

Free Publicity for Your Virtual Business

By: Victoria Parham, President & CTO
Virtual Support Services, LLC

Your virtual business is finally up and operational, everything is in place and you're ready to tell the world. So, you take out several advertisements in your local newspaper, pass out fliers, launch the website that you spent days working on tirelessly. However, after about six to eight months you notice that you've invested quite a bit in ads and not a single person has responded.

First things first. "Don't spend another dime on advertising your virtual business. Do spend time on creating a short, impacting, and buzz generating news release that will capture the attention of editors and reporters.

Your immediate priorities when trying to attract publicity for your virtual business should include the following:

- Make sure your service or product is ready for the public (get it out to market)
- Ensure it works
- Make sure it's something that people need or care about

Once you're sure that your product or service is the best around then it's time to tell the world. Be prepared to spend lots of time on your public relations (PR). Remember the purpose of PR is to create good will, to keep your company and/or product in front of the public, or to "humanize" your company so the public *relates* to your people or reputation rather than viewing your company as a non-personal "it or thing".

Media professionals are very busy people and don't have time to read news releases that cover your life history or simply sell your product or service. Three key factors to consider when developing your news release:

- Be clear
- Be concise
- Be brief

Your message should be summed up in a few short sentences otherwise, it will be received as too long and editors won't read it (in file 13 it goes). One of the best and cheapest ways to get free publicity for your virtual business is to get out into your local community, now is definitely not the time to be shy, consider the following:

- Join your local chamber
- Sponsor charities
- Offer valuable facts about your industry or business

- Piggyback off a local or national story
- Write an article
- Speak at an event

In today's competitive business environment, attracting free media coverage simply makes good business sense. The publicity will cost you the virtual business owner (VBO) nothing; but time and energy; and will help you to reach results that maybe you yourself never imagined.

About Author:

Victoria Parham is president and chief technology officer for VSSCyberOffice.com, a forerunner in the virtual support services industry, an advocate of portable careers for trailing spouses and family members. Its web-based Virtual Business Owners Training Program(tm), the first Virtual Careers program for Department of Defense ID Cardholders, is available and accessible at military bases around the world.

VSSCyberOffice is a military spouse and veteran-owned business support services and entrepreneurial training firm.