

Timing Your Publicity, Tuning Your PR

How adept are you at your own public relations? In this article, Linda shows how you can tune and time your PR to get the maximum results for your efforts.

From Designers to Guerrillas

It's amazing what teens can remember – and absorb. I remember the time my father came into a room and showed me the cover of a [Zig Ziglar](#) book. He told me I should read it. Not wanting to ignore my father, I did read the book. I don't remember anything about the book (not even the title) except this:

Be sure to buy plenty of business cards, and spread them around like crazy.

As I became older and grew into the entrepreneur my father begged his children to be, I learned that business cards were my best (and least expensive) tools in getting my name and my skills in front of the public. This was before the Web, before blogs and before any social media. To be social, an entrepreneur was expected to become a member of the local Chamber of Commerce and attend weekly "meet and greet" meetings to throw around even more business cards.

Now, a designer or developer can network without leaving home. Still, the business card remains the best tool any business person can use. Buy them early, buy them often and – like Zig Ziglar suggested – throw them around like confetti during any major league ball game.

But, beyond the business card, how do you promote a product or service? According to the folks who wrote *Guerrilla Publicity* (Jay Conrad Levinson, Rick Frishman and Jill Lublin), the first thing you should do when you launch a campaign is to create a Web site. I'll bet you've heard that before.

But, you may not realize that any good launch requires a time table. You may not realize that you must become a guerilla, not a designer, to conduct a successful PR campaign.

The Product/Service Launch Time Table

Many women know about time tables. Women plan weddings. Weddings take at least nine months to plan. Women bear children. Children take nine months to gestate, which gives women nine months to plan for that child. So, you might realize that women who have experienced the nine-month planning option would also have an advanced concept of the limited time involved in publicity campaigns, as most publicity campaigns take nine months to work.

And, that nine months can fly by...so it's best to plan early, be true to that plan and remain excited about your product or service launch. This planning also applies to relaunching any product or service.

I'll provide you with some of the details involved with the nine-month time table included in *Guerrilla Publicity*, but I suggest you buy the book, or at least visit the [Web site](#). In this site, you can learn how to write a press release, learn "the truth about creativity," and take advantage of the resources only publicity guerillas can appreciate.

Nine Months Out

Nine months before you launch a new product or service, or relaunch your business, you should make sure all your tools are in shape. Conrad, Frishman and Lublin suggest:

- That you have adequate blogging and podcast equipment in place;
- That you write and distribute articles for fine industry newsletters, blogs and podcasts (other than your own blogs and podcasts);
- That you write and distribute three articles for the same number of industry Web sites;
- That you design point-of-purchase graphic displays for retail outlets;

- That you continue to write new articles, create handouts and order business cards (where did you hear that one before?) to distribute at speaking engagements;
- And, finally, that you solicit pre-orders on any products and services.

The point to the above exercises is that you get your name out there and to prepare for the later stages of your PR campaign. You have three months to write, design and solicit pre-orders.

You probably noticed the "speaking engagement" part of this early stage PR effort. If you've never spoken in public before, you're in for a treat. It's a rush, really. Just ask any public speaker who still gets the jitters before walking on stage.

To learn how to speak in public, you might do what a poet friend of mine did – she hired a voice coach (I [found one](#) online who teaches online!) to learn how to project her voice and to enunciate clearly. She's learning [how to speak with a microphone](#). You can learn how to speak in public by joining public speaking groups, or groups that offer constructive criticism to the speakers who practice speaking publicly with those groups – like [Toastmasters](#).

Or, you can wing it...and hope you don't pass out before you reach the podium.

Six Months Out

This is where things might get strange for you as a designer (or a developer). The guerillas suggest that you upkeep your blog, which is a no-brainer for most of you. But, the next step is to distribute camera-ready articles to editors at top magazines such as [Inc.](#), [Entrepreneur](#) and [Income Opportunities](#). While this is a great idea, I know few designers and developers who can write a good magazine article.

At this point, you may want to hire a writer. Even then, you cannot expect the greatest writer to get an article accepted in any magazine. But, those articles might be accepted in local magazines and newspapers, especially if you have a newsworthy article that can help others. Take a look at the articles in the linked resources in the previous paragraph and think about what you have to offer others through your knowledge about your product or service.

Beyond this, you can:

- Post a press release on your Web site and link to it from your blog.
- Send press releases to other Web sites that will reach your target audiences.
- Send press releases to generate articles and coverage by media that focus on business (for example, the business section of your local newspaper).
- Send press releases to syndicated radio and TV shows that focus on business.
- Send a press release through a syndicated PR service like PR Newswire.
- Schedule 15 talks and workshops where you can leave handouts.

Another tip from this book states that you should solicit client and customer endorsements, but it might be difficult to do this at this point, since you're still three-six months out from your product or service launch. However, if you're committed to a relaunch of your business, this is a highly recommended practice. Place those recommendations on [LinkedIn](#), your blog and your Web site.

If you are becoming more accomplished at speaking in public, or if you have no qualms at speaking, then seek out some [speakers bureaus](#) to get slotted for speaking at meetings.

Three Months Out

All along, you should be updating your blog and podcasts. Continue to send out press releases, but only if they offer new information (*do not ever send the same press release to the same media outlet twice unless they ask for it*). At this point, you can think about sending out an email campaign, but I have my qualms about this last piece of advice.

The only reason I feel uneasy about the email campaign is because the Guerrilla Publicity book doesn't state anything about collecting email addresses during the previous six months. Plus, you can add a way for folks to read your blog through RSS or through an email alert when you post new items on your blog. Email is not the only way to go here.

But, the book does mention at this point to create a media kit for distribution. During the previous six months, you should have developed enough press releases, articles, photographs and a business plan – all great tools to complete this task without headaches. You can learn a bit more about [how to create a press kit](#) online, but you also can find books at the library on this topic, too.

These days, it is perfectly acceptable to create a digital (or electronic) [press kit](#). Take advantage of the possibilities to show off your design skills with this project.

Thirty Days Out

Outside updating everything, this book provides a few interesting ideas to try during the final month before the “big day.”

- Prepare a national contest that solicits stories on the wackiest ideas for your product or service.
- Print 1,000 brochures (that you designed about nine months prior) containing ten tips, your phone number (toll free?) and your Web address. No need for email, as that information would be on your site.
- Forge alliances with people who could promote you and your product or service.
- Call media to secure more interviews.

I would suggest, as well, that you have everything in place to deliver on the date of your launch. Nothing kills a business faster than promising Eden and not delivering.

Conclusion

If you're a designer, you're probably clued in on how your Web site and/or blog can be used to gather marketing statistics. With global reach, that Web site and/or blog and your social media networks can do things for you that no other newspaper or magazine could ever do. You should be building these networks early in the game, back in the nine-month era.

The point is to become public. When you become public, bad things can happen. You'll make mistakes (you'll learn to rectify them quickly), you'll make enemies (you'll be the adult), you'll see mistakes made, and sometimes the best of them will be online like [this story](#) that the Louisville Courier-Journal did about me and my new job. Note that the name under the photo is “Debra Poth” instead of “Linda Goin.”

Ah, well...such is the life of PR. Debra Poth, a shopowner who was in the original newspaper story, got some extra PR. That's the up side. Even if you buy ad space and create your own ad, there's no guarantee that the ad will end up in the right space and in the right direction...even if you own the newspaper.

Hopefully, you can provide people with great value in your products and services, and that value can be your best PR. Word of mouth and a few thousand business cards might be all you need to succeed. If not, then you'll learn how to speak, write and tactfully swim. Or, you'll hire someone to do those things for you.