

Council Post: How To Avoid The PR High: Helping Clients Understand Media Exposure

Apr 28, 2020, 07:15am EDT



Lynne Goldner Forbes Councils Member

POST WRITTEN BY
Lynne Goldner

Chief Creative Officer/Owner at [Your People LLC](#), building business through storytelling, relationships and higher purpose.



Photo:GETTY

Clients get most excited about media relations work, because it's exciting to see yourself on TV or in print or to hear yourself on the radio. For many of us, it boosts our sense of importance and relevance. Plus, it can validate our expertise and the knowledge we bring to

the marketplace.

Being interviewed by the media also can boost your ego. Yet, in my experience, it's the least likely way to tangibly bring in new business. Many marketing experts agree that it takes an average of [seven brand touches](#) before a person will choose to take action. One of the most likely inspirations for making a move is a personal one: [word-of-mouth referrals](#) from friends and family members.

I've scheduled clients to appear on TV in three- to five-minute interviews, and they tell me that in the 24-48-hour period after their TV appearance, they usually see a spike in inquiries, calls and online traffic. After that spike, however, it often goes dark. TV ignites enthusiasm for a brand temporarily, but it's not usually sustainable on its own.

I've had several clients who love being on TV so much that they become almost like addicts, craving more and demanding a higher frequency of appearances. Anyone who's been in the public relations industry for a hot minute knows that you can't overstay your welcome or be greedy when pitching a particular client. There are ebbs and flows to how often media outlets want to feature one person without something in return, like paid advertising.

I call this irrational demand for more media attention the PR high. It happens to the best of us, and most PR pros know the pattern of a client on an irascible PR high whose demands can't be met. Usually, they stick with you for a short while, and then they end the contract, hire another PR firm and express the same demands. When their run ends, they leave that shop in search of another.

It's an endless cycle that usually leads to a dead end. Beware of the PR high.

I try to prepare for this potential outcome by prepping clients from the outset with realistic expectations about media exposure. We have calm conversations at the beginning of a contract about the benefits of media outreach, the wisdom of aiming for a variety of media interviews (including print, radio, TV, blogs and podcasts), and the typical trajectory of a client media campaign.

Some good rules of thumb for media outreach include the following:

- We need at least six weeks of pitching time to secure good coverage (and sometimes more).
- Local media outlets are more likely to respond than national.
- Hardly anyone secures interviews in big-time media outlets like the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* or *Good Morning America* without first securing local and regional coverage and building on it over a period of time. Media exposure is a gradual and consistent build.
- Once you do land in one of the big national media outlets, it might be your only chance. Most people don't become regular sources for national news professionals unless they lead

their industry or somehow stand out from the crowd.

- Not every idea or story is newsworthy. Clients need to trust our expertise when we say that an idea might make a good blog post on their company website or a social media post — or perhaps form the focus of an e-blast to their opt-in list.
- We vary outlets because we don't want to overstay our welcome at one particular news source, and they get sick of you when you knock at their door too often. You don't want to be *that* person who a TV station or newspaper ignores indefinitely.
- All media exposure needs to have takeaway for viewers, listeners or readers — it can't just be the client singing their praises. They have to give tips, information or something that others will benefit from. Simply put, media interviews need mutual benefit — for the client, the news outlet and news consumers.

Like all forms of marketing, success in media outreach depends on the strength of the relationships we have with media outlets and professionals — and the way clients carry themselves when interacting with media. One longtime client of mine writes a handwritten thank-you note and sends it to any media professional who interviews her. She does that just to show gratitude and class, and to take a step toward building a real human relationship with that person. Believe me, it goes far. She is remembered and welcomed back when we pitch an idea some months later.

On the converse side, I've had clients who've hit the PR high and became impossible to work with. One client ended our contract and proceeded to hop between all the PR firms in our town, securing occasional media exposure and alienating a lot of people along the way. Another client was so impressed with himself that a TV producer actually pulled me aside and said they would never invite the guy back. After my initial red-faced embarrassment subsided, anger took over, and I had a passionate heart-to-heart with the client.

Growing a client's bottom line depends on a steady, consistent and comprehensive marketing mix of which media relations is one important part — and if it's not handled right, it's an opportunity that quickly becomes a curse.



Lynne Golodner

Chief Creative Officer/Owner at [Your People LLC](#), building business through storytelling, relationships and higher purpose. [Read Lynne Golodner's full executive profile...](#)