

How To Gain Media Coverage For Your Antiques Business

By Evan Mangan

If you are an antiques dealer or auction house looking to market and grow your business, at the top of your wish list will be media coverage. The cost of Public Relations and issuing a press release is a fraction of the cost of placing an advert. Of course, there are no guarantees that PR will generate media coverage, but if it does, the benefits can far outweigh advertising.

- **Instant credibility:** If you appear in a leading antiques publication, your business earns credibility in the eyes of antiques buyers. This coverage can also be used on your website and marketing materials.
- **Improved search engine performance:** How your site performs on search engines is related to the number of quality links to your website. Online media coverage results in links back to your site, which pushes you further up the search ranking. (See our Marketing Antiques Guide to Search engine marketing).
- **Snowball effect** – Many journalists pick up on a story only after there is existing media coverage.

Who do you send your press release to?

When considering who to send the release to, our advice is to be:

- Targeted – avoid sending everyone the same message. It will be perceived as spam. Decide which type of media owners would be most interested e.g. Antiques media, national press, local press or online media. Within media, decide what type of journalist will be interested in your story.
- Pragmatic – consider who is likely to give you coverage. Are you an established dealer or auction house with a long heritage or a new start-up? Is your news likely to appeal to broadcast media or simply trade media?

Journalists are customers

- Once you have decided who you are targeting, think of the journalists as a group of customers that you need to sell to. Put yourself in their shoes and ask a few questions:
 - **Volume** - they receive hundreds of press releases a day. Why will your release cut through the crowd? What can you do to tailor your release to the journalist and perhaps offer an exclusive?
 - **When is their deadline** – is it a daily deadline by 3PM, a weekly local newspaper with a print deadline of Monday evening or are you targeting monthly golf magazines? If you want coverage in the July edition of a magazine, then you will need to issue the press release in April for a July issue that goes on sale in June.
 - **Frequency** – when last did you send a press release? If you have sent a number over a short period of time, journalists will see it as spam and they won't take future releases seriously.
 - **Their audience** – who is their audience (readers or listeners) and why would they be interested in your story? They are only interested in a story that serves their needs. Ensure you have looked at what type of stories they tend to cover and what the demographic profile of their audience is. Use this information when shaping the press release.

Tips on writing a press release

- **Make their job easy:** If you have thought about the journalist's audience and what is likely to make an interesting story, your job in writing the press release is to make it easy for them to tell the story. In theory, they should only have to do minor editing to your press release.
- **Brevity:** Your release should be circa 400 words and rarely more than a page.
- **Get to the point:** At the end of the first paragraph, the journalist should know what your story is and why it is newsworthy. If it takes longer, few will bother reading to the end.
- **Jargon and exaggeration free zone:** Journalists don't like jargon. Phrase your story in consumer terms and avoid exaggerated claims like "incredible course" or "absolutely unique". When you do make a claim substantiate it.

- **Quotes** – Include quotes from the Owner, Club President or Club Secretary in the press release. Ideally, also include a quote from a customer or supplier.
- **Quality of writing:** Ensure there are no spelling mistakes, typos or instances of poor grammar or your release will be seen as amateurish and discarded.
- **Contact details:** Ensure there is a web address and both telephone and email contact details at the end of the release for the media to follow up.

How to distribute the release?

How you distribute the release will depend on who you are targeting. The options are:

1. Create a targeted list
 - Identify media owners and journalists who you think would be interested in covering your story.
 - Send your press release and a media pack to these journalists, conveying that this is not a widely distributed press release. Suggest opportunities for an exclusive slant on your story or exclusive follow up material.
2. Access a wider email list
 - A marketing agency can provide an up to date list of named sports or antiques related journalists across all media in the UK and the US. These journalists can be emailed your press release. The advantages is that you are hitting a lot of relevant and targeted named journalists. The drawback is that these journalists receive many emails and yours will need to stand out.
3. Direct feed Newswire service
 - A marketing agency can arrange for your press release to be sent directly onto the screens of editors and journalists in the UK and US via a newfeed. This guarantees that your press release will be seen by editors.
4. Online distribution
 - There are a number of online press release distribution services, which ensure that your release is distributed across a wide range of sites that antiques journalists access for stories. It will also be picked up by Google News and Yahoo News.

After the release ... What next?

- If you are picked up by the media, be prepared to do interviews with press, radio and perhaps TV journalists, often at short notice.
- Consider the questions the journalists might ask you and prepare answers. Think about the top two points you would like the reporter to cover and ensure you get those across.
- Be prepared to provide follow up material such as photographs of your stock and director biographies.
- If you didn't receive any coverage, prepare to follow-up, particularly if you have created a targeted list. Your objective is to create a relationship with the journalists, so send a follow up email or letter and be prepared to resend the materials, as they might not remember receiving them.

About The Author

Evan Mangan is a former Head of European Marketing for Yahoo! Mobile and was Head of International Operational Marketing for Orange. He is founder and Managing Director of The Marketing Crowd (www.TheMarketingCrowd.com) and Marketing Antiques - a full service marketing agency which makes the marketing techniques employed by major brands available and affordable to antiques businesses.

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