



The Guerrilla Review

Ten Golden Rules For Using Email To Get Media Coverage

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So, you think you have something newsworthy? Why don't you tell the whole world? Welcome to the world of push-button technology where all you have to do is press the "Send" key to get your message out to the world!

Or, so they say. But you haven't found it that easy; have you?

For several years now, publishers and marketers have been using email as a means of getting their messages out to people. Some emails are not worth reading and they end up in the Trash Folder.

However, if you target your audience with the right message, it **WILL** be read! Articles, Press Releases (also known as New Releases), Newsletters, reports and "White Papers" all have their place. But a properly worded, and "sized" email—to the right people—will exponentially increase your odds of getting more publicity for your business.

And that's the whole reason for doing them; right? What you want is more than just a "hum-drum" ad that might get seen—and it might not. But in the right hands of the right media channel, it can be the difference between survival and bankruptcy in your business.



But, there are some rules to remember when sending out emails to the media. They're looking for “news”... REAL NEWS—because that's their job... to report the news. If your email (or PSA—Public Service Announcement) comes across as an ad that's trying to sell something, it will get deleted faster than a swamp rat eating a bag of Cheetos! Trust me on this one: if you violate this rule, you'll get “black-listed” and banned from their servers.

Well, how do you go about getting “on the good side” of the media?

Remember: these are real people at the receiving end of your emails. They have jobs to do, just like you. They have families to go home to everyday, and they have bills to pay, and kids who have astronomical cell phone bills because they spend all their “waking time” texting their buddies—instead of having real conversations on the phone.

They're “soccer moms” who are harried by their own work schedules, complicated with picking up the kids at day care, going by the soccer field to pick up “Little Johnnie” from practice, and then—to top it off—they have to go by the grocery store, pick up groceries, go home and cook supper for the kids... because they want to make sure Little Johnnie and his siblings get fed right.

They're already upset with “The System” because they don't feed them right at school, and they dang sure don't educate them to survive in this complicated world.

So, about the time they get the car loaded up with the groceries, they remember having forgotten something at Wal Mart, and they get in a hurry backing out, and crash into some idiot who drove behind them in the parking lot.

Their day is not going too great at this point.

They come into their office the next day, and they find your email sitting in their Inbox—along with about 3,000 other “junk” emails, and yours just happens to be the one that “lights their fuse.”

But... they don't delete it.

No...

...they sit there and cogitate a “flame” reply to you...

...then they hit the Send button.

You think it's all over with that?

Noooooo...

...no, no, no, no! They're just getting started!

Then they “black list” you from their servers, and then they forward your email to some Spam-Cop internet service, or worse—they fire off a complaint to your ISP.

It can get pretty ugly from there on out.

But, how do you avoid all that?

Simply pick up the phone and call them, introduce yourself (quickly, I might add), get “to the point” and tell them you would like to send them an email—a News Release—about whatever you have.

Just make sure it's “newsworthy.” Because if it's not, they'll tag you faster than a paintball war down at the recreation center.

You want to really make these people mad at you? Just lie to them. They will “sniff” you out faster than a cheetah chasing down a lame wildebeast.

Lying to media reps will make them madder than a mosquito in a mannequin warehouse! Get my drift?

Okay, now that I've (hopefully) made myself clear about who you're dealing with, let's get on to the Ten Golden Rules... or as some would call them, "The Ten Commandments of Emailing The Media Moguls."

1. **Think, think, think... and think again—before you write ANYTHING down!** Ask yourself: what are you trying to accomplish? Put yourself in the position of the person receiving your message. You're a busy media professional. You've got to get the news out. You've got deadlines. What would YOU do upon receiving your email message? Would you publish it, or would you toss it?
2. **Read, read, and re-read the content of your message.** Is it news? Or is it a "come-on?" If it appears too hyped up, or appears like a "sales pitch" it's going to get trashed. In the military, we used to say, "Check, check and re-check." So, here you have to read, and proof-read, and check it again. Also check it for spelling, syntax, proper punctuation and grammar. If it comes across like you learned English as a second language—it will show. It will be so glaringly obvious, and it will reflect on you negatively.
3. **Target your media contacts narrowly and carefully.** A good way to find the right media contact is to go online to their site, or call them up and ask for the newsroom at the local radio or TV station. Or call the newspaper and find out who handles the media reporting for your genre. If you have a new book coming out you go to the "book editor" section. If you have something dealing with business, you go to the "business editor." If you have something that deals with a real estate news item (and not some piece of property for sale) then you go to the "real estate editor."

4. **Keep your message short and “to the point.”**
Make your email message shorter than this article. As a matter of fact, keep it down to one or two screens. You might be able to get away with a third screen if you have something truly worthwhile. You'll have to be the judge of that: but, don't push your luck.
5. **Keep the subject and content of your message relevant to your target recipient.** Don't send something to the real estate editor when it needs to go to the General Business editor. Don't try to sell them on anything. If they want more information, they'll ask you for it. The subject of your message should intrigue them enough to read your message.
6. **If you're seeking publicity for a product or service, or you want to get reviews for a new book or software, use a two-step approach.** Query your contact with a “hook and news” angle before transmitting your news release. Or offer to send them a review copy of the release on follow up. Offer free copies of other reviews and articles. If they show an interest in it, they'll let you know. Just make sure you include ALL your contact info in your signature line: name, address, email, phone, etc. *(To avoid angry complaints about unsolicited email, either send them a brief email requesting permission to send them a release, or call them on the phone and get their permission. After you get their permission, make sure you make a note of your conversation with them in the follow up email.)*

7. **Address each email individually and seperately to each recipient.** DO NOT send CC's or BCC's to multiple recipients. Address each person by their full name—in each individual email. You're not running an autoresponder here, okay? Treat each one of them fairly as an individual and respect their time and attention. If there's one sure way to get this relationship off to a bad start, it's by sending them a message with a bunch of others in the TO: line or the CC/BCC line. You do that, and they will “rat” you out—quick!
8. **Be honest.** Be honest with yourself and your media contacts. If you try to “pull a 'fast one'” on them, they will smell it a mile away! Don't make any claims that you can't back up. Don't make claims about your product or service that you can't prove.
9. **Tailor each email to the editorial style of your recipient.** They ALL have different requirements. Take the time to find out what they are. Some of them want it “clipped” and short. As Bob Cole with KVET in Austin, Texas would say, “Put a bumper sticker on it!” As Donald Trump would say, “Say it in ten words or less, or don't say it at all!” As Dan Williams might put it, “Give it your 'Elevator Pitch.’” Call them up and ask them for samples of the styles they want in their news releases. Ask them for a “media kit.” Go to your local library or read it online. Take the time to study their style. Write the way they like—not the way YOU like. Seek to develop a long term relationship as a regular contributor and not just a “one time” shot.
10. Follow-up in a timely fashion. Don't pester and “hound” them, but be respectful of their time and attention. Be professional in your writing and in your telephone conversations. Practice good writing, proper diction and grammar when speaking. Take time to learn good phone and writing skills. Nothing turns these people off faster than someone who can't be professional in speaking and writing. Call it pride or arrogance, but you're playing on THEIR turf. Remember?

Okay. I hope I've been thorough with as much information as possible here.

Remember: these are real people at the receiving end of your emails and news releases. Your success with the media depends on your respecting them and being courteous—even if they're not. I know some of them can get a little “testy” and cantankerous, but you can never get away with it.

They're in control: you're not.

Learn to make friends with the media. Never treat them like the “enemy” —unless you're a politician. If you're in the business of selling something, you want to treat these people like Ronald Reagan did: treat them like professionals—and with “kid gloves.”

You can—and should—use email and news releases to get news coverage about your business. But, you shouldn't rely solely on email. When used in conjunction with conventional public relations (mail, phone, fax) you will get maximum effect.

Cultivate relationships with the media by becoming known as a valuable contributor. Don't treat them like they were a “one night stand” or they'll burn you—and fast! They want news for their readers. Give them news. For you, it's just free publicity when they decide to publish your news release.

Go to their conventions and seminars. If you can afford it, go to the big ones they have in Washington, D.C. and around the country. Don't know where they are? Call them up at your local newspaper, magazine, radio and television stations and ask!

It's not hard to get news coverage and national publicity if you take the time to learn what their requirements are. Do a careful job in your research and it will pay off for you. Email is a good way to make the most with limited funds. If you have an Internet connection, you've got half the work done.

You can start out small by working locally in your region, then branching out to surround market sectors. In little to no time at all, you can be national and on the View with Whoopie and Barbara, or on "Live with Regis and Kelly." Play your cards right and you can get on Good Morning America, the Jay Leno Show, David Letterman, Oprah, or Larry King Live (just ask Joe Vitale).

There's a lot more I could include in this article. As a matter of fact, I could write a whole book on it. But this should be sufficient to get you started.

An Additional Note: You can get local coverage by piggy-backing on the latest national news. Do you have something to say about a national news story? Do you have something that you wrote about that deals with the latest scandals? It can be good news or bad news: people want news!

Provide a local angle: *you!* Local reporters and producers have to cover national stories—from medical news to the foreclosure crisis. Make yourself the local celebrity and come up with a solution to the mortgage and foreclosure crisis, and you're almost guaranteed to get media attention.

Call your local TV station and ask to talk to the news editor. They need local experts, and they know who to put you in contact with at the station. When you call that person, you can say that the news "anchor" referred you to them. Next time you see a national story on which you can provide perspective, email your local media. "Toyota Recall—Local Expert Comments" or "Foreclosure Crisis—Local Foreclosure Specialist Comments" could be your subject line.

The local media loves it when you can show them how a national story will impact their local area. Similarly, you can pitch trade publications on how a broad national story will affect their local industry or markets. Example: "How New Real Estate and Mortgage Regulations Will Affect the Local Economy.

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To read some of Mr. O'Dell's other presentations and white papers, visit the links below:

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