

425+ Home-Based Businesses You Can Start-Up - Full-Time or Part-Time!

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MySpace
Marketing - Pg. 28**

HOME BUSINESS[®]

The Home-Based Entrepreneur's Magazine

June 2007

BLOGGING for Business



Special E-Commerce Issue!

**The Latest E-Trends to Build Your Business Online including
Blogging, eBay, MySpace, Search Engine Optimization,
Branding Yourself, Link-Baiting, & Much More... Pg. 16**

Other E-Commerce Topics:

- **Raise Money Online.**
- **Make Your Web Site "Sticky."**
- **Put Your Home Office Online.**
- **Discover Internet Lead Generation.**

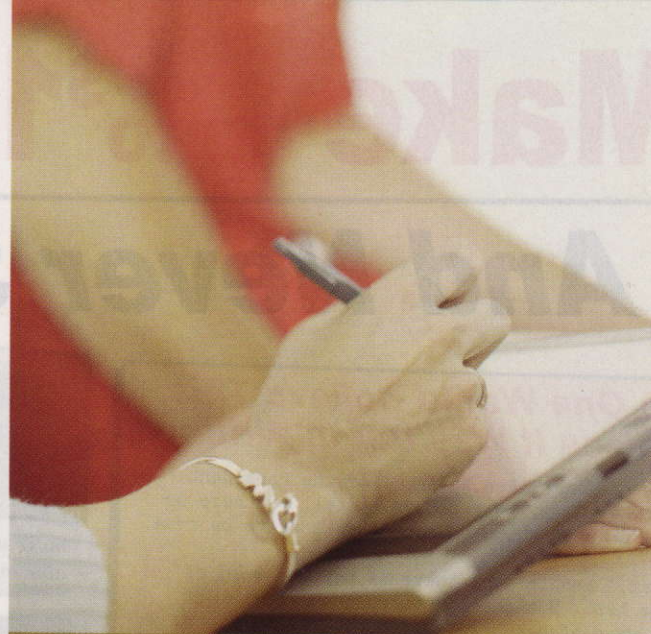


15+ Money-Making E-Commerce Businesses - Low-Cost & Easy-to-Start - Pg. 24

LAUNCH YOUR PRESS CAMPAIGN Online

Building Online Publicity Takes More than Just an Electronic Press Release

By Deborah Jeanne Sergeant



Before shipping out your first press releases, learn how to write them effectively.

You can make your home-based business stand out by leveraging the power of the Internet. By building an online media plan, you can receive more publicity online and in print publications, pushing your Internet presence far beyond your own web site.

MAKE THE RIGHT CONTACTS

Make a list of all the web-based and print media in your area because they are your best bet for regular exposure. Unless your company is truly extraordinary, larger publishers will not likely be interested in writing about it.

Include in your list industry-specific, general business, and general news sources, plus small weeklies, off-beat periodicals, and local college publications. Use keyword searches that relate to your industry and your town, nearby cities, county, and state. Some publications target specific groups such as women or those with disabilities.

Find media contacts by researching the medium's web site. Links such as "Contact Us" should show you who is the "Managing Editor" or the manager or editor of a specific department. Don't contact the publisher, webmaster or others who have little input as to

specific content. Very small publications represent an exception.

"Advertising" is for those who are paying for publicity. Use "Feedback" as a last resort; usually, it indicates a web-based form letter meant for readers, as is "Letters to the Editor."

OUTLINE YOUR ONLINE STRATEGY

Theresa Szczurek, a business consultant in Boulder, Colorado, plans press contacts by asking herself the following questions:

- What are your objectives and what are you trying to achieve?
- Who are you trying to reach (who is your audience)?
- What message would you like that audience to get?
- What is the best way to communicate that message to your target audience?

Szczurek sold her first business for \$40 million and currently heads Technology and Management Solutions, LLC, through which she consults with small businesses. She answers the above questions about her firm:

- **Objectives:** to raise awareness in the business community about my consulting/speaking firm and become a trusted resource for media contacts.
- **Target audience:** local and selected statewide print and broadcasting business media contacts.
- **The message:** how the firm's services in strategic planning, marketing, and organization development help small and medium-sized companies produce extraordinary results.
- **Tactics to communicate the message:** sending out regular media releases (one per month), monthly e-newsletter, and blog updates.

An Example of a Local Press Release

[your logo]
Elaine's Soaps
111 Main St.
Merryville, NY 11111

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE [or date by which you need it released]

Contact: Shelly Smith
(555) 555-5432
ssmith@countrysoaps.com

[today's date]

ELAINE'S SOAPS TO HOST BENEFIT
Merryville Women's Shelter Clothing Drive

MERRYVILLE -- Elaine's Soaps will offer a soap-making workshop benefiting Merryville Women's Shelter.

"I hope to raise funds and awareness," says proprietor Elaine Smith, who will teach the workshop. "I've experienced domestic violence and it's important to me to help these women."

Shelter representative Mary Johnson, says, "We need to increase our supply of lightweight clothes for summer. We are grateful for Elaine's help."

Participants will learn how to craft five different soaps to take home. Participants should pre-register by May 13, 2007. The cost is \$35. The event will be May 28, 2007 from 2 to 4 p.m. at Elaine's Soaps, 111 Main Street.

Smith has provided handcrafted soaps for Hamilton County from her home-based shop for 15 years. She holds a BS in Cosmetic Arts from Merryville College.

For more information, contact Smith at (555) 555-xxxx. **HBM**

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Press Campaign Online

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FIND AN INTERESTING ANGLE

Be newsworthy; don't cry wolf or your press releases will be ignored. Newsworthy items could include:

- A major change in how you do business
- A round-number anniversary
- How your company represents a growing trend
- Any special event that would interest readers

Include accurate statistic and facts, naming the sources, to make news relevant and timely, but also to keep the "human touch" evident.

Features focus on people and are less driven by statistics. These softer pieces elicit more of an emotional response than an intellectual one, but still get your company name in print. Perhaps the nail technician at your home-based salon just climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. Or your assistant, moonlighting as a playwright, sold a script to a big production company.

A how-to piece uses your expert input to help others learn the best way to do something. If you run a jewelry business, you might advise on how to care for pearls, for example.

SOME HELPFUL WRITING TIPS

“Avoid sugary or stuffy quotes; most reporters want fresh quotes and will seek them...”

Before shipping out your first press releases, learn how to write them effectively. Write in the third person. Follow Associated Press style because journalists may want to cut and paste from your press release. Pick up the newest edition of the AP Stylebook.

Proofread the press release. If you don't write well, consider hiring a freelancer through one of numerous sites such as www.writersweekly.com, www.monster.com, and www.craigslist.com.

Give an eye-catching, but not misleading title. Keep the press release to one or two pages, placing the important items first and then following with the details.

Use exclamation points and bold font sparingly. Standard typeface (Arial, Courier or Times New Roman) in 12- to 16-point font work well.

Stick with the facts. If your company actually is a leader in your industry, people will already know. Avoid sugary or stuffy quotes; most reporters want fresh quotes and will seek them, but a few realistic comments are okay.

Finish off the press release with details, including your qualifications, how long you've

been in business, what you do, and some quantification of your customer base. Give specific dates for past events, not "eight years ago." Make sure your contact information is easy to find on the press release.

Once you get the knack of it, send out regular press releases, about once a week to once a month.

FOLLOW UP ON YOUR PRESS RELEASE

"There is a higher likelihood that you will be picked up if your name is known," says Szczurek. If no one uses your releases, re-evaluate them. Are they newsworthy? Well-written? Targeting the right audience? If so, follow up with a brief phone call or short e-mail to ensure that the press releases have been received.

"Be prepared to give a 15-second summary of your news and why it is important to the audience the reporter addresses," says Szczurek. "Ask if the reporter is on deadline before you go into a long discourse."

Send press releases at least three weeks in advance for a date-sensitive story. When media representatives respond, follow through with the information and photos they need as quickly as possible so they make their deadline. Reporters hate being abandoned by the subject after they have been assigned to cover a story. Many times, a story must be scrapped because it has lost its timely appeal, which



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makes the company lose publicity and also the trust of that reporter for subsequent stories.

ENHANCE YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE WHILE YOU'RE AT IT

Use the information in the press releases as a springboard for your entire online press campaign. Include it in your site's "Company History," "Helpful Hints" (how-to pieces), "About Us," and blog. Robin Helstrom, who operates Christian Natural Health from her home-based office in Geneva, N.Y., packs her web site and print newsletter with helpful content and tools, such as the free "Health Analyzer" on her site.

"It's for people unfamiliar with natural health and it opens it up to them," she says. She also finds that using valuable content on her site "gives me credibility when people refer me and it validates what I'm doing." By sending her newsletter to anyone registering at her site, Helstrom says that she "creates customer loyalty. You want to keep them informed on the latest health news."

IF YOU GET STUCK, CALL A PRO

Hiring a freelance writer can be helpful if you run out of things to say in your newsletter. If your business is part of a larger entity, you can also tap that as a resource, like Helstrom does. Because she also distributes Nature's Sunshine products in addition to her work as a doctor of naturopathic medicine, she links her site to theirs and distributes the corporate newsletter to her mailing list with an insert specific to Christian Natural Health.

SPREAD THE WORD OFF-LINE

In time, your online press campaign can improve your publicity in the off-line world as well if you become recognized as an expert in your field. Volunteer for opportunities to speak and demonstrate your specialty to enhance your company's reputation. Then follow through with press releases.

For example, if your home business is creating custom jewelry, volunteer to help your church's teenaged girl's Sunday school class make simple pieces to give to women living in a homeless shelter. Let media contacts know about it, and perhaps other groups will think that kind of a project is a great idea. Eventually, you could expand into a whole new revenue-generating endeavor: jewelry workshops for civic groups, clubs, and parties.

Don't let your online exposure remain a static web site. Use the power of the Internet to bolster your company's publicity. For extra help in writing press releases, visit www.prwebdirect.com/pressreleasetips.php, www.ereleases.com/howtowrite.html, and www.infoscavenger.com/prtips.htm. **HBM**

Deborah Jeanne Sergeant has been freelance writing from her home since 2000. Many of her newspaper articles were written using press releases. She lives in Wolcott, N.Y. Her web site is www.hometown.aol.com/skilledquill/freelance.html.



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