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Be a Media Messaging Superhero, But Beware of PR Kryptonite

By Michelle Tennant Nicholson

Most people who hire publicists are at the top of their field. However, even industry superheroes should beware of overpromotion during interviews. Or, as I like to call it, kryptonite.

One of the biggest challenges for publicists is to teach clients the media's pet peeves. After executing PR campaigns for the past 20 years, one thing I know about messaging is this: Leading with education will make you a go-to expert, but promoting your product during an interview will kill your media superpowers faster than a speeding bullet. Sales promotions weaken your public appeal. Go-to media experts leave sales promotions to advertising. Trust me, it isn't just a clothing change in the phone booth.

Here are three ways to be sure your messaging will soar above the others, so you—or your client—remain a go-to media superhero:

1. Be the Expert

Let your expertise do the heavy lifting in interviews, and leave the sales job to the Internet. In your interview, focus on three tips, tools or steps that listeners, readers or viewers can do today to solve a problem in their lives. Use a memorable Web site address and watch the traffic fly. It's a bird, it's a plane... no, it's just great key messaging coupled with fabulous search engine optimization (SEO).

Your product or service will sell itself on your Web site, provided you're writing proper sales

copy and structuring a solid sales funnel. In today's digital world, what's key to growth and sales is increasing your own audience through Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and other online tools, like a blog or an SEO-coded online press kit, such as those at PressKit 24/7 (presskit247.com). Combine all these tools at EmpireAvenue.com to increase your online reputation score.

Promoting your product during an interview will kill your media superpowers faster than a speeding bullet.

Use your interviews and media coverage to bring traffic directly to your main sales Web site, which, if effectively written and structured, will retain and convert visitors to purchases.

2. Educate

My firm, Wasabi Publicity, Inc., represents *The New York Times* bestselling author, Pamela Yellen. Her book, *Bank On Yourself*, is the name of an investment and savings strategy people purchase. I suggested Yellen use her trademarked phrase "bank on yourself" during interviews as a verb instead of a product name.

Visitors to her Web site can see that “bank on yourself” is a product. So, there was no need to hit media and the public over the head with a sales pitch during interviews. As soon as she made that shift in her messaging, she scored a nationally-syndicated spot on NPR’s “Tell Me More” in their “Money Coach” segment, teaching children financial literacy and the early steps to “bank on yourself.” The shift even birthed a product that will teach people about financial literacy.

3. Tie in News

Every day the media covers seasonal and breaking news. The seasonal news is predictable, and the breaking news is easy fodder for media coverage. Media contacts are hungry for expert sources to educate the public when news breaks. So if you truly want to increase your superpowers, stay on top of breaking news: celebs, politics and more. Then simply tie in your key messages to what’s breaking in the news.

Look to sites like PitchRate.com that connect you to the media for free. Media connection services like this put experts, entrepreneurs,

authors and business owners in touch with journalists who are looking for stories every day that are based on experts’ knowledge.

In Yellen’s case, the season was spring, when many new graduates enter the workforce—an example of seasonal news. More reports were coming out about the economy strangling new graduates’ ability to find work, which is an example of breaking news. So, a segment pitch on how adults can teach teens and children about finances was a perfect topic, both seasonally and for breaking news.

Save the day with your expertise, educational tips and your tie-ins, and the media will consider you a superhero. Leave your sales pitch at your Web site. Advertising messages are all about sales, but PR messages are educational. Don’t confuse the two, and you too will capture the heart of the media, your Lois Lane. **PRN**

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