

## Budget-wise PR:

get the fullstory  
on how to stand  
out from  
the crowd.

With many marketing teams finding their budgets dramatically cut this year, paying for advertising space in magazines or other media may no longer be an option.

So now is a good time to consider using PR to your advantage, as when used effectively, it can help raise awareness of your business and ultimately drive sales. We work with Sore Thumb Marketing, who offer great PR to their clients, even when on a tight budget, so we thought they would be ideal to speak to for advice right now.

We asked owner and PR veteran, Julie Wilson, a few questions on how we should try to attract the right kind of attention, and for some suggestions on how to promote new products and services using PR as the vehicle. For more ideas on how to stand out from the rest, you can contact Julie on 01636 671438 or go to:

[www.sorethumbmarketing.co.uk](http://www.sorethumbmarketing.co.uk)



## “half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don’t know which half.”

John Wanamaker (1838-1922)

### How can I develop PR stories?

Press releases can be drafted about new content and statistics, but also “hooked” on relevant calendar dates like Easter, Summer or Christmas holidays, as well as the huge range of National Days or Weeks that run throughout the year. Be aware that magazines work about 3 months in advance, so you need to plan well ahead.

Also look at ways to promote your business at a local level, as local newspapers and radio stations are often crying out for stories and you could be it! Become a friend of the local media, invite them to see what you are doing, get them to come along to a charity event or good photo opportunity or offer to become their “expert” in your own field of expertise. Persistence is the key to developing stories, keep on emailing those photos, even when they don’t turn up to the event - keep the pressure on, it will pay off.

### How do I put together a good press release?

The most important part of the press release is the headline - make it bold and interesting. It makes sense to write in the style of the headlines of the publication that you are targeting. Start with the date at the top and a short heading in bold. Include your company logo and an image of the product or service you are promoting in your release - making sure that the image is low res so that your file is small when emailed.

Include the “5 w’s” in the opening paragraph - Who, What, When, Where and Why. Use simple, direct language but don’t be afraid to add quotes from someone in the company, a client’s opinion or even your own, as it breaks up the prose and can be a more effective way of expressing a point of view. When finished, type -ENDS-

### Is there any particular story angle that the press like to pick up on?

Surveys always work well with the media, providing them with statistics on the facts that relate to your message. It is inexpensive to email your own database and ask for feedback that you can use to provide facts for the press release. An example of this might be a garden centre asking customers about buying seeds to grow their own vegetables, perhaps as a cost saving measure. Then issue the findings as a press release called “Credit crunch gives allotments a boost - over 65%now grow their own fruit and veg.”

### What other ways can I drive awareness of my business?

Consider using the internet to your advantage with many free listings available and local directories that make only small charges for entries. You could also offer to write articles for complimentary businesses’ websites or newsletters or be “the expert” for a local mag or forum. You can even adapt your press releases for the basis of the article - there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Be on the look out for awards that are run nationally and locally and try and get your company or product nominated. Think about new opportunities created by sites like YouTube to promote video footage of your event or product offering - dare to be different!

### Are there any other low cost promotional ideas?

Competitions and reader offers are another good way to maximise editorial coverage. They allow you a degree of editorial control, as you can ensure all your key messages are included, and are much more cost effective than advertising. These provide you with the opportunity of securing editorial coverage for the cost of providing products for prizes. The reader offers can be linked to questions whose answers can be found on your website, or within the copy of your article. It is also a good idea to offer all non-winners a chance to get a discount off their first purchase - perhaps in the form of a voucher you can email to them and they can print it off.

### Is there anything else I need to stand out?

It is a good idea to include a media centre on your website which includes your latest press releases, along with high resolution images that journalists can download too. If you haven’t any photos, this is an area where it is a good idea to invest a little money. For example, if you are issuing a release about a survey highlighting the effects of all the packaging that we throw away at Christmas, why not attach a photo of a family group, surrounded by empty present boxes, showing just how much wasted packaging there is and reinforcing your message.

As with all limited expenditure, make sure you spend what you do have on getting the basics right, and remember that consistency and a strong logo make a lasting impression too.