

10 Tips for Getting the Most Product Publicity

By: Steven M. Stroum

1. **Write Clearly and Concisely.** Be aware of “engineering speak” and don’t write at too high a technical level because the personnel at publications and websites who actually critique and select news for publication do not always have technical degrees. This does not imply that journalists are not competent, it points out that engineers should be sensitive to their audience and respectful of their requirements for clarity and brevity. Always include a human editorial contact as a service to editors should they need more information. This also allows you to establish a relationship with those editors.
2. **Adopt a Giving Mindset.** Remember the key to creating a successful product release is to prepare your materials from the perspective that you are trying to serve the media by contributing content. That is why “problem-solving” approaches work extremely well. Yes, the result will be “free” publicity. However, don’t take the approach that you want something for nothing. Truly adopt the mindset of a giver, not a taker, and you will get much better results with editors. Think about it, nobody wants to be taken advantage of.
3. **Be a Romantic and KISS.** For the uninitiated, KISS means “Keep it Simple Stupid.” Designing a product requires limits and a clear sense

of space constraints. A news release is similar. You must restrict your presentation to about 200 words. Further, remember that a product release is about a product: what it is, what it does, how it does it, where you get it, and what it costs. It is not appropriate to include quotations from the president or another person in a product release. Product application stories, however, are different because the benefits from the use of your product are often qualified by a statement from the actual customer.

4. **Substantiate Performance Claims.** Don't write a glorified advertisement and call it a "news release." If you make a claim such as high tolerance, then provide a number. If your product is compact, then provide the dimensions. If your product operates over a high temperature range, then provide the range. Get the point? Quantify wherever possible. Your message will have a greater likelihood to be received as "credible" news by an editor if you quantify your claims or substantiate them via their ability to meet the specifications of an independent organization such as the FDA, ASTM, or Military.
5. **Understand What Makes a Product Newsworthy.** An older product can be upgraded or can be totally new to a different market segment. These new applications represent something newsworthy to a new audience. Also, a product may have different features that are of interest to different audiences. For example, paint can be easy to apply, chemical-resistant, and yield a hard finish. Separate product news releases and different media lists can be developed featuring each characteristic. Furthermore, each feature of the paint may be more or less important to various audiences. For example, UV resistance doesn't typically matter for interior applications, but is very important to a boat- or bridge builder for obvious reasons.

6. **Don't Try to Stuff too Much Information into a News Release.** Believing that the more information you include in a news release, the more value you will receive is a huge mistake. Nothing could be further from the truth with respect to news releases. Less is more! The fact is, most editors are seeking problem-solving information for their readers. Generally speaking, the more specific the problem being solved; the better the publicity coverage will be. In the above example, if you focus on a hard finish, you are solving a problem relative to durability or abrasion resistance. Moreover, the sales inquiries will reflect that interest. In other words, you know what your prospect's problem is and can arm yourself to solve it, increasing the likelihood of making a sale.
7. **Realize the Importance of a Professional Photograph.** When preparing a product news release, the old cliché, "one picture is worth a thousand words" has never been as relevant as it is today. A phenomenal photograph that is congruous with the message being conveyed will reinforce your message. More importantly, it will provide an editor with great content. As the editor of *Plastics Auxiliaries & Machinery* wrote to the author, "Perhaps you can use this situation to make a point to your client regarding what can be done by producing a *gorgeous photo* of a fundamentally plain product." Realize also that photographers are like actors, they need solid direction to be successful.
8. **Know That Publicity Works for Any Product.** Not believing publicity will work for your product or service is plain crazy! Publicity will work for any product for which there is a "legitimate need." That said, I'm not certain what the legitimate need was for "Beenie Babies" and "Pet Rocks," but they were very successfully introduced using publicity only! In fact, the most successful products in history were all introduced using publicity. The Apple Mac was introduced in 1984 with a legendary publicity stunt by

Steve Jobs who had the computer introduce him! The Microsoft Tablet, Vista Software, and numerous other products were also introduced with publicity. If there is a need your product or service fills, there will be an audience interested and, therefore, publications, websites, and blogs available to satisfy that interest.

9. **Prepare and Disseminate News Releases Regularly.** Don't just send out news releases occasionally. Send them out consistently. What many engineers fail to appreciate is that editors are always looking for information and if you become a reliable source it increases the odds your product news will be published regularly. In effect you are building relationships with editors through a consistent news release program. Equally important today is that news release increase your odds of showing up on page one of Google and other search engines. The reason for this is because Google, for example, bases their search not on the characteristics of a particular document, but on the basis of the number of websites that are linking to the document. So, product news releases are a terrific way to illustrate your ability to solve problems and, therefore, become known as a problem-solving company, and they also help keep your products highly visible on the first page of *organic searches*.

10. **Don't Ever Promise to Advertise.** Many engineers assume that they can't get news releases published unless they advertise. Nothing could be further from the truth. Don't even think of trying to "leverage" an editor by implying that if they publish your news release you are going to advertise with them. High quality publishers know that editorial integrity is their most important product. The greater their credibility, the greater will be their value to their readers or website visitors. According to *Penton Media*, "A

publication should not sell editorial. It should be independent from the advertising sales department and free to select only the material of interest, relevance and value to the reader.” A leading editor once wrote an editorial entitled, “Church and State? ... Journalism 101” in which she stated, *“The other day I got a press release in the mail and the envelope in which it came had the following stamped on the front: ‘Advertisers Press Release Enclosed.’ I was tempted to throw it away without even looking at it. The sender was implying that my judgment on the value of the release would be affected by the word ‘advertiser.’ So, if you ever wondered whether I favored advertisers with editorial coverage that wasn’t warranted, there’s your answer.”*

Finally, as a small businessperson myself who has been preparing product news releases for clients since 1977, I understand the real challenges facing smaller, technical companies and am passionate about helping you compete with larger multi-national firms; given the uneven playing field we’re playing on in the 21st Century... If these guidelines have helped you appreciate that preparing effective product news releases is not a simple task and can play a very critical role in your company’s marketing program; I have achieved my goal. There are certain things in life you shouldn’t skimp on. It is my belief that with your car you shouldn’t skimp on brakes and tires and with your company you shouldn’t skimp on accounting, legal, and marketing advisors. Get a great accounting firm, get a great law firm, and we invite you to contact Venmark International and get a great product publicity firm.

About the Author

The “**10 Tips for Getting the Most Product Publicity**” was created by Steven M. Stroum, president of Venmark International, a company he founded in 1976. Since that time he has been recognized as the “best in the business” by many leading editors. In recognition for his contribution

to the success of many smaller companies, Mr. Stroum was elected to serve on the *Commonwealth of Massachusetts Small Business Task Force* and was later appointed to serve a four-year term as one of 18 small business advisors to the Governor and served on the *SBANE* (Smaller Business Association of New England) board of directors as Publicity Advisor. Mr. Stroum's contribution to the small business community was recognized further when he was selected by the *International Rotary Foundation* to join a five-man Group Study Exchange Team and tour South Korea for six weeks as an ambassador. He has also been listed in "Who's Who in the East," was an executive member of the *American Marketing Association*, addressed the *Inventors Association of New England* at MIT, and the *New England Chapter of IEEE*. Mr. Stroum was also appointed to the Norbert Weiner Forum at Tufts University to study the impact of technology on society. He has been a guest lecturer at Babson College, Boston College, Northeastern University, and has addressed numerous business and civic groups. Most importantly, Mr. Stroum is a small business advocate who realizes the important contribution small businesses make to our society in terms of creating jobs, opportunities, and the "spirit of achievement" which is the essence of American free enterprise.

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