



## Podcast #039 Working with Journalists

Hi everybody and welcome to this week's episode of The Marketing Menu podcast with Nicky and Liz. Nicky, you've entered the tense world of moving house, haven't you and been on the receiving end of varying degrees of customer service from estate agents in particular. Could you share some of that with the listeners

I'm only going to share good news. So, I've been really surprised by the customer service I've received from my agents actually, they always get back to me on time with feedback from people who've come around. Now being somebody who's looking for a house at the same time, I know that sometimes people give immediate feedback, it's not for them or whatever. And that can be difficult for some people to hear. But I've been very encouraged that they've always given me the feedback. As I say, they've always updated me with legalities and things of that nature. Being very hot on the GDPR and all that sort of side of things, it's been interesting to see who's conveying the whole GDPR aspect when you go onto people's mailing lists, some people are overly checking that you are aware of what you're signing up for and what their obligations are as a result, which can be a bit little bit wearing from somebody from our marketing world, but others have not even bothered asking. So, you know, very interesting from that point of view. Overall it's been good. But yes, a challenging time!

So, important for us to learn from that kind of experience is that if you say you're going to feedback, do it.

Absolutely.

And do it in a timely fashion.

And don't get hung up on the detail. I think it's more important that you go back with something. Even a yes or a no, I haven't heard or it just wasn't for them. I don't really need to know the whys and wherefores too much, but just to have that acknowledgement that you know, somebody liked it but it wasn't for them.

Brilliant. Good luck! So, back to today's podcast which is all about working with journalists.

Yes, listeners, you may have a story about your business that you want to tell the world but how do you get it in the media. Before we start to talk about what journalists are looking for, let's have a look at what exactly IS newsworthy?

First, you need to think about why you want to get your business noticed. Is it to raise awareness of what you do, attract new customers or increase sales?

Probably all of those, to be honest! But I take your point, you need to have a clear objective.

But what you think might be interesting or even monumental for your own business probably wouldn't be of interest to the general public. A good rule of thumb is to think about whether you would be interested if you read it about someone else's business.

So, what ARE they looking for?

They're always looking for human interest stories, so the story behind the product. They're unlikely to be interested in a product launch unless it's got a good story behind it about how the business was started.

And the more quirky the story, the better.

See if you can tie into any big news story at the time. This also applies to general stories. For instance, if you were setting up a hypnotherapy business that offered help to mums-to-be with morning sickness and the story broke about a major celebrity who was pregnant and suffering badly.

What type of event might qualify then to be newsworthy? Don't just think about your local paper either, is there a trade journal that might be interested?

Yes, here are some suggestions:

Staff achievements

New staff

Anniversaries

1,000th customer

Joint venture/promotion with another business

New premises/services

Supporting local charity/initiatives

To get you thinking about what might make news, think about whether you be interested if you read this same story about another business? Is there more of a story you could tell?

It's true that people love people. We all like a feel-good story so when you're looking at putting a story forward, who are the people behind it? If you're celebrating your 25th year in business, that's great but who are the people behind it? Did they overcome obstacles to get started? Was it an unusual start? Focus on the people rather than the products or service you provide. That can still be mentioned but not as the main headline.

It's all about content marketing – giving people content or a story rather than 'this is our product – please buy it'. So how does getting in the media help your business?

You may have already have had some success or you may be just about to start. But regular news stories can help reinforce your brand message, raise awareness of what your business does which in turn will attract customers and ultimately increase sales.

So you can see the importance! And, remember a press release is free, apart from your time and effort putting it together so its well worth doing. Don't be disheartened if you don't always get published. It can be hit and miss but you improve your chances by knowing where journalists find their leads. So where do they look?

There are many ways journalists find their stories. The most obvious is by Press Release or an email or phone pitch. They may get a tip off directly to the newsdesk or individual journalists and they are briefed by the police for any major stories. But they also search themselves. Social media has become a fertile ground for potential stories. This is something you can use easily. Simply type #journorequests into the search bar on Twitter and you will see a timeline of journalists and freelancers looking for specific stories, usually related to something that is going on in the main news or for a forthcoming big new piece. You could check this several times a day for any opportunities that might be relevant to your business. Another good habit to get into is to check the national and local news first thing every morning. Is there a story you can tap into? Something that would give you the opportunity to be a spokesperson or give an expert opinion? As soon as you see it, you can contact the newspaper/tv to offer a story.

Another way of finding a way to pitch a story is to enrol in a Media Enquiry Service. There a number of UK platforms available – Journo Link, Response Source and Gorkana are just a few examples but basically, they give you access to journalists who post what type of stories they are looking for. This obviously works well at a national level for newspapers, magazines and journals. You can define your specific area of interest but it can be expensive. If you are just starting out, I would recommend using the Twitter hashtag journorequests to get you in the swing. If you are more established and want to reach a specific audience, it might be worth investing in one of the other services.

Just a note of caution, when you do sign up, you will receive a lot of emails so you may want to set up something in your inbox to syphon them into. With some, you may be able to regulate how frequently you get them. I had one where I got an email every single time a new request was posted so I changed it to once a day!

Is there anything else that can help businesses prepare for working with the media, Liz?

Well, you could prepare a Media Pack which journalists could download from your website?

What goes into one of those then?

Essentially, background information about your business. So almost like a fact sheet about the background to your business, who your key people are, facts about your business that would be relevant if they were included in a story, maybe some FAQs and previous media releases. If you were staging a particular event, you would include high-resolution images to be used, background info to the product, quotes that could be used and the official media release.

We've covered what journalists are looking for, and also how to find them, so now we're going to look at the process of what to do once you're in contact. But before we do that, just a reminder that you're listening to The Marketing Menu podcast which is free to download every fortnight on a Wednesday via iTunes, Blubrry, Stitcher and TuneIn, and now we're available on Spotify.

And we publish a transcript of what we talk about which is proving useful for those who prefer to read rather than listen which can be downloaded via our website [www.themarketingmenu.com](http://www.themarketingmenu.com)

So, back to working with journalists. Some of this is basic common sense but remember this is all about being professional and credible so that they will want to come back to you for further stories. Don't be nervous about this but be very clear about what you are prepared to say and what you will definitely not say. There is not really anything that is off the record.

Yes, it goes back to having an objective for your story. Once you're clear you know what your story is about and what you want to say, it's really helpful in making sure you contact the right person for your story, particularly if you want to respond quickly to an emerging story.

For local news, find out who your local reporter is and phone them to introduce yourself. Explain that you will have stories to send them and ask how they like them to be formatted. Or how about Invite them to come and meet you & your organisation.

Once you're in contact, you need to make sure that the stories you are providing are credible and relevant to their audience. Remember that they are in the business of selling papers or magazines so they are looking for entertaining stories with unique perspective that may tie in with current news.

So having looked through the paper to see the names of specific journalists, you can now start compiling a database. You can start to look further afield at other magazines, journals, blogs who may be interested in what you do. A simple excel spreadsheet will do and these are the details that you will need to include:

Key contacts in newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, blogs etc relevant to your organisation

- Journalists
- Bloggers
- Freelancers
- Producers
- Editors

Yes, make sure your database is quality, not quantity. Include details like:

- Name Publication
- Name of contact
- Email
- Phone
- Address
- Website address
- Circulation details
- Deadlines

Another good place to look for contacts is Twitter. You can use the search box to find journalists on specific newspapers or bloggers for your specific area of interest. Another way of contacting people with your story is to look up #journorequests on Twitter. When journos are looking for stories or people who could speak about a particular subject they post their request. Just take time out a couple of times a day to have a look and see if there is anything you can respond to. There are also paid media service agencies that will provide much more detailed information like Journo Link, Gorkana & Response Source that we mentioned earlier that you can subscribe to.

So it's over to you, listeners, how about making a start on compiling your own media contact database and don't forget to include details of your local radio and tv stations too. Now, before we go, just a little word about Crisis PR – in case of emergency!

Yes, it's always wise to be prepared, isn't it?

If a potentially negative situation has arisen that means the media are going to be interested, get yourself prepared. If they call you for an interview, don't panic! If you haven't got a statement ready, explain you will get a statement and get back to them. If you call them, be clear and to the point and remember nothing is off the record so don't say anything that you wouldn't want printed or broadcast.

Great stuff. Well, listeners, we'll be back in two weeks when we will be focusing on how to measure the effectiveness of your marketing activity.

Wow, well it's all very well and good churning out lots of marketing messages if you don't whether they're working so that will be really useful. Until then, it's goodbye from me, Liz Gordon.

And from me, Nicky Matthews. Goodbye.

©The Marketing Menu 2018. All rights reserved.