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VOL. 126 | NO. 77 | Wednesday, April 20, 2011

## Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

### PR: Caterpillar or Butterfly?

Lori Turner

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Lori Turner-Wilson

George Carlin said it best. “The caterpillar does all the work but the butterfly gets all the publicity.” That’s because the butterfly is simply more newsworthy.

Most businesses today can appreciate the important role that public relations plays in building a brand and creating awareness. Generating press, however, can be more difficult than it sounds. And it all starts with ensuring you have something interesting to talk about.

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Sure, it seems fundamental, but what is newsworthy to you may fall flat when pitched to a reporter. Simply working hard and satisfying your customers isn’t newsworthy.

A number of factors can influence whether a reporter deems a story worth writing about. Ensure that your story idea meets at least two of these criteria, and you’ll have a higher likelihood of success.

In my early days in PR, a reporter asked me a simple question I’ll never forget. “What makes it interesting NOW?”

The story you are pitching needs more than relevancy, it needs timeliness. Is your company celebrating a milestone anniversary? Do you have a new CEO? Do you offer a product that solves a consumer problem that has been in the news this week?

Another factor is its proximity. How close is your event geographically to a publication’s readers or a TV station’s viewers? If you are opening a new location in a market 250 miles away, your local media may not be interested.

A story pitch with a novelty factor can also be appealing to news media. When partners in a law firm donate free legal services to those in need, it’s not unusual. When those partners rebuild a family’s home recently destroyed by a storm, that’s unexpected and newsworthy. The deviation from the expected makes it novel.

A story’s significance also impacts newsworthiness. How many people does your story impact? If you’re pitching a story regarding your company’s expansion, are you hiring two employees or 200? If your company is still relatively small, position the “significance” of your growth by tying your pitch to the national trend in the rising number of start-ups resulting from the flood of corporate layoffs.

Conflict breeds interest. If you are a local business owner with an opinion about a controversial new retail chain coming to town, that’s newsworthy. If you’re in health care and you unify peers from competing organizations to comment collectively about a controversial component of health care reform, that’s newsworthy.

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RECORD TOTALS	DAY	WEEK	YEAR
PROPERTY SALES	83	199	4,428
MORTGAGES	91	262	7,145
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	127	3,984
BUILDING PERMITS	0	595	11,784
BANKRUPTCIES	57	307	5,767
BUSINESS LICENSES	15	87	2,075
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	67	222	7,721
MARRIAGE LICENSES	17	102	1,649

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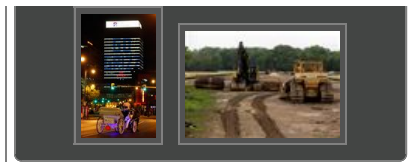




Not surprisingly, stories with human interest angles appeal to the readers' emotions – joy, sadness or even amusement. TV news programs, for example, often end on a positive note with a feel-good human interest story. These stories bypass the typical criteria for what makes a story newsworthy by not needing to be timely, novel or significant.

Be the butterfly. Help your business generate the press it deserves by first putting your story idea through the newsworthiness test. Doing so will help ensure your brand gets recognized for its good work.

*[Lori Turner](#) is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, [www.redrovercompany.com](http://www.redrovercompany.com). You can follow RedRover on Facebook and Twitter.*



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