

Ideas on how and where to promote in your community

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooley

Here are a few ideas on how you can actively promote your group, organization or personal activities in your community. These ideas are focused more on the private sector, but would work with a few creative twists for public and personal efforts too.

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS may be the easiest way to secure media coverage, as they are traditionally more accessible than radio and TV stations. Additionally, being print media they often allow you to communicate more information than other media. And, they are often 'looking' for local news events and activities.

BROADCAST MEDIA are also a great source of promotion with public service announcements (PSA's) which might be video or audio taped or scripted for their on air use. I've found the local cable companies quiet receptive as well as the local radio and TV PSA listings.

You might investigate offering your services to a local talk show as a guest or host, if you have an interesting twist or newsworthy idea to share. It never hurts to try and the worse they can say is no!

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE can be a great connection for promotion of your cause, company or community group and for personal networking. An advertisement in their newsletter or directory can be both effective and inexpensive. As a member, you can obtain a membership list and do some selective broadcast faxing or direct mail work. I've done that successfully in the past few years.

In addition, I've offered my services to Chambers across BC and Alberta and gotten some good responses. If you are a service provider I'd suggest it would be more effective taking the time to personally visit them to let them know who you are and what you bring to the community. If you have a brochure or promotional material, they will often allow you to leave copies for their members and people coming into their information centers.

Offer to speak on your area of expertise and become a resource for them. I've done this for years and found it to be a great way to gain recognition and local exposure. If you publish a newsletter, make sure your local library gets a couple of copies for their business reference section.

LIBRARIES will often allow you to post flyers and announcement on their bulletin boards. If you are a service group or provider let them know who you are and what you do. They often get calls for information and can refer people to you or your group.

If you publish a newsletter, make sure your local library gets a couple of copies for their reference section. If you get extra copies of industry periodicals, have written a book or some other publication, I'd suggest donating a copy.

CITY HALL can be contacted for information for information on how to have your events or group publicized in any of their publications, cable programming, or the city's community services calendar. Again, make sure the staff and council know about you and your group.

You might even decide to throw your hat in the ring for public office. You may not win, but you certainly get exposure. Many years ago, in New Westminster I ran a fun 'Bob the bear for mayor' campaign to encourage people to get out and vote. I didn't win, but the positive press including front-page picture and story didn't hurt my business (a cute little coffee shop on main street.)

IN HOUSE PUBLICATIONS are often looking for material and submissions of interest to their readership. Public, private and association publications are actively looking for good materials to use. If what you do or know can be structured in such a way as being informative and interesting for their readers, you have a great chance of getting published.

I've had articles published across North America from this simple activity and some of them have resulted in business for my speaking and facilitation services. Contact their editors about submission deadlines, areas of interest and editorial style. Ask about submitting 'fillers.' Fillers are articles of various lengths that are generic, timeless in focus and can be used when needed. You might be surprised at the results.

Note: I offer a series of free downloadable business enhancing articles on various topics on my Website. Visit us at: www.ideaman.net

LOCAL CHURCHES can help in passing on information to their members, if what you offer is of interest or helpful to them. Let them know what you offer, and how you might be of assistance to their congregations.

COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES, or TECHNICAL INSTITUTES may have internal cable TV networks or radio broadcast facilities. When I attended the U of A (in another life) I was program director for CKSR Student Radio and did my own show every Friday morning where I interviewed people in addition to playing music. Also, check out their student publications, newspapers, staff newsletters and electronic media.

If you are a knowledgeable speaker on your topic, you might be invited to be a guest lecturer on a related discipline. For years, I promoted my kitchen design business and cabinet sales by doing guest visits to the architectural and design departments of a local Tech Institute. It built credibility, gave me an increased sense of self-confidence, and drew new clients as well. You may be able to participate in career days or other related events held on campus.

PRIVATE TRAINING COLLEGES OR TRADE SCHOOLS can also be a good source of contact to promote your event or organization. They too, are looking for knowledgeable guest who might be willing to share them from their experiences.

HIGH SCHOOLS may be a source of good will and exposure, by getting involved with local Junior Achievement Programs, if you're in the business sector.

BILLBOARDS may also be available for public service announcements in your area. Check to see what might be available or how you might apply.

PROCLAMATIONS by local, provincial or state, or national governments might be a way to gain publicity for your group, if you qualify. If you have a special week, or your association has one, why not contact city hall or one of the other levels and see what is available for having them do a proclamation accordingly. When I was Public Relations Officer for BC's Toastmasters I was able to get the provincial government to officially declare a specific week as Toastmasters week in BC. We then leveraged that with local proclamations across the province. Contact the mayor's office as to the procedures and timing required for such a proclamation.

ALLIED BUSINESSES, COMMUNITY GROUPS OR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Take a moment and investigate the possibilities of working co-operatively in marketing or promotional efforts. Group efforts can work wonders! Find out what they offer to the community, or if you have compatible or non-competitive services or products, or if you have common areas of concern, or services. See if they will agree to combine marketing or public relation efforts. Join efforts could be the best use of time, resources and personnel, with a benefit to both parties.

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