hours"-type sessions.

Your local Chamber of Commerce offers unparalleled support opportunities for businesses in your community. In many ways, Chambers are big lobbying groups, lobbying for the rights and privileges of businesses in your community. They will push for you at the state capitol, in Washington D.C., and in other communities, to promote your town and the businesses, attractions and people in it. This activity by your local Chamber of Commerce will trickle down to you, the individual business member, with information about ways to run your business more efficiently, chances to develop new business with other organizations and communities, and opportunities for finding more customers right in your own home town.

**Business Clubs**

Of course, chambers aren't the only game in town. Every community has business-related clubs, organizations and support groups. There are traditional organizations like Rotary and Lion's Club and other more non-traditional groups for
entrepreneuring women, for small business owners, for home-based business owners, etc. I can’t emphasize enough how important it is to get involved in groups like these. People like to do business with people they know. So, the more people you know, the more potential customers you will have. All you have to do is be available, be friendly and have the kinds of products and services people need at prices they can afford. People will bring their business to you. More importantly, you will get a name for yourself and your business in the community. You will be seen as someone who’s popular and well-liked. Your business will become well-known as one which supports the community, something which is an important element of your overall promotional plan.
Speaker set at AMBUCS meeting

Doug Swanson, public relations and communication expert, will be the speaker for the Sooner AMBUCs 7 a.m. breakfast meeting at the Norman Ramada Inn Tuesday.

Swanson came to Norman in 1991 as a University of Oklahoma doctoral student and works with the Hatfield and Bell public relations firm.

"Almost everybody is uncomfortable speaking in public," he noted. "But you can overcome that fear of standing in front of a crowd if you learn and apply some basic techniques."

Prospective members and guests are invited and no reservations are necessary. For more information about the American Business Clubs, call 321-4216.
While I certainly would not advocate "selling" your business or organization to everyone you come into contact with socially, it certainly doesn't hurt to talk up your business when the opportunity seems appropriate. Much commerce in this country starts with word of mouth, even though we often tend to neglect the importance of this type of communication. The more people know and understand your business and see that it will benefit them, the more they're going to want to do business with you. Even if they don't have need of what you offer, chances are they'll talk about your business to other people. I've mentioned the research which shows people need to have seven mental "impressions" about your business before they'll remember you or your products. Why not start making those impressions today with your barber, the attendant at the car wash and the people you play bridge with at the country club? You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain by letting people know what you do for a living, how you do it, and why you do it better than anybody else.

Speaker's Bureaus

In just about every community there's an organization which looks for experts to speak at community events on various topics (usually these agencies are referred to as speaker's bureaus). Often they're associated with public relations firms or with universities. These associations field calls from community groups looking for someone to speak on a particular topic. The bureau works to match the speaker to
the group, the topic, and the occasion. It works out well for the group as they get a
speaker from the community who's an expert on the subject they want to hear more
about. It works well for the speaker, since he or she gets to talk about this topic of
interest, and promote his or her business in the process. Everybody benefits, and in
most cases there's no cost to anyone. You sign up to join the organization (as a
speaker) for free, and the speaker's bureau will publish your name and area of
expertise in a guide which lists all the people who speak for the bureau. A speaker's
bureau will not generate speaking engagements for you every other week, but if you
get one or two a year that's great. Each time you speak, 15, 20, 50 or more people
get exposed to you, your company, your ideas, and your philosophy. It's a super
promotional opportunity.

Before I leave this subject, let me remind you about the negative things which
get said about business, and why you should try to avoid saying them as much as
possible. It's a proven fact that people tend to talk more to other people about their
bad experiences with businesses than their good ones. If my new car breaks down,
the car dealer can't fix it and I'm driving a loaner car for three days, I'm much more
likely to bring all those disturbing facts up in conversation than if my car didn't break
down or was fixed right away. It's the same way with your business. Treat people
well, and they may talk about you to a friend or two. But treat people unfairly, and
they're going to tell everybody! Always bend over backward to please your
customers.
Keep that thought in mind as you go about your day "talking up" your business. Talk about the good stuff! Talk about what's right with your business, your community, other businesses and organizations. Problems are important, of course, but generate more talk about solutions. People who talk about what's right with business and what's right with the community may appear like a Pollyana sometimes, but chances are they're more fun to be around than people who are constantly berating business, talking down the community and complaining about how things should be. Much of the time those complainers aren't the ones who go out and fix anything, anyway.

Letters to the Editor

A good place to start to present an idea to the community is with your local newspaper's "Letters to the Editor" column. Newspapers frequently publish letters to the editor which praise a cause, a philosophy, a business, or an organization which is active in the community. When these letters are published, the individuals and businesses involved get free publicity—in a very positive light.

Here's an example: my business is a member of the Norman, Oklahoma Home-Based Business Association. The Norman Chamber of Commerce scheduled a "Business Expo" at a local shopping mall, but the Home-Based Business Association couldn't afford the cost of a display booth for the three-day event.
Fortunately for our group, however, the Oklahoma Electric Cooperative purchased a booth for us so that we could take part in the show.

The event was a tremendous success for the members of the Association—many of whom have few opportunities to get their products and services before the public. So, after the show, my wife Terri (Vice President of the Home-Based Business Association) wrote a letter to the local newspaper. The letter explained how the Oklahoma Electric Cooperative had bought the booth as part of its ongoing commitment to business in the Norman area, and how such efforts should be recognized and applauded by the community. The letter was printed in its entirety on in a Sunday edition of the newspaper—complete with a banner headline.

As a consequence, the Home-Based Business Association got some great publicity, the Electric Cooperative got publicity and public recognition for its unselfish endeavor, and the newspaper editor showed her great concern for businesses of all shapes and sizes in the Norman, Oklahoma, area.
OEC's support of home-based businesses appreciated

Editor, The Transcript:
While many companies and individuals spend a whole lot of time complaining about our sagging economy, one Norman firm is doing something to promote business activity. I think their actions should be recognized! The Oklahoma Electric Cooperative recently purchased a booth at the Norman Business Expo (held Feb. 28 and 29 at the Sooner Fashion Mall). The booth was provided free of charge for members of the Norman chapter of the Oklahoma Home-based Business Association.

OEC's contribution allowed many home-based business people, who could not otherwise afford the cost of a booth on their own, the opportunity to display and sell products and inform others of their services. In this way, OEC played a big part in stimulating business activity in Norman and throughout our area.

Many people are not aware of our local and statewide home-based business associations. Home-based businesses are growing nationally by 7 to 9 percent a year. The Department of Labor predicts that 50 percent of the workforce will work at home by the turn of the century. A variety of product-oriented and service-oriented businesses are serving Oklahoma communities. They range from architectural to electronic design firms...from computer consulting to exporting...from arts and crafts to furniture and household goods. These enterprises are making a major impact on our local and statewide economy.

In 1988 there were 1,047 known home-based businesses in Oklahoma. Sixty-three percent were operated by females, 82 percent were operated by married people and 76 percent were operated by college-educated people. It is estimated today that there may be as many as 17,000 home-based businesses in Oklahoma alone. There are over 30 million home-based businesses in the U.S. which comprise 30 percent of the labor force. The income generated by home-based businesses is between $40 billion and $60 billion a year.

Many businesses which started as home-based businesses have gone on to become major corporations in our state. One such business is United Design Corporation. People choose to operate as a home-based business for a variety of reasons. For some it's the sole source of income, for others it supplements their income while they work outside the home. But whatever the reason, home-based businesses are growing not just statewide but nationally as well.

The OEEBA, which supports these efforts statewide, operates solely from member dues and activity fees. Additional funding comes from major foundations and corporations like OEC, which provide essential seed money for program start-ups. Membership is open to those in business at home and those starting a business.

Activities and programs include regional seminars and trade shows, which provide information and networking opportunities. Information is provided to members on such topics as how to form a business, expanding a business, marketing your products or services, pricing your products or services...and the list goes on.

It is through the help of businesses like OEC that home-based business organizations can continue to exist, and their members (like me) continue to prosper. I think the Oklahoma Electric Cooperative should receive a public "thank you" for its efforts to promote commerce in Norman, help Norman home-based businesses do business, and help support local and statewide home-based business groups.

TERRI SWANSON
Vice President
Norman Chapter
Oklahoma Home-Based Business Association
Newsletters

More and more, companies both large and small are finding that the company newsletter is a great tool for getting out the word about the company's products and services. Why? Because they work! Even doctors, lawyers and other professionals are using them to attract and keep clients (In a January, 1989, Forbes article, for example, a physician is quoted as saying he'd give up his Yellow Pages ad before he'd quit sending out his newsletter!).

By using the personal computer which just about every office has these days... along with an inexpensive desktop publishing program, most companies can quickly and easily put together a very readable, enjoyable and informative newsletter.

The newsletter is a great morale builder for your employees. It is also a terrific image booster in the community, as it informs your customers and future customers about your business and the kind of work you do. A well-produced newsletter can give your company the image of professionalism and stability that's so important in today's competitive marketplace.

If you're thinking about including a company newsletter in your company's overall communications package, here are some ideas on creating a newsletter that will be just right for your business:
The Newsletter Purpose and Goals

Your newsletter should serve a number of purposes. It should unify, support, and encourage growth of the "team" spirit of your employees. It should allow customers to become more aware of the products and services you offer and the people who work with you to provide those products and services. For the general public, the newsletter should establish the image of your firm as a professional, competent, and caring company engaged in community service. Your newsletter should represent everything that your company is—and is growing to become—because it serves as the cornerstone of your company's communicative outreach to its employees and the community at large.

If you're considering starting up a newsletter, start first by considering:

- What are our company goals?
- Who is the audience and what should they learn about us through the newsletter?
- What motivates these people to learn, and how can we build on that in the construction of our newsletter?

On average, each copy of a newsletter is read by the intended recipient and at least two other people. If you gear your newsletter only to the people in "your group" you are forgetting a lot of your eventual audience.
For employees, your newsletter should:

- give information to help improve performance and productivity
- impart a sense of "belonging" on your company team
- illustrate important personal and professional achievements
- increase communication and morale on the job
- allow employees to take pride in themselves and their company

For customers, your newsletter should:

- reinforce the image of your products as superior to the competition
- show "behind the scenes" professionalism which results in creation of your quality products and services
- deliver information about new products
- emphasize the talent and competency of your employees
- highlight your community service efforts

For the public, your newsletter should:

- allow the general public to find out what your firm is all about, what products and services you produce, and how you produces them
- give a greater awareness of the importance of your products and services in our lives
- present the image of your firm as a "team" of professionals working together in a successful business
Some important issues you need to address to employees through your newsletter are topics including: increased production, decreasing of waste, working together more effectively, individual noteworthy accomplishments (in the workplace or on leisure time), and the importance of community service work.

Personal issues that are important to employees include: recognition of birthdays and anniversaries, notable personal accomplishments, and family support for work within the company.

Issues which are important to the general public—and are appropriate for discussion within a public newsletter—include such topics as: what the company is, what the firm does (its work and products), what the company does for the community, how its people work together as a team and what differentiates your firm from the competition. Discussion of these topics is important for employees to be exposed to on a regular basis, as well.

Your company newsletter offers outstanding potential for passing along information of a general nature about changes in corporate goals and policy. You should include any information that would affect greater employee efficiency, a higher quality product, or an enhanced image of professionalism and effectiveness. Only general information should be presented. For example, information about new policies should be publicized in the newsletter only if it applies to all personnel. The newsletter should not serve as the exclusive conduit for such information, rather, it should serve as a source for reminding employees of goal or policy changes which workers have already been informed of by their supervisors.
In order to impart information most effectively, start by defining the tone of your newsletter. Identify THREE things you want people to keep in mind when they read it. Write those three things down on a sheet of paper, and tape it on the wall. You will need to keep those ideas in mind constantly, throughout every issue! All text and graphics must maintain and support this image you’re creating!

Use ONLY editorial copy and graphics that portray this image, and DO NOT use anything that is not appropriate or questionably appropriate to the image you have established for your newsletter.

Everyone loves to see their name in print and nothing will do more for an employee’s morale than the opportunity to have his or her honest achievements publicized for others to read about. Your company newsletter should take advantage of this opportunity by featuring, on a regular basis, small news items about employee honors, recognitions and promotions. The emphasis should be on employees who made significant contributions to the "team" output which make work more efficient or productive for the company as a whole. As an example, the fact that "Mary re-organized the files" is not a newsworthy item unless we are told that, in doing so, Mary cut two days’ worth of work from the end-of-the-month bookkeeping process.

With the exception of job terminations or dismissals, all entrances and exits of personnel from the workforce through death or attrition should be appropriately noted, with a varying extent of coverage based upon the individual’s length of service and duties within your company.
Birthdays and anniversaries are important to take note of, in a brief and tasteful manner (though, of course, individuals who do not wish to have their birthdays recognized should have the opportunity to bow out of the process). A birthday or anniversary is not worthy of anything other than a brief mention in a summary column unless, as with the example noted above, the individual has some unusual or noteworthy reason for celebration.

Information about employees’ families has a place in your company newsletter... to a point. This information could be expanded to include a write-up and/or photo when an employee gives birth to twins, has a child win the state spelling bee, marries another employee, etc. But "Secretary Sue’s Sister Sally Weds in Sarasota" is not a story of interest for your newsletter or its readers.

Finally, each issue of the newsletter should include a feature story on a topic of interest to employees, customers and the general public. Topics do not necessarily have to deal specifically with your company, but can be applied to it by association. In a November newsletter, for example, a feature story on "The Holiday Blahs" could focus on ways to avoid becoming depressed during the holidays, and talk about specific strategies for reducing stress and keeping a high energy level at work and at home. The feature could include a sidebar story about a particular employee with his or her own personal strategy for making it through the craziness of the holidays with spirit intact. If, for example, the newsletter was put out by a dairy, it could feature additional articles about the importance of milk products in a balanced holiday diet, a description of some quick, effective exercises for working off extra
pounds, and a photo or graphic to illustrate the typical growth of milk and egg nog sales over the holiday period.

Style and Format

Of course, every company is different and everyone's needs in a newsletter differ as well. Nevertheless, many companies have found that they can effectively and efficiently produce, in-house, a single-sheet (17 inches by 11 inch in size) newsletter. This sheet (which can be run off from a single master on your photocopy machine) folds down to a four-page, 8 1/2 by 11 inch publication. Research substantiates that this is the size most readers prefer in a company newsletter, and it generally works out well for the small-to-medium sized business just getting started with a newsletter.

If desired, a box can be reserved on the final page for indicia (postage and address labels) for copies of the newsletter which are mailed out to specified recipients.

Research on newsletters and their readers shows most people prefer black text on a white background. It makes a strong visual impact and gives the perception of high quality and authority. This also works out perfectly for cutting costs as you can produce a single "master" sheet newsletter and run off copies on your photocopy machine.
When preparing the "master", decide on an eye-catching but simple design for the banner which goes across the top one-fifth of your front page. The banner will include the name of the publication, the date, and a brief sentence which explains what the newsletter is and who puts it out. Surround this information with a graphic box to keep eyes from drifting off the page.

Don’t forget to include, in some consistent spot in each publication, your company’s full name and mailing address, the name of the editor of the newsletter, and the © copyright symbol to make sure what you put in your newsletter remains your property. (An example of a high quality newsletter is given at the end of this chapter.)

**Narrative Content**

Throughout your newsletter, the text must be clear and understandable. A positive, upbeat tone must be maintained. The newsletter is not a newspaper, therefore it does not need to have "investigative" stories or any content that would be perceived in a negative light by any reader. Rather, the newsletter is an assertive, positive, inspiring document which highlights what’s right about your business and its people and products. When the subject matter necessitates that unpleasant topics be dealt with, they should be dealt with in ways that offer help, promote the answering of questions and encourage the participation of everyone in reaching successful conclusions. Corporate jargon should be kept to a minimum, so that all
readers will understand the full meaning of each story. The display of corporate
hierarchy should also be kept to a minimum, to promote the feeling of "team" spirit
that a publication of this type demands.

In the text of your newsletter, never forget human needs. You are writing for
people. Capture their attention. Gain the reader's acceptance. Offer a benefit
wherever possible.

* Keep the look of short sentences (10 - 12 words is best; never more
  than 21 words to a sentence)
* Use short words (2-4 syllable words are best)
* Keep the look of short paragraphs (less than 10 lines) so you won't
  bowl over readers with volumes and volumes of verbiage
* Avoid jargon
* Repeat key words and concepts
* Have lots of white space (usually non-justified--without an absolute right-
  hand-side border--is best)
* Use graphics and lists to take the place of lots of copy

As we've already discussed, research has determined that we, as humans,
tend to be most interested in eight subject areas:
1-Money
2-Relationships
3-Praise
4-Health
5-Leisure
6-Acceptance
7-Pleasure
8-Self-improvement

Your newsletter should play off of these interest areas whenever possible!

Remember, too, when writing your newsletter articles, that people love to see "you" in text... they also like to see their name... it identifies your message with the reader. Use "you" a lot. Use words that sell... you... save... benefits... new... results... safe... proven ...free... discover... find... easy... life. They're short, they're active, simple and interesting words!

Graphics Content

Appearance is the number one reason people will or will not look at your newsletter and typically they take less than three seconds to make up their minds.

Newsletter text should be relatively large and easy to read. For maximum impact, headlines should be crisp and bold. Significant amounts of "white space"
(space on the printed page that is not filled with text, photos, or graphics) should be allowed to give the newsletter an approachable, easy-to-read appearance. If you end up producing a newsletter with the "gray" look of the Wall Street Journal, for example, you will end up with a newsletter that looks stuffy and unapproachable—even though the actual content of the newsletter may be fantastic. When you "gray out" you lose readers, so try to reserve at least 51 percent of your newsletter for white space (space between printed lines of text, margins, borders around headlines and photos, etc.).

Clear, understandable graphics should be used to support stories where statistical references are needed or completely in place of stories if the issue allows. If you're producing a newsletter on your office personal computer, most desktop publishing programs include software that will allow you to produce graphics such as bar graphs, charts, and pie graphs. You can also purchase relatively inexpensive "clip art" books with graphic materials in them. In any case, though, use graphics sparingly. The newsletter offers an opportunity to illustrate important ideas, and these ideas must always appear with a light touch and in clear, understandable forms.

Photographs are important to the newsletter. However, it is equally important that each photograph used by legibly reproduced and appropriate for use. No embarrassing or inappropriate photos should be used. Everyone appearing in a photograph needs to be correctly identified and portrayed in a positive light. Black and white photos work best. Never run any photo that is washed out, out of focus,
appears "posed" or just looks dumb. Photo montages don't work, and too many photos of "the boss" will cause employees to tune out.

Some Production Tips

In terms of production specifics, here's some information about people's preferences—specifics which are borne out by research into newsletter effectiveness:

The three best paper colors are white, light gray and beige. (And, again, these are easy to run off yourself on the copy machine.) Don't do any wild reds, oranges, or greens... they'll look novel, but people won't read them. Limit colored ink, as well. Never use colored ink where black would be the norm.

Readers overwhelmingly prefer the 8 1/2 x 11" size, set in 10 to 14 point size Bookman, Roman, or New Century type style, with headlines double or triple that size. If you set your newsletter in some unusual type like Park Avenue Regular it may look interesting at first, but will not get read in the end. (The type of this book is 12 point Swiss Roman, with headlines in Swiss Bold Roman.)

Whatever you choose (or whatever your word processing software will allow), pick a type style and be consistent. Limit CAPS and underlining. Using too many type styles in a single document gives it a "ransom note" feel. Publications are smoother and more effective when they are LIMITED to no more than two type faces.
When employing graphics in your newsletter, always remember that your use of graphics (especially photos) should be tasteful, elegant, simple, soft and not offensive to anyone. Remember, as producer of a newsletter, you rule the copy and the graphics, they don't rule you.

Getting Started

Once you really get into newsletter production, you'll find that you must have to forge ahead, find your own system and your own best way of doing things. One good idea, though, (even for the smallest newsletters) is to establish "departments" to channel and maintain information so that your assembly time in preparation for publication will be minimized. This will provide continuity from issue to issue, provide an opportunity for others in your organization to "get in on the act", allow more freedom for you as editor and provide means (and control) as you delegate responsibilities.

Departments can include:

- Lead stories (written by subject matter experts)
- Routine columns ("General Manager's Corner", etc.)
- Photos
- Graphics
- Filler
A good way to keep your newsletter fresh is by keeping and studying other newsletters which you probably now receive from other companies both inside and outside of your industry. (If you don’t now receive other people’s newsletters, make a few calls and get on some mailing lists.) What works for them? What do you like/dislike? While not copying their formats or ideas, what can you do to alter your own format to make it more effective, based upon your own feelings for what you see in other publications? Another good idea is that of having your newsletter critiqued regularly by someone from outside your office. (Of course, if you produce a newsletter that has wide distribution among employees, families, friends and customers—you’ll get lots of feedback!)

Here’s a great example of a newsletter created by Max Martens (who also created the cover for this book). It’s the first issue of a newsletter for the Topographic Companies, a mapping, surveying and engineering firm. I wish I could reproduce the newsletter here in its full size (8 1/2" by 14") and with the red accent color that makes its bullets and special fonts "stand up" on the page. Still, it’s obvious why this newsletter is such a success: it’s clean, crisp-looking, easy to read, and it accents the total professionalism of the company which it promotes. It’s a terrific example of a successful newsletter (and one that doesn’t cost a whole lot to produce, either).
Global Positioning System (GPS) Services are now available from Topographic Land Surveyors. Our Midland and Oklahoma City offices have GPS receivers and are involved in projects in which we are mapping existing pipelines using GPS. Once the GPS points are collected in the field, they will be loaded into a CAD package and maps of the system will be made.

Field Notes

Topographic Engineering Company president Robert Keating and Topographic Mapping Company president Ralph Healy have been accepted by the Intergraph Corporation to become Intergraph Registered Consultants (IRC).

Topographic Land Surveyors of Oklahoma recently completed the survey of a 100 mile pipeline system in western Oklahoma for Phillips 66 Natural Gas.

Topographic Mapping Company has signed a joint marketing agreement with the ORC Geological Society. The OCGS will sell and distribute Topographic's Oklahoma digital land grid file to OCGS members. The members will be able to buy large or small amounts of land grid data.

The Pampa, Texas office of Topographic Land Surveyors of Texas recently completed the surveying and mapping for a 100 mile products line built by Diamond Shamrock in south Texas. The line runs from Three Rivers to Laredo. The Pampa office is currently involved in surveying and mapping a 270 mile pipeline for Diamond Shamrock that runs from Wichita Falls to Duinas, Texas.

The Oklahoma Ad Valorem Task Force has selected Topographic Mapping Company as the supplier for Oklahoma digital land grid data. The land grid data will be supplied to each County Assessor and used as the control base map for their automated mapping efforts.

Rogers retires after 28 years

Virgil Rogers, manager of surveying operations in the Oklahoma City office, has decided to call it quits after 28 years with Topographic. Virgil's voice was a familiar one to our clients when calling in well locations and pipeline surveys. He had managed the surveying efforts since 1977. Replacing Virgil as executive surveyor and manager of Oklahoma surveying operations will be Derel Patil. Derel, a registered surveyor in Oklahoma, has been with Topographic for 15 years serving as district manager for the northern Oklahoma area. He has also been involved with our GPS efforts in Oklahoma.

We wish Virgil good luck and welcome Derel to Oklahoma City.

John Keating, founder of Topographic Engineering, is the new manager of Topographic's Midland office. Jeff Sulter, Registered Professional Land Surveyor in Texas, has rejoined the Midland team as supervisor of field staff after a two year absence. The Midland office recently moved to a new location, and an Open House was held in November in order to introduce clients to Topographic's services and facilities.

Topographic Mapping Company will begin to incorporate GPS control with their Oklahoma and Texas digital land grid which will help make it the most accurate land grid available. These corners will be available to Topographic digital land grid customers through a maintenance program.

Topographic is now producing piped drawings of compressor sites, plants and other facilities. These CAD drawings graphically show all pipe, fittings, valves and other vessels within the site. Our draftsmen create these drawings from information provided by our clients, from existing drawings or from data obtained by our surveyors. These drawings are used for maintenance and modification of facilities, inventory of equipment and for planning changes or expansion.

Topographic Mapping Company now has available culture data (transportation and hydrography) for the Mid-Continent and Permian Basin areas. This data is currently compatible with most CAD and GIS packages. It will also be compatible with GeoGraphix upon the release of their next update.

Note: All brands and product names are the trademarks of their respective companies.
GPS a valuable tool in joint pipeline project

Enegex, Inc., a subsidiary of OG&E, recently teamed up with Topographic to do a pilot project using GPS. The objectives of the pilot were to locate the pipeline and record the location of all important features using GPS equipment. Such features include roads, fences, angle points in the pipeline, lateral lines, pipeline crossings, valves, creeks, power line crossings, encroachments, etc. The pilot included a 100 mile segment of a transmission line and about 50 miles of gathering lines with connections to wells. The project area is in the heavily wooded area of southeastern Oklahoma.

Once the data was collected in the field, it was processed and loaded into Intergraph MGE, a very powerful GIS software. The GPS data, along with Topographic’s own digital land grid (sections, townships) and DLG digital data (transportation, hydrography), produces a very good base map that can be created using as much or as little of the data needed. GIS allows the user to archive information about the pipeline and perform queries about any of the data.

The objectives were to locate the pipeline and record the location of all important features using GPS.

1,000 mile walk

Topographic Mapping Company employees Jack Fick, Jr. (left in photo) and Stephen Banks have completed inspection of a 1,000 mile pipeline system in western Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle. The two were responsible for locating leaks, replacing signs, painting fence posts and updating maps.

In The Sites

Topographic Engineering Company is proud to announce that the company’s home office, 6709 N. Classen Boulevard in Oklahoma City, is hosting “A Technology Affair” in spring 1992. The event will serve as an open house and unique forum for acquainting customers with the company’s technology.

Topographic is also sponsoring seminars to educate our clients on GPS. We show how GPS is being used in the energy industry and how GPS plays an essential role in automated mapping. These seminars are being held at Topographic’s offices.

For more information on this and all products and services Topographic has to offer, contact marketing director John Pitts at (405) 843-4847, or FAX (405) 843-0975.

Topographic Engineering Company
6709 N. Classen Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73116

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Topographic Engineering Company

Wall Locations and Elevations
Digital Land Grid GPS GIS Boundary Surveys River Surveys

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SUMMARY

Nobody can "sell" the business you're in better than you can. So take every opportunity possible to promote your industry, your company, your products and services, your employees and your philosophies through one-to-one contact with the public. Start by joining your local chamber of commerce, to stay in touch with the business community in your town and build your network of business contacts. Join a community civic organization or business club. Find out who runs the speaker's bureau in your area—then go sign up. You know your industry, your business and your community. You have special skills and expertise that can help people improve their lives. So why not help people and promote your business by speaking occasionally to local organizations about what you know and what you do? The world is full of "experts" and there's no reason that you shouldn't promote yourself as one of them. Finally, consider putting what you know in writing... in a company newsletter. It will serve you well as a promotional and sales tool, expanding the reach of your message to your present and future customers.
CHAPTER SIX
Crisis Management

Unfortunately, whether your organization is big or small, it is not too difficult to find yourself in a "crisis" situation. Your business makes an error in judgement... or, one of your products is found to be less worthy than you thought... or, files get lost... or, employees do dishonest things... or, workers quit their jobs without giving notice. There are a number of these kinds of internal and external situations which can, separately or together, make your business a candidate for "crisis." The kind of crisis I’m concerned with in this chapter is a much more serious problem, however. It’s the kind of crisis that puts your business in a negative light with the public. It’s the kind of crisis that happens when an internal problem becomes public knowledge. It’s the kind of crisis that can change people’s opinions about your business, your honesty, your competency and the desirability of doing business with you.

A crisis is any situation where:

- Your organization’s competence or honesty is threatened
- The public learns about the threat
- The development of the crisis is beyond your control

The best way to illustrate organizational crisis is to take a look at two recent crisis situation with which we’re all familiar:
The Exxon Valdez Incident

Probably the best example of how not to handle a crisis situation is the disaster created when the Exxon Valdez oil tanker ran aground in Alaska on March 24, 1989. It's an example which will be brought up in business management classes for decades to come.

Journalist and scholar William J. Small probably best summarized it when he wrote: "Exxon: No company ever spent more to repair the damages of an industrial accident. None worked harder to marshall an army (and navy) to fight the damages to the environment. No corporation ever had to cover so much territory to repair the result and probably no other company ever got a more damaging portrayal in the mass media." Small details the accident and the many, many Exxon blunders that followed in his article "Exxon Valdez: How to Spend Billions and Still Get a Black Eye", in Public Relations Review, Spring 1991 vol. 17:1.

The sad thing is, it appears Exxon hasn't learned anything from the Valdez incident.

On January 1, 1990, some ten months after the Valdez spill, a mechanical failure caused thousands and thousands of gallons of oil to spill into the Arthur Kill waterway between New York and New Jersey. Water became polluted, wildlife was killed, and Exxon's corporate bigwigs made the same kinds of public relations blunders they had made the year before in Alaska. The only saving grace for Exxon at Arthur Kill was the fact that the spill happened over a holiday, the leak was not
exceedingly large and that it happened in New Jersey, an area most people don’t equate with pristine rural splendor.

As we entered the last half of the 1980s the environment became a big issue. We all saw it coming. Community recycling campaigns started up. People were talking about "Earth Day." McDonald’s Restaurant stopped using foam cartons. There was great public debate about overflowing landfills. Everywhere you looked you saw people really concerned about the environment and concerned that it wasn’t getting the care it needed. Where was Exxon while all this was going on?

Exxon could have monitored the pulse of the public, seen that environmental issues were "hot" and taken some pro-active steps to make Exxon appear concerned with the environment. Exxon could have joined in community clean-up campaigns, contributed to wildlife preservation causes or gotten involved with other causes and campaigns that would have put its name before the public as a company concerned with maintaining the environment for future generations. (This is all image management—as discussed in Chapter 3.) None of this costs a lot of money. All of it is an investment because it creates an image of a concerned and responsible company, with useful and beneficial products, caring for the concerns of its customers. It would have shown that Exxon is interested in what interests people. It would have made Exxon look like a responsible, friendly neighbor and not just another nameless, faceless, "big oil" corporation.

Another thing Exxon could have done was take care of business in a responsible manner. Someone at Exxon could have said, "Hey, we've got a lot of
big oil tankers floating around out there with a lot of sticky, gooey, expensive oil in them... how do we know the people who are driving them are competent and professional? How do we know they're capable of handling any kind of situation that comes up on the waterways of this nation? If oil does start to leak from a tanker, who will get there first and how will they help stop the leak?"

Suppose, too, that someone at Exxon had thought about oil leak warning detection systems (like the one that had failed at Arthur Kill, allowing thousands of gallons of oil to spill into the water before anybody noticed). Someone at Exxon could have said, "Hey, we've got a lot of pipelines out there, carrying oil all over the place, near people's homes and businesses... how do we know that those pipes aren't leaking? If they do start leaking, how soon will we find out about it? Do we have full leak detection warning equipment, and do we test it often to make sure it works?"

These suggestions and many others, are posed by Ben Yagoda in his article: "Cleaning Up a Dirty Image" in the April, 1990, issue of Business Month. He asks us to consider "how much better Exxon's image would be today if it hadn't allowed an alcohol abuser to pilot an oil tanker or if it had been ready and able to conduct the most efficient cleanup possible." No one would know Arthur Kill from Arthur Godfrey if Exxon had simply repaired its broken alarm system when it first began to act up."

As Yagoda puts it, "Reality outplays image every day of the week." That is to say, people who are in business should act businesslike. They should do what they need to do every day, to assure that they produce effective, safe, reliable products
and services... that they satisfy customers... and that they do their work in a manner that they can continue doing it safely, reliably, and predictably well into the future. You must be aware of every possible thing that could go wrong, and work as hard as you can to see that those things don’t go wrong. Exxon, apparently, hasn’t figured this out.

The documentation of what took place after the Valdez incident show that the company was slow to get into action and slow to make any effort to mitigate the damage to its image. Exxon’s PR people were slow to react to media inquiries about the spill. When they did react, they gave information that was misleading or downright false. They grossly under-played the impact of the environmental damage.

Even today, more than two years after the spill—where is Exxon? Have you seen any publicity touting a new concern with the environment from the officers at Exxon? Have you seen any publicity about new double-hulled tankers from Exxon to help stop spills? Have you seen or read anything at all about a new concern for the environment from the company? Do you think anyone at Exxon cares? If they do, they have certainly failed to demonstrate it.

More importantly, what’s the first thought that comes to your mind when you think of Exxon? Is it the thought of a company that is environmentally-conscious?... a firm that sells high-quality gasoline and petroleum products?... a firm that operates well-run gas stations that provide good service?... or is your first thought that of a company that was responsible for an ecological catastrophe that will live on for decades? Wow, what a great image for a business to have, huh?
The Luby's Cafeteria Mass Murder

On October 16, 1991, a man drove his pick-up truck through a window and into a Luby's Cafeteria in Killeen, Texas. The man got out of his truck and stepped into the restaurant. He began shooting. He killed 23 people. It was the worst mass killing by a single gunman in American history.

Although Exxon had the ability to foresee and prevent the crisis that happened in Alaska, there was no way Luby's could have expected that one of its restaurants would turn into an urban terrorist zone. But although there was no way to expect or in any way prepare for what happened, Luby's handled the crisis with the utmost professionalism, compassion and candor.

Almost immediately after the shooting stopped, according to Mitchell Schnurman of the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram, managers at the Luby's in Killeen were on the phone to the company's main office. Within hours, corporate jets were in the air. Top executives of the company and the top executives from their PR firm were rushing to Killeen. Other executives travelled by car, stopping at a Luby's in Austin, Texas en route to pick up the most current information, which had been sent to Austin by FAX.

Thus, while the yellow police "crime scene" tape was still wrapped around the building, Luby's had the company C.E.O., three senior vice presidents, and the senior partner of the company's PR firm on site with more executives on the way.
By the very next day, Luby’s had deposited $100,000 into a victims’ assistance fund. It had paid for the rental of 40 motel rooms for victims’ family members. Company officers met with the media in person, while others on the Luby’s executive staff handled more than 100 telephone calls from media all over the world.

Reporter Schnurman quotes Luby’s vice president of marketing (and company spokesman) Buddy Schrader: "Actually, it was very much a common sense thing."

Through the company’s actions, it demonstrated concern for the people of Killeen and their families. The company demonstrated that it has compassion and that its executives really care about people. Luby’s demonstrated that it’s a good neighbor. It passed the crash course in crisis management.

Of course, these aren’t the only examples. We see instances all the time where companies both big and small really "blow it" in a crisis and put tarnish on their image that time won’t erase. It happens to big firms occasionally; it happens to small firms in my community and yours all the time.

No one can write a guidebook for crisis management. No one can tell you what to do and what not to do in every situation. No one can predict whether your company will ever need crisis management intervention. It’s obvious to me, however (and it should be obvious to you, too) that you stand a good chance of surviving a crisis if:

- You are aware of your community, what’s going on in it and how you fit into the picture.
• You prepare for any eventuality in your management of people, facilities, products, and resources (in other words, be ready for the unexpected).

• You take a pro-active stance when crisis occurs (you take control of the situation and do what needs to be done to make things right again, regardless of the cost).

• You’re honest with everyone involved.

• You report everything you know, completely and accurately, when the public wants to know what happened.

• You take the blame when it’s your fault and vow to correct your mistakes in the future. Ask forgiveness from the community if you need to. Learn from your mistakes.

• You take the initiative to develop a solution that’s fair to everyone—including yourself. You implement the solution, correct the problems, and move on.

**SUMMARY**

I hope you have many, many years of productive organizational activity without a crisis. If a crisis should come your way, I hope you remember these simple and honest ideas for making the best of a bad situation.
CHAPTER SEVEN
What To Do When You Don’t Know What To Do
or... Getting Professional Help

This chapter is designed to teach you the basics about professional public relations assistance available to your organization. Most PR firms today do more than what is strictly thought of as public relations; they often engage in advertising campaigns, market research, audio/video production and other aspects of "communication." Many even shy away from being labelled as "public relations" firms. However, for the purposes of this chapter, we’ll call these companies PR agencies, because this book is mostly concerned with the public relations elements of business promotion and publicity.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to having your PR work taken on by an agency. These advantages and disadvantages are especially clear in the world of small business. First, the disadvantages:

Public relations firms are expensive. PR firms are typically engaged by business for a monthly retainer fee, under the terms of a contract which runs a minimum of three months and often as long as a year or more. Monthly retainer fees for a full-service PR agency range in the thousands of dollars. Additionally, PR agencies often pass along to the client all "hard copy" costs--the costs of photography, printing, postage, telephone, and other fees related to production of material for the client.
Even PR agencies that work by the hour are costly. The 1992 *Writer's Market* compiled average fees for public relations practitioners and found that agencies charge between $200 and $500 per day, plus expenses. Press releases alone go for $85-$300. A media kit will run $500-$3,000, and copywriting for advertising can cost $20-$100 per hour.

Also, PR agencies are often geared toward complete campaigns. They are not accustomed to doing projects "one at a time," or do doing work that doesn't integrate into a total communications package. This puts the small business owner at a special disadvantage. The small business person who, say, needs only to obtain some media exposure through news releases and an occasional feature article can't be served effectively by a PR agency which is oriented toward doing complete campaigns with promotion, advertising, marketing research, evaluations, etc.

There is, however, a growing number of professional public relations consultants who are gearing themselves toward small business needs and concerns. In my own research, marketing, and publications firm, for example, I deal almost exclusively with small and home-based business people. I offer a variety of services, from marketing research to copy writing and preparation of speeches and publications. I sell my services either on a "per piece" basis or through a monthly retainer and I can tailor my services to fit the needs of smaller and more specialized clients. I can afford to do this because my agency is small (low overhead) and operates in a small geographic area (Norman, Oklahoma), for a specific kind of business (small and home-based professionals and retailers). If you're in a small
business and you’re looking for a PR firm, don’t discount professional help entirely until you’ve checked out the individual consultants and smaller firms doing business in your area. Look for them in the telephone directory, through the Chamber of Commerce, through your local university (many professors do outside consulting and marketing work), through your local Public Relations Society of America chapter, or home-based business association.

I speak often to business groups about contracting with public relations professionals for business publicity and promotion. As a general rule of thumb, I tell business people that if they feel comfortable with the "do's" and "don'ts" of publicity, if they have at least four to six hours a week to spend on developing their company promotions plan, if they have desktop publishing skills, and if they sure about exactly what they want for their company PR effort, then, they should feel free to go ahead and engage their own in-house PR plan.

If they do not feel comfortable about any of the above factors, though, I recommend professional PR help.

Whether you seek help through a large PR agency, a small firm, or through employing a consultant, there are some definite advantages to having help from the outside to establish your public relations campaign.

Initially, just having someone "from the outside" can bring a breath of fresh air into your company. Too often, we spend so much time ourselves thinking about our businesses, mulling over our products and our ideas and considering options which we develop ourselves that we unwittingly close ourselves off to new ideas. Someone
from the outside can keep this from happening by presenting new options and alternatives which you may have never thought of before. You might find new solutions to some old problems. Perhaps you'll come up with productive ideas which have never been used before in your business.

Making use of professional PR help will also bring a significant amount of outside professional, technical and labor expertise into the equation for your business. You'll be free to concentrate on the business of doing business, while letting the PR firm manage the day-to-day creative and administrative aspects of your public relations effort. In other words, you can mind the store while your PR firm dreams up new ideas, tests those ideas, works them out on paper and does all the detail work for putting your PR message before the public.

In terms of technical expertise alone, a PR firm (whether it's a big one or a small one) brings the compilation of years of media, management, marketing and administrative skills together to work for you. Researchers, copy writers, graphic designers, computer support specialists and account administrators are just some of the people available to manage your PR effort and take the burden off of you for developing a campaign.

In summary, PR firms can do a lot for your organization, if you have a lot of work to be done and a lot of financial support for your effort. A good PR firm will work with you to create effective ideas for a public relations campaign and transform those ideas into workable projects. The PR professionals working within the agency will plan, develop and orchestrate the projects, making use of their many contacts in
the business and media communities. There will be an evaluation of the results of your PR efforts. Finally, the agency will formulate a plan for continuing action.

Choosing An Agency

Don't be in a hurry to choose a public relations agency to go to work for you. Take lots of time. This is a decision which will change the course of your entire business effort. It's a decision that shouldn't be made hastily or influenced by your emotions. Don't choose an agency because it's been in business a long time, or because the agency has a good name, or because your brother-in-law works there. Choose an agency because you like the work it's done, the work it does meets your expectations, the people who work there are professional and savvy and because the agency has a track record of backing up its promises with results.

When you start the process of looking for an agency, get some recommendations first. Ask other business people who they've used for their PR work. Find out which agencies specialize in your type of business (many agencies work with only certain types of businesses and organizations, while other agencies are generalists, working with a variety of clients). Just as important, talk to other businesses about which agencies working in your area are not well recommended.

As a result of this process, you can develop a list of PR agencies to contact in order to find out more about their services.
Take this list and write each agency. In a brief, one page letter (on your company letterhead, of course) explain that you are shopping for a public relations firm and you’d like to see what they have to offer. Ask the agency to contact you.

The responses you get to this letter will enable you to further whittle down the list of potential agencies for your business.

Chances are, you will not receive responses from every agency you write to. Some will make judgements about you from your letterhead (as to the size of your business and the type of business you do) and choose not to pursue your business at all. The agencies that do contact you will send information which reveals a great deal about them. Generally speaking, the appropriate response to this letter from you would be a personal letter from the PR agency, along with a brochure profiling the agency and its services to be followed by a phone call from an agency officer within a week or so.

However, not all agencies will do this, as I found recently when evaluating a stack of responses to an inquiry letter sent from an individual in the Dallas area seeking PR assistance.

Of the dozen or so responses, there were perhaps three which I thought were excellent. They included a personal letter and a high-quality brochure detailing the background and abilities of each agency.

There was another group of responses which I would consider average. They included a personal letter and a brochure of lesser quality which didn’t really give a complete description of the agency. Nothing in the brochure or the letter allowed for
a complete understanding of what the PR agency could do for the particular business that asked for the information.

Surprisingly, there was also a group of responses which I considered totally inadequate for professional public relations firms in one of the largest cities in the nation. These responses came with form letters or poorly written personal letters—and sometimes no brochure or "sales" material. One of the responses was a form letter that came with a poorly-typed "brochure" which had been run off on a photocopy machine. It looked like something that had been put together in someone's garage!

From these responses alone, the PR agencies revealed their overall sense of urgency and professionalism. After all, when a PR agency answers a letter asking for information, it is responding to a request for service that could lead to new business. It should respond promptly, professionally, and with the best quality work it can do; it should put its best foot forward. An agency that responds with a form letter and poorly-typed photostat brochure is telling you that it doesn't have a best foot to put forward! It is showing that it has no real understanding of what's needed to market a company and its products in the business world of today. That kind of an agency won't be in business for long.

At the point where you've received these responses to your letter, and reduced your list of agencies even further, it's time to meet with each one individually to find out more about them. You should not have to contact them to start this process. They should call you. If, after two weeks or so have passed, an agency that mailed
to you has not contacted you by phone to set up an appointment, you should drop
them from your list. They're not assertive. They probably don't communicate well.
(After all, if they won't go after your business--to put money in their pockets--how well
will they promote your business to the outside world?)

If you're in a metropolitan area of the country, you should have no trouble
isolating at least four agencies to talk to about PR services. Make appointments at
your convenience (not theirs) to talk about their services, and tell them that you
would like to look over examples of their work.

The first thing you're going to want to look for when you sit down with them is
who you sit down with and how they conduct themselves. If you go in for an
appointment with the vice president and instead end up meeting with a staff person
of little significance within the organization, beware. You're a decision-maker, and
you should be meeting with a decision maker in the agency. You should expect to
meet with someone relatively high up in the chain of command, someone with whom
you'd be negotiating a contract (if things reach that stage). You should be seeing
someone with authority to decide how your PR work would be done.

At the same time, you'll want to meet with two or three other individuals within
the organization who actually do the creative work. In your situation, you would want
to meet with a copy writer and/or researcher, with a graphics designer and with an
account executive. You want to get a real good feeling about the "feeling of urgency"
that the agency associates with clients and their projects. How qualified are the
people who work there? Do they have a good track record? Are they creative? Do
they appear to work together well? Do they really understand your needs? Will they have the time and energy to devote to your business? Can they represent themselves professionally when dealing with your business and your customers?

At this time, you'll want to see examples of past work. If the PR agency tries to show you "mock-ups" or "drafts" or otherwise incomplete versions of work they've done for other clients, don't buy it! Every agency that's worth its salt has a large folder filled with completed work they've done for other people. They should show you the best they're capable of doing--and examples of everything they do, from ad copy to correspondence, to graphics work, to broadcast scripts and video productions. If they can't show you examples of something they claim to be able to do, chances are they can't really do it.

You should be able to take some samples with you, to look over at your leisure and compare to what you've received from other agencies you've interviewed. They should be able to give you completed brochures from some of their clients, copies of newspaper ads, flyers and other materials which they've done for public distribution by clients. If they refuse to give you such samples (work that was done for public distribution anyway), you've got to wonder why.

You should expect each of these agencies to prepare a specific presentation for you, based upon what they've learned about your business and what they think they can do for you. This presentation may be ten or 12 pages long (or longer). It should offer specific proposals for accomplishing whatever goals you've said you want to accomplish. It should give you several options to choose from, to tailor the
PR services to your developing needs over time. Most importantly, it should include some way of evaluating the public relations campaign either through verifiable increases in public exposure for your business name and philosophy, increases in sales, customer floor traffic, etc. The PR firm needs to be able to evaluate how well it’s efforts have succeeded and you need to be able to see how well the efforts have succeeded so you know your money was well spent.

Here’s an example of a proposal for services prepared for MED-SERV Home Health Care Service.
This Proposal Prepared Especially for

MED-SERV HOME HEALTH CARE SERVICE

by

The Swanson Group
Image • Management • Media

2115 Melrose Drive • Norman, Oklahoma 73069

(405) 447-4052
MED-SERV HOME HEALTH CARE SERVICE

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MED-SERV HOME HEALTH CARE SERVICE

Current Market Strengths:

- A small, independent, well-managed firm
- Provides personal service from highly-trained specialists
- Helps people throughout a wide geographic area
- Provides a large variety of medical assistance
  ... "Health Check" for homebound people
  ... Medical care for individuals with moderate needs
  ... Treatment for those with debilitating illnesses or injuries
- Willingness to attend to more than strictly medical problems
- Active in volunteer work in our community
- Meeting an extensive (and growing) need for service

MED-SERV is a company providing valuable services...

...that make people feel good!
Opportunities for Promotional Development:

Every opportunity presents a chance to create a better understanding of MED-SERV and its care...

- Among the general public
- Among those who provide care for the elderly
- Within the medical community
- For social service agencies and churches
- Within the regional business community
- Among members of the news media

Help MED-SERV expand into Edmond and Shawnee...

Publicize MED-SERV's growing outreach to rural residents...

Assist the initiation of MED-SERV's "Health Check" program...

Develop more opportunities for community service...

The bottom line?:

*To develop new referrals of people needing MED-SERV care.*

Theme... The Seed From Which Our Ideas Grow
Our campaign for MED-SERV starts with the creation of a theme... the seed from which all our professional communication and marketing efforts develop. This theme will build upon what is probably the strongest quality of MED-SERV... it’s personal, caring medical attention for people who need it the most.

(As an example, the theme:

"MED-SERV, YOUR HOME HEALTH CARE COMPANION")

The theme creates the understanding of MED-SERV as a friendly, helpful, caring organization... very much unlike the cold, sterile medical "establishment" so many people imagine. The theme would become an integral part of all MED-SERV advertising, letterhead, publicity and promotional materials. The theme, then, would become more than just words... it would encompass everything MED-SERV is to its patients, their families, and the communities it serves.

Promotional Opportunities

Our campaign builds around promotional opportunities which are developed through direct and indirect contact with the public in the following ways:

General News Releases

Stories of interest to the general community that have to do with MED-SERV, its business, professional staff members, clients, services, outreach, volunteerism,
and other topics are featured. Brief summaries, including photographs when applicable, are delivered to the news media to suggest coverage in newspapers and magazines... and on radio and television. The news of MED-SERV's expansion to Edmond and Shawnee would be among the first general news releases to be disseminated to the media.

**Regional Feature Articles**

Feature articles and photographs profiling the services offered by MED-SERV would be written for local newspapers, magazines and specialty publications. Strong emphasis would be put on MED-SERV's volunteer work in the community, to show that MED-SERV is a firm dedicated to helping those less fortunate.

**National Feature Articles**

Feature articles and photographs depicting MED-SERV as a quality health care provider at the forefront of home health care would be offered to national publications. These articles would be tendered to publications such as *Mature Living*, *In Health*, *Geriatric Consultant*, *Senior Patient*, and others. Articles written for these publications might feature stories on how MED-SERV is reaching out to an elderly rural Oklahoma population, how MED-SERV dealt with the complexities or complications of a specific patient or group of patients, or how MED-SERV's community volunteer work is filling a need in Oklahoma that would otherwise go unmet.

**Direct Mailings**

We would develop our own data base for direct mailings to physicians and other medical professionals, elder care agencies, social service agencies and civic
groups, informing them of MED-SERV's high-quality, personal service to homebound patients. The direct mail campaign would make the recipients aware that, in many cases, Medicaid completely covers the cost of MED-SERV visits, requiring no additional financial burden on the patient. The letters would include the MED-SERV brochure and express MED-SERV's willingness to meet in person with the recipient to discuss the importance of locating homebound individuals who need medical care.

Newsletter

One of the most effective ways to make the community aware of the valuable in-home health care services offered by MED-SERV would be to create a monthly newsletter. The newsletter would be mailed to patients, their families, doctors, social agencies, elder care givers and other "friends of MED-SERV." The newsletter would include updates about MED-SERV, appropriate information about Medicare or insurance coverage changes, perhaps household tips or general information which would be of value to the home-bound... and perhaps some photos of selected patients or short stories of interest about their lives. ("Mary Anne Brown celebrated her 100th birthday party at her home recently, with her three daughters and many friends and acquaintances in attendance...") The newsletter would serve to illustrate and amplify the understanding in the community that MED-SERV is a personal company providing important, quality medical services to people who depend on them.

Open House

Another important element in creating a strong community presence for MED-SERV is through an open house at the MED-SERV office. The open house would
allow doctors, elder care givers, social agency officials and others who have the potential for referring patients to MED-SERV to see the facilities, meet the staff, and get to know the nurses who care for MED-SERV patients. The event could even be conducted with the assistance of the Norman Chamber of Commerce and be held as a "Business After Hours" mixer... which would draw not only physicians and care givers, but business people who would also gain a greater understanding of MED-SERV and what the company does.

Professional Services Options

Although we are presenting two initial options, our desire is to tailor a marketing and communications package that meets MED-SERV’s specific promotional goals. The following are our proposals for your consideration. If you have something else in mind, we’d be happy to sit down, and develop a package to your exact specifications. We are a small, ambitious firm offering a wide variety of services low overhead costs and the desire to serve your immediate needs.

✓ Option 1: Maximum Service - $**** monthly

- We write the original copy for general news releases. Upon approval, we typeset the copy and reproduce it on MED-SERV letterhead for delivery as appropriate (no limit).
• We research and write the copy for all regional feature stories. Upon approval, we typeset the copy and reproduce it on MED-SERV letterhead for delivery as appropriate (no limit). We research, investigate, and issue query letters to determine opportunities for publication of such articles in the Oklahoma City-Norman area, throughout the region, and statewide in Oklahoma.

• We research and write the copy for all national feature stories. Upon approval, we typeset the copy and reproduce it on MED-SERV letterhead for delivery as appropriate (no limit). We research, investigate, and issue query letters to determine opportunities for publication of such articles nationally as appropriate to the promotional and growth goals of MED-SERV.

• We photograph, process, and duplicate all photos for general news releases and regional feature stories, and provide the appropriate number of photo duplicates to be included with news releases and feature stories (no limit; we cover the cost of lab film processing and photo duplication).

• We coordinate all direct-mail, including the building of computer databases to MED-SERV specifications, on our database software system. MED-SERV retains the right of ownership to all databases. We write all correspondence for direct-mail campaigns, and upon approval we will personalize, typeset, and reproduce all correspondence on
letterhead. We will assemble and post all mailings (no limit; MED-SERV assumes postage cost only).

- We research, develop, and produce a prototype for a monthly MED-SERV newsletter for mailing to patients, their families, physicians and medical professionals, social service agencies, civic groups and elder care givers. Upon approval, we will begin the process of writing, editing, typesetting, and reproducing a monthly newsletter with stories, features, and photos of interest to "friends of MED-SERV." We will assume all costs related to writing and production of camera-ready copy; MED-SERV will assume all offset duplication and postage costs.

- As required, we will write, edit, and graphically design any and all printed material for MED-SERV, including, but not limited, to flyers, brochures, newspaper advertisements, in-house forms and documents, letterhead, business cards, and display advertisements. We will assume all writing, editing, photography and graphics costs; MED-SERV will assume all reproduction costs.

- Upon approval by MED-SERV, we will begin the planning for an "Open House" event, to be sponsored by and for MED-SERV, and for the purpose of entertaining physicians, medical professionals, elder care givers, and administrators of social service agencies, to allow them to familiarize themselves with MED-SERV's professionals and their services (MED-SERV assumes all related costs).
- Upon request, we will provide any and all materials needed for representatives of MED-SERV to make professional presentations about the firm and its services. This service will extend to, but not be limited to, research, speech writing, production of visual materials, and presentation publicity.

- We will provide 24 hour on-call availability.

- We will provide exclusive representation for MED-SERV, and not represent any competing medical services firms or agencies while our MED-SERV agreement is in effect.

- We will meet with MED-SERV weekly, and for whatever time duration is necessary, to discuss ongoing efforts and plan for future activities.

✓ Option 2  Minimum Service - $***. monthly

- We write all copy for up to 5 items of direct-mail correspondence, general news releases, and regional feature stories per month. Each additional item after 5 will be billed at $**.

- All written copy is provided to MED-SERV for MED-SERV to reproduce and distribute as appropriate.

- We will photograph, process, and duplicate all photos for general news releases and regional feature stories, and provide MED-SERV with the appropriate number of photo duplicates to be included with news
releases and feature stories (MED-SERV assumes the cost of lab film processing and photo duplication).

- MED-SERV assumes all offset printing, photo processing, postage, local travel expenses of .25 per mile, and/or the billed charge of any long-distance telephone expenses related to our MED-SERV activity.
- We will be available for consultation Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- We will meet with MED-SERV representatives once per month, and for whatever time duration is necessary, to discuss ongoing efforts and plan for future activities.

We thank you for allowing us the opportunity to present our marketing and communication ideas for MED-SERV. We hope that The Swanson Group can be of service to you. Please read over our proposal, and contact us at your convenience!
Where the proposal ends is where you begin, when you sit down with the agency to cut a deal. When you do this, you will want to negotiate an agreement for services. That agreement will contain:

A specific description of the services which the PR firm agrees to provide for your business or organization, such as:

Write, produce, and distribute three news releases to all local newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations to announce the opening of the new "Acme Super Widget" factory.

Design, typeset, write, edit, and print 5,000 copies of a two-page brochure for the "Whizzo for President" campaign.

Create a modern, effective, trademarked logo for the "Oklahoma Farmers Electric Co-Op", featuring a setting sun and a tractor in the design.

Research, write, edit and print draft copies of three individual speeches to be given by company chairman of the board to chamber of commerce, dock workers' labor union, and ladies' auxiliary.
A description of how long the contract for services will run, how much your business will pay for those services, and when payments will be made:

The term of the contract between "Whizzo for President" and "Hocus-Pocus Public Relations" will be from April 1, 1992 to November 5, 1992. "Whizzo for President" agrees to a fee of $2,450. for the services agreed upon herein to be performed by "Hocus-Pocus Public Relations."

"Whizzo for President" agrees to pay $1,225. on or before April 1, 1992, with the balance of $1,225. to be paid in monthly installments of $175. on May 1, June 1, July 1, August 1, September 1, October 1, and November 1, 1992.

A description of the "hard copy costs", what they extend to, who will pay them, and when they will be paid should be:

"Big Dent Body Shop" agrees to pay all hard copy costs, which shall include, but not be limited to, postage, photocopies, printing, long-distance telephone costs, FAX costs, and travel mileage at .25 per mile, incurred in connection with the performance of this agreement. Such costs will be billed to "Big Dent Body Shop" by "Little John's PR Shop" on the first day of each month, and will be paid in full by "Big Dent Body Shop" no later than the 15th day of each month.
Finally, you’ll want to make an agreement with the PR agency as to how the agency will document that their campaign has had a positive effect. This will vary from campaign to campaign but basically you’re going to want to see some evidence that the PR effort worked to bring more business to your company. You need to decide how this would be best demonstrated... through picking up new customers?... through a greater sales volume?... through -x- number of news releases printed in the newspaper or aired on the radio? What do you want to see happen?

Notice that this gets us right back to where you started when you first began thinking about promoting your business organization. **What do you want to see happen?**

**SUMMARY**

In the preceding seven chapters I've given you a basic understanding of how the news media work. I've shown you who the media are and told you a little about them. I've talked about your business image and why it's important to develop and maintain it. I've shown you how news releases and feature stories are effective promotional tools that you can make use of to promote your business through the free media. I've shown you how to write news releases and how to contact the news media to get them put in print and on the air. I've talked about the importance of community involvement and personal appearances which allow you to promote yourself and your organization in public. I've illustrated some business "crisis"
situations and shown how the companies involved either stood high and tall... and came out ahead... or took the low road and did irreparable damage to their public image. Finally, I've summed it all up by showing you how to go about getting professional help for your promotion and publicity work, should you still feel unprepared to go about the process yourself.

You've been shown how to go to work to promote your business. Remember that, no matter how strong it already is, your business organization can use the help. The world is ready to hear about what you have to offer. So there is no reason to hesitate. Get going—and good luck!
GLOSSARY

Clockwork story—a routine news story occasioned by a particular event or occasion marked by the passage of time.

Communication—the process through which information is transmitted from one individual to another, for the purpose of obtaining a desired reaction or result.

Commiseration story—a news story which identifies a problem or conflict, personalizes it with an individual or group of people and illustrates its relationship to the public at large.

Community story—a news story that has as its focus a particular community, or action/event which relates to that community.

Conflict story—a news story which emphasizes fundamental physical and/or philosophical divisions between individuals or groups of people.

Controversy story—a news story which emphasizes philosophical differences between people.

Cooperation story—a news story which highlights cooperation between otherwise unassociated groups to address a common issue or problem.

Copyright—the process through which one obtains legal protection for one’s originally-created writings, to hold those writings safe from unauthorized use. Symbolized by the © symbol.

Crisis Management—strategic, organized actions to preserve the integrity of business functions in the face of unplanned difficulties created and/or maintained by outside forces.

FAX—the common reference for the device which allows transmittal of two-dimensional printed information over telephone lines, from one facsimile machine to another. (Used as a noun to refer to the machine or the output from the machine itself; or as a verb to refer to the process of sending material from one machine to another.)

Goals—in layman’s terms, "what do you want to happen?: specific outcomes or targets for which business activity is undertaken.

Graphics—elements of design which appear in a printed document, such as photos, illustrations, shading, etc.

Hard Copy Costs—the costs associated with a public relations or marketing campaign (outside production work, printing, postage, supplies, etc.) which are typically charged back to the client when a PR agency handles the campaign.

Image—the perception you want your customers to have of your business and its products and services.

Letter to the Editor—a letter written to the editor of a magazine or newspaper (generally) which offers you an excellent opportunity to give a free "pat on the back" to a business, individual or community group, or publicly recognize an idea worthy of consideration by the readers of the publication.
Logo—a graphic symbol or design used to represent your company on all your stationery, equipment, products, uniforms, buildings, vehicles, and other artifacts of your business.

Marketing—all the processes you have to engage in to get your product or service from its source (your company) to recipients (your customers).

Mass Communication—transmitting of information and ideas to a large group of people, generally through a mass medium such as radio, television, etc.

Mass Media—newspapers, broadcast stations and other outlets which serve as conduits to transfer information from its sources to recipients.

Medium—an outlet through which information is passed from its originators to the public (i.e., a particular community newspaper, television station or closed-circuit cable television station). Together, such outlets are referred to as media, mass media, or news media—and, as such, are referred to in the plural.

Media Kit—a packet prepared for the media to inform them of an event or an issue. Media kits often contain a news release, appropriate photos and other supporting materials and some trinket of value for the news editor (e.g., a ticket to the event, a T-shirt, or coffee mug). To be most effective, media kits are hand-delivered to news editors and followed up later with a telephone call or letter offering to answer questions or assist in story development.

News—information which is considered of interest or importance to the individuals receiving it.

News Conference—a somewhat dated method for releasing "news" to the media by calling all media representatives in a given area to assemble at a given place and at a given time, to obtain the information and purportedly to ask questions of those involved in disseminating it.

Newsletter—a document produced by your company for distribution to customers, employees and the general public, giving news of your company and its people, products and services.

Promotion—any public or semi-public event that helps build your business through increasing awareness of what you do or sell.

Public Relations—building a continuing rapport for your business and its people with customers in specific and the community in general.

Publicity—any issuance of information that draws attention to your business. In the positive, is pretty much synonymous with promotion. In the negative, can be synonymous with crisis.

Visual Impact—the immediate impact a two-dimensional document has when you first look at it; strongly affected by the presence of graphics.
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