

# How to Toot Your Own Horn

## Marcus Hibdon

### I. Background

- a. Journalism career notes
- b. PR experience as a journalist
- c. Work at Mt. Hood Territory and Travel Portland
- d. Winging it

### II. Knowledge of PR and my assumptions

- a. At least tangential knowledge of what PR is and why it's an important, often crucial, supplement to other marketing efforts.
- b. Knowledge of how to write a press release or pitch journalists
- c. Awareness of resources available for free and for sale.
- d. What do you want to get out of this?

### III. Changing Face of Journalism

- a. Decline of print from increased production cost, falling profits in ad sales, shrinking of the news hole and decrease of staff.
  - i. Creates opportunities and challenges for PR
    - 1. Opportunity:
      - a. Journalists need more help finding stories now more than ever before. It's a forced efficiency.

Think of their audience

i.

Why, but most importantly why now.

ii.

1. If you've been around for 150 years, why are you a story now.

Create news

iii.

1. Travel Portland Twisitor Center vs. everywhere else.
- b. Journalists are looking for easy stories (content) that matters to their readers, but doesn't require a lot of staff time to produce.

Online photo galleries

i.

Quotes in a Press Release that actually sound like somebody said them

ii.

## 2. Challenges:

- a. Shrinking news hole means less pages. Less pages mean fewer stories. Fewer stories mean more competition.
- b. Consolidation is forcing more shared content and repurposed content than ever before. This is also an opportunity.
- c. Reliance on wire copy like never before. Also an opportunity.
- d. Need more support than ever before with photos, video, availability. They need it available now.

## b. Fragmentation of media sources

1. Rise of the bloggers/twitter/etc. is changing the face of media forever. Online magazines

- a. Follow these technologies

Learn about them

i.

Utilize them

ii.

Don't be scared to look for applications in developments you think may fail.

iii.

2. Readers have more options than ever before and are quickly finding their niche publications
  - a. Spheres of influence are shrinking to some degree, but there's a lot more spheres than ever before.
3. This will eventually become the media of tomorrow. All the old PR practices are being destroyed. All the old metrics are being destroyed. As journalism evolves, we all need to learn different ways to define success. Numbers will no longer tell the story. In fact, they already don't and haven't for a long time.

## IV. How to Toot Your Horn

- a. Public Relations is about relationships with your audience. It's achieved through a relationship with a journalist

1. We'll talk about that later, but you need to understand the difference between types of media focus.
  - a. Local/ Hyper-local Media
  - b. Regional Media
  - c. National Media
2. They will all behave differently. Their readers are different. Their story is different

- b. Precision Pitching

- i. Know the media you are pitching

1. Why your story? Why now? Why do readers care?
  - a. If they don't, buy an ad.
  - b. If you can't, find a publication that does.
2. Is your story appropriate for their section. Where does it belong? Tell them where you think it belongs and have good reasons for it.
3. Step away and look at your pitch like a reader would. Lose the bias we all have by promoting our destinations
4. Have they done similar stories to this?

- ii. Realize every story won't work for every media focus

1. Don't mass pitch stories. Those days are mostly over now.
  - a. Don't rely on a press release to deliver your story

i.  
But you still need to know how to write one

2. A hyper-local story usually isn't a national one. Usually.

iii. Cut to the chase when pitching

1. Get to the point and always have a point.
2. Avoid hyperbole in language. There's no such thing as the greatest, best, etc. etc. anything.
  - a. Remember editors are trained to cut through this type of language.
  - b. Don't approach editors like you would consumers. They want facts. They want reasons why they should cover something.
  - c. A true story has reasons why they can't NOT cover you.

iv. Don't Over Pitch

1. Only pitch "real" stories so media don't become exhausted
2. Seriously, don't over pitch something. You will not win the staring contest.

v. Keep Advertising and Editorial Sacred

1. One has nothing to do with another.
2. Never forget that.

### c. Embrace New Communication Technology

i. Twistor Center a great example. It's been used by media.

1. NYT Frugal Traveler – placement resulted from Twitter feed suggestions. Happened organically because it made it easy.

ii. Consider media-only e-newsletters

1. Quarterly if your very dynamic

iii. Social Media if you can afford it

1. Journalists are some of the first people to embrace these technologies

2. They are integrating themselves into the newsroom as publications struggle to survive.

3. Use it to engage media

iv. Create a media-only section to the web site

1. Don't expect them to sort through the consumer level stuff

2. Create quick fact sheets, pitch sheets, new story ideas and an online media kit. They won't always ask you for something. If it's not there, they'll just move on to somewhere that does have it.

v. Don't feel like you have to do everything at once

1. Stay vigilant in creating resources for media

2. Create goals and approach it as a triage situation

d. PR is not a bonus, it's an investment

1. It won't happen on it's own with any consistency

2. It cannot be an afterthought and it isn't free.

a. Do you budget money for PR? Do you budget PR money for media?

## V. Great but How Do I get into NYT or USA Today

a. Lower-tier PR leads to top-tier, but you have to have a story.

1. Just because you want to be in there, doesn't mean they want you in there.

2. Just because you should be in there doesn't mean you will be in there

b. Sometimes you may not be the story; you're just part of the story

i. Recognize when you are part of a larger trend and capitalize on it

1. Are you doing something that other places have started doing at the same time?

2. Are you doing something that is being done somewhere else in a different way?

c. Understand that some stories are more effective in smaller publications than large ones

i. Don't use metrics to make your decisions

## VI. Simple Truths

- a. Don't pick fights with people that buy ink by the barrel
  - i. You can't force editors to do something so don't try
- b. Editors are like elephants; they don't forget
  - i. Be helpful during positive stories and negative stories
    - 1. You don't have to compromise your organization at any time, but don't make a journalist's life difficult because you don't want a story to come out. They will remember it and so will the editors.
- c. Develop trust by being trustworthy
  - i. If you give writers a good story, they'll come to you looking for more.
- d. Forget all those journalism clichés; they'll only get you in trouble
  - i. Nothing applies to journalists across the board. They are all different.
- e. Most importantly deliver what you promise
  - i. Don't fool journalists, especially local and regional publications.
  - ii. If you offer photos, make sure they are good ones.
  - iii. Make sure your facts are correct
  - iv. Be ready to respond instantly if you pitch

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MARCUS HIBDON  
COMMUNICATIONS & P.R. MANAGER

[MARCUS@TRAVELPORTLAND.COM](mailto:MARCUS@TRAVELPORTLAND.COM)  
TRAVELPORTLAND.COM

TRAVEL PORTLAND  
1000 S.W. BROADWAY, STE. 2300  
PORTLAND, OR 97205

503.275.9769 DIRECT  
971.645.2700 MOBILE  
800.962.3700 TOLL-FREE  
503.275.9791 FAX