

How to Hire The Perfect Publicist

By Joan Stewart

The Publicity Hound

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How to Use This Book

If you already know how to read this ebook using *Adobe Acrobat Reader*, skip this section and go to Page 11.

This ebook is in *Adobe Acrobat* PDF format. If you can read this, then you already have the *Adobe Acrobat Reader* installed on your computer. I'll give you some tips below so you can conveniently navigate the book and find what you want fast. This ebook is best viewed at a minimum desktop configuration of 800 x 600 pixels at 16 bit color.

Hyperlinks

Throughout this book, you will see several *World Wide Web* addresses that are underlined in blue. **Example:** <http://www.PublicityHound.com> . If you are connected to the Internet, and the web address has the standard http:// format, you will be able to click on the link and it will take you to the webpage listed. **Your main (default) Internet browser will open up automatically a few moments after you click on the link, and you will be taken directly to the webpage in the link.** To get back to the book, close your Internet browser, or click on the *Adobe Acrobat Reader* button on your task bar.

Email Addresses

Email addresses work in a similar fashion to hyperlinks. The format you will see in the book is <mailto:jstewart@PublicityHound.com> . When you click on a link with a “[mailto:](#)” format before the email address, your main email program will open up automatically a few moments after you click the link. The email address in the link will already be in the “Send to:” area of your email program. This makes it very convenient for you to email anyone listed in this book. You do not have to be connected to the Internet to **write** the email, but you do have to connect before you **send** it.

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Emphasis

I have various ways throughout the book of emphasizing words or points. As you see on the previous page, I made the words **write** and **send** bold. I use Bold and Italic for book names like ***How to Hire the Perfect Publicist***. **You'll see red text occasionally**. This means the item I'm discussing really needs a lot of emphasis.

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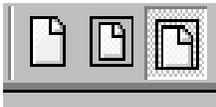
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Using the Adobe Reader

There are two ways you can adjust the size of the page to suit your personal reading preferences. You can either use the icons at the top of the screen or the sizing bar at the bottom of the screen.

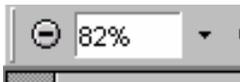
Icons

The icons at the top of the screen make broad changes in the sizing of the page. Pick the one that you like best by clicking on one of the icons.



Sizing Bar

You can also use the sizing bar at the top of the Adobe Acrobat Reader screen to set precise sizing of the page. Click the arrow to the right of the percentage box as shown below.



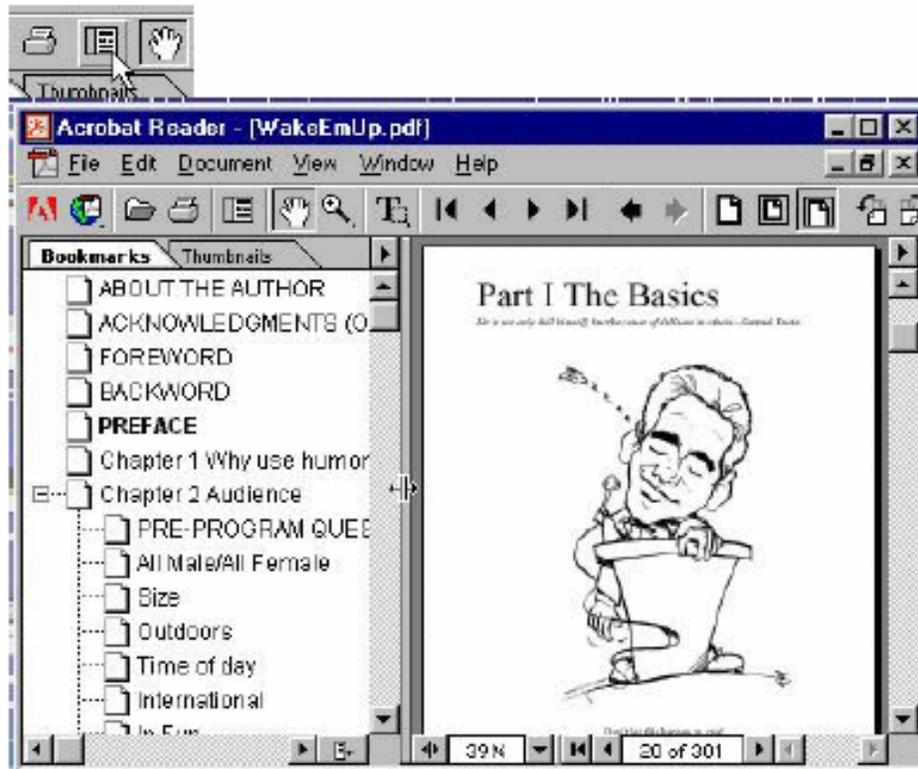
Bookmark Panel

Adobe has a cool feature that allows you to have a complete clickable outline of the book handy on the left side of the screen. You can close this area if you prefer to have more screen area for the actual page you are reading. To close or open the panel, click on the icon shown. It acts like a toggle switch, opening and closing the side window.

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Adobe Acrobat Reader window showing clickable outline.

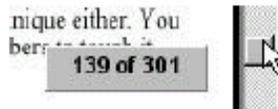
If you want the window there, but it is too big, you can drag the vertical resizing border to the left. Hold your mouse button down over the top of the border until it turns into a double arrow and drag to the left.



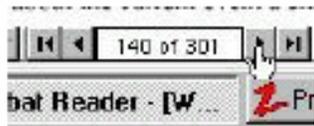
Turning Pages

There are 4 ways to turn pages in your book.

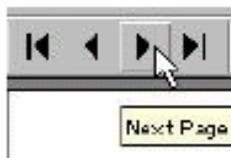
1. You can use the arrow keys on your keyboard.
2. Use the scroll bar on the right side of the screen. Note that when you click on the scroll button, the page number you're on pops up in a little box at the bottom of the screen.



3. Click on either side of the page number box on the bottom of your screen.

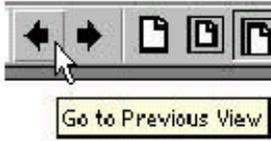


4. Click on the icons at the top of the page. The single left and right arrows move you one page at a time, and the left and right arrows with the vertical bar take you respectively to the beginning of the book and the end of the book.



Returning to Your Last Position

Click the back button at the top of your Adobe Reader to return to the last page you were on.



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About the Author



Joan Stewart’s free publicity campaign started at age 10 when her hometown newspaper wrote a story about a blue ribbon she won for a 4-H sewing project at the Ohio State Fair. She was hooked on newspapers from that point on and knew she wanted to be a newspaper editor. She eventually worked as a reporter, then editor for 22 years at three daily newspapers in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and at the weekly Business Journal in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She left the newspaper industry in 1996 to start her own business. Today, she works as a media relations consultant, speaker and trainer and publishes the popular online newsletter “The Publicity Hound’s Tips of the Week” at <http://www.PublicityHound.com> . The newsletter, read by publicists and self-promoters everywhere, shows you how to build and maintain strong relations with the print, broadcast and online media. Stewart is a past president of the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Speakers Association. She shows you how to use the media to establish your credibility, enhance your reputation, sell more products and services, promote a favorite cause or issue, and position yourself as an employer of choice. She has created more than 100 educational tools, from special reports and ebooks to audio tapes and CDs, to help publicists and self-promoters manage a strong media relations campaign. You can read more about them on Page 77.

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Introduction

Even though my job is devoted to teaching people how to do their own publicity, one of the most frequent questions I hear is, “Where do I find a good publicist?”

I am not a publicist. But after working 22 years in the media and 8 years as a media relations consultant, I know the types of pesky publicists that media people detest:

- They’re pushy and obnoxious.
- They don’t take “no” for an answer.
- They’re clueless that the story they’re pitching isn’t a good match with the media outlet they’re calling.
- They write multi-page, rambling news releases, and they bury the gist of the story in the 6th paragraph.
- They follow up every news release with an annoying phone call to ask the media outlet “Did you get my release?” and “Do you know if you will use it?” And they charge you for doing this.
- They have that sickening sweet sound to their voices. Journalists who hear it know, within seconds, that they should brace themselves for a sales pitch.
- They sometimes sound downright desperate, as though they’ve spent the entire morning getting rejected.
- They offer the media boring, lifeless story ideas.
- They promise you—and the media—more than they can deliver.

These pesky publicists will waste your money. They could also damage your reputation.

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I also know the types of perfect publicists that media people love:

- They invest time developing and nurturing strong relationships with their media contacts.
- They take the time to learn the wants and needs of the audience that reads a particular magazine where you want coverage.
- They know the special sections of a particular newspaper where your story would be a good fit.
- They know the kinds of guests a TV talk show producer wants to book.
- They know exactly who to call at a certain radio station and they know what their client must do to get onto the show, dazzle the audience and be invited back.
- They know how to deliver a sizzling story pitch over the phone in 15 to 30 seconds.
- They know how to catch the attention of busy reporters and editors with enticing email messages.
- They know how to write a short, compelling pitch letter.
- They invest in up-to-date media directories that explain when to call, when to send an email and when to snail-mail a letter.

These perfect publicists know all the ways to make the media's job easy. They are a valuable link between you and reporters, editors, photographers, news directors, talk show producers and assignment editors. Their hard work and tenacity can produce thousands of dollars in free publicity for your product, service, cause or issue.

Finding the perfect publicist is like striking gold.

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In this book, you won't find a list of publicists who I recommend. I can't do that because I don't know your budget, the type of publicist you need, or whether a particular publicist's personality meshes well with yours. You have to decide those things on your own.

This book, however, WILL give you lots of guidance on how to make those decisions. It will also give you all the tools you need to find, interview, work with and reap the rewards of the perfect publicist.

What You Will Learn

In the following chapters, here's what you'll find:

- When you should hire a publicist
- Stories about publicists from hell
- Where to find the best publicist for you
- How they set fees and the advantages and disadvantages of each method
- What to do before the interview
- Questions to ask during the interview
- Qualities of the perfect publicist
- How to work with your publicist
- Tips for authors
- Tips for musicians
- Tools for publicists and self-promoters

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- A glossary of terms about publicity and the media
- ...and LOTS more. Now let's get started!

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Chapter 1: When You Should Hire a Publicist

If you're willing to spend the time learning the tricks of the trade, you can learn how to do what the publicists do. But that could take months or even years. Sometimes it makes perfect sense to let the perfect publicist do it for you.

Here are 16 situations when you should consider hiring a publicist:

1. You work for someone else and can't devote the time to create and manage a major publicity campaign.
5. You work for yourself, but running your business entails hundreds of other tasks that leave time for little else.
6. You're an author who's on a book tour, or you're busy working on your next book.
7. You're an author whose contract with the publicist assigned to you by your publishing company has expired, and now you're on your own.
8. You are aware that your publisher is handling many books at the same time and you know it's important to have a publicist unrelated to the publisher working directly with you from the beginning.
9. You have a job such as a consulting practice, and your time is better spent making money on client projects than it is doing your own publicity.
10. You don't have the right kinds of media contacts.
11. You are familiar with the basics of how to get local publicity, but you want to take your campaign to the national level and don't know how.
12. You want publicity in a certain part of the country and would prefer to work with someone who has strong media contacts within their own region or state.

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13. You're trying to get in front of people within a particular industry but don't know the best ways to reach them.
14. Even though you feel comfortable interviewing, you don't like the thought of calling reporters and editors on the phone and asking them to cover your story. (More about this in a minute.)
15. You're doing most of your own publicity yourself. But there's one aspect of it that you don't know how to do or don't want to do, such as setting up an online media room. The perfect publicist can help smooth the rough spots in your publicity campaign by doing small-project work.
16. You're already a successful Publicity Hound who is writing newspaper articles, doing radio interviews and appearing on TV shows. You're so busy being in the media spotlight that you need someone behind the scenes who can keep you on track and focused. The perfect publicist will work several steps ahead of you, lining up interviews for next week and beyond.

Did you notice anything missing from that list? I intentionally didn't include the two following situations:

--You have little or no knowledge of how the media operate, or the basics of what a publicity campaign entails. If that's the case—if you are absolutely ignorant about how the media do their jobs and you need to spend a significant amount of money on a major publicity campaign—you are NOT a ripe candidate for a publicist. Not yet, anyway.

--You find the very idea of publicity distasteful but necessary, and you're looking for a publicist to relieve you of the entire burden of working with the media. If that's the case, don't part with your hard-earned money. Your publicity campaign must involve you at some point. If that's unacceptable to you, then don't seek publicity.

Recognize yourself in either of those two situations? If so, start learning how the media operate. Go to the library. Or do a search on the Internet for "publicity." Or visit my website at <http://www.PublicityHound.com> and start reading the free articles and other educational tools designed to teach you how the media do their jobs, and what you and your publicist must do to make the media's job easy. Sign up for my free ezine called

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“The Publicity Hound’s Tips of the Week” at my website at <http://www.PublicityHound.com> and read it every week.

To get the most for your money when hiring the perfect publicist, you must have a basic understanding of what reporters, editors, guest schedulers, TV assignment editors and others want—and what they consider news. **Without that knowledge, you’ll have to trust your publicist to make every decision for you.** That’s risky, even if you’re using the perfect publicist.

If, however, you understand how reporters do their jobs, you can challenge your publicist with intelligent questions and maybe even offer a suggestion or two. And your publicist won’t have to spend a lot of her time—on your nickel—educating you on simple background you can learn on your own.

Take a few weeks to immerse yourself in learning about the media. To do that, here are eight other ezines, websites or discussion groups that you should read or visit regularly. There are many more. But if you stick with these, or just a few of these, you’ll be off to an excellent start.

Expert PR

This ezine, delivered twice a month, is chock full of top-quality articles on a wide variety of public relations topics.

http://www.mediamap.com/resources_expertpr_form.asp

Media Insider

This website, hosted by PR Newswire, is a treasure trove of articles and advice about how to work with print and broadcast reporters, how to pitch media in various industries, pitching tips, and lots more. The first time you visit, you will be asked to sign up for this free service with your name and password.

<http://www.MediaInsider.com>

Journalists Speak Out

To get supportive advice from reporters, editors and producers on how to improve your pitching prowess, subscribe to this newsletter, published by Bulldog Reporter.

<http://www.infocomgroup.com/ezineform.html>

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What's Next Online

BL Ochman's site includes an archives filled with articles on how to promote yourself online and offline.

<http://whatsnextonline.com>

I-PR

I-PR is an 11,000-member international, interactive subscription forum that features news, tips and resources for developing and implementing successful PR campaigns using the Internet. In addition, I-PR holds frequent members-only "Meet the Media seminars," news release clinics and teleseminars on cutting edge PR topics. Click on the link below to join the discussion group.

<http://www.adventive.com/lists/ipr/summary.html>

Creative Ways

Marcia Yudkin has a helpful site loaded with free articles on publicity, marketing and how to create sizzling promotional materials. If you have time to read only one book on how to promote yourself, read her book called *6 Steps to Free Publicity*.

<http://www.yudkin.com>

Show Stoppers

This site teaches you how to meet the media at trade shows and other events. It features more than two dozen excerpts from their excellent ezine by the same name. Learn what to do if a magazine writes a less-than-raving review about your product, how to generate publicity at trade shows, and what to do if a media outlet asks you to write an article on your own.

<http://www.ShowStoppers.com>

Academy of Marketing and Advertising

George McKenzie's site has a variety of articles on the print and broadcast media.

<http://www.get-free-publicity.com>

Midwest Book Review

Jim Cox, publisher of the Midwest Book Review, offers lots of articles for publishers and authors, including numerous ways to promote yourself and your books.

<http://www.execpc.com/~mbr/bookwatch>

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Once you can speak intelligently about things such as story pitches, media kits, news releases, follow-up stories, the local angle, profile stories and radio talk shows, it's time to go to the next step and hire a publicist.

If the very thought of talking to reporters and editors or appearing on a radio show frightens you, hire a good media coach too. A media coach will give you all the training you need to feel comfortable during print and broadcast interviews and can prepare you for what to expect during your publicity campaign.

Many publicists know who the best coaches are, so you could actually hire a publicist first. After all, there's time to get training while a strategic plan is being created and while the media kit is being written. Plus, the publicist may have some ideas and angles that should be covered in training.

Don't use a publicist as a crutch or as someone who can shield you from the bulldog reporters you've heard so much about. The closer you are to your own publicity campaign and the more you understand it, the less susceptible you are to getting stuck with the Publicist from Hell.

Who, exactly, is the Publicist from Hell? Proceed to the next chapter.

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Chapter 2: How to Avoid the Publicist from Hell

When I asked readers of my ezine, “The Publicity Hound’s Tips of the Week,” to share their nightmare stories about working with publicists, responses started pouring into my email box minutes after the newsletter was sent.

Here are problems other Publicity Hounds have encountered when working with publicists—the types of problems this book teaches you to avoid.

The Disinterested Publicist

Nicole Pilon, who does public relations for All Pro Putting Greens in Ringgold, Georgia, says her company’s Publicist from Hell charged \$138,000 for six months of work, then made a series of mistakes that proved he had little interest in the client or the product. She tells the story:

"Our product, synthetic putting greens, are golf training aids, designed to LOWER golf handicap scores for enthusiasts who want to practice in their yards," Pilon said. "We manufacture the turf here, and the greens are installed either by the homeowners or by our dealers nationwide.

"My boss hired a PR firm located about two hours away. He was quoted \$138,000 for six months of services and was allotted 40 hours of service a month from a publicist that he never met. My boss immediately sensed that this guy had nowhere near the level of understanding about our product and industry, which was hard to swallow for over \$100 grand.

"Several thousand dollars and several months later, my boss began to see variations of a 200-word story obscurely placed in newspapers throughout the U.S. Although this one story got a ‘supposed’ readership of 27 million, we received very few calls.

"The release, we discovered, had an error in wording. The stories all start out by explaining how, inspired by Tiger Woods, my boss had developed a golf training aid that’s affordable for virtually any homeowner or golf enthusiast. That’s fine. But further

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down, the release said: "...[putting greens] give golfers the ability to shave valuable strokes off their game. . ."

"We're sure the publicist intended 'valuable' to mean an improvement in score. But if you've golfed for 10 minutes or 10 years, you know that the only 'valuable' strokes are those that are on your competitor's score card! Fortunately, my boss only took a little flack from those who commented on it."

The publicist even questioned why some of the newspapers featured a photo of a man swinging a club when the story was about putting greens.

"Even if the publicist doesn't play golf," Pilon said, "as the PR person for this product, he should know that any story referencing Tiger Woods, golfing training aids, handicap scores, etc. can be accompanied by any sort of attractive photo, whether it's of a golfer swinging, enjoying time on his green with the family, dreaming, or just putting."

Her boss hired her and immediately realized the benefit of having a fully involved, in-house PR person. "I'm here fulltime, and he gets me for a fraction of the cost that would be incurred by the PR firm."

Pilon says she thinks the chance for error and miscommunication increases when the client and publicist haven't met each other, especially when the publicist isn't personally involved with, nor interested in, the client and product. Some publicists and clients never meet each other and things work out fine. But if you have the chance for a face-to-face meeting, by all means take advantage of it.

Pilon suggests: "Hire a firm you are comfortable with and that has publicists who will personally consult with you and your product. Of course, they won't be 100 percent experts as you are, but some knowledge of you, your product, and its field is extremely helpful."

Lessons you can learn from this nightmare:

- Insist that you sign off on every news release your publicist writes. Some publicists, in fact, will insist on it.

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- Ask candidates who you are considering hiring what they know about your product or your industry, and if they have obtained publicity for other clients similar to you. If so, ask to see their placements. You'll read more about how to interview publicists in Chapter 6.
- If you work in a small organization and someone quotes you a fee for six months that's equal to the combined salary of at least four other PR people for 12 months, ask yourself if you'd be better off hiring a qualified full-timer.

The “Do-Nothing” Publicist

Arlie Corday, who works in public information at a college on the East Coast, says it's vitally important that you know exactly what duties the publicist will perform. At a school where she worked previously, a well-known PR firm was hired to help with publicity.

“Turns out all the company does is give advice,” Corday said. “Not one press release, not one media call, not one actual bit of work. I have since talked to PR people at other schools and colleges who hire this same do-nothing firm simply because it looks as if they are doing all they can to publicize their institution and ‘it's already in the budget.’”

Lessons that Corday suggests you can learn from this nightmare:

- Make sure the contract explains the scope of work. That is, exactly what the publicist will do.
- Ask to see media placements they have gotten for other clients.
- **Ask for references, call them and ask lots of questions.**

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The Ineffective Publicist

E. Donald Two-Rivers of Green Bay, Wisconsin, a Native American author, wanted speaking engagements to promote his books. But \$1,400 later, all he got was a rewritten brochure and a ream of paper listing names of places the publicist contacted but no specific contact information so he could follow up. Then he received another \$135 invoice for out-of-pocket expenses. But not one speaking engagement.

“I should have been more stringent and ask for a list of satisfied customers,” Two-Rivers said. “I was just way too eager to get my name out there.”

He says he has gotten a lot more speaking engagements by making his own contacts, with help from his wife.

“I’ve had the honor of reading at several prestigious affairs, including the Smithsonian Institute,” he said. “This we did by following tips we’ve seen from you and other on-line PR sites and by doing the necessary research and cultivating our contacts.”

Lessons you can learn from this nightmare:

- Make sure you know whether your publicist will give you names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of all media outlets contacted on your behalf. Most publicists will not and they shouldn’t be expected to.
- If you need help lining up speaking engagements, your publicist should have experience working with speakers and meeting planners. If the publicist doesn’t, you may have to do this yourself and work with a speaker’s bureau.
- **Ask for references, call them and ask lots of questions. References should be current.** A few publicists are running on successes from 20 years ago.

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The Barely-Out-of-College Publicist

If you work with a large PR firm, beware of getting stuck with a young, inexperienced publicist at big-firm rates. PR practitioner Sharon Dotson of Houston, Texas explains:

“I used to work as public relations director of the Boy Scouts of America here in Houston. Fortunately, we had a very powerful, influential board of directors—mostly CEOs and other top officers of many of Houston's biggest companies. These companies would sponsor our Scouting events.

“These companies spent mountains of money with very prestigious PR firms for their own company needs. So the rich and powerful board members leaned pretty heavily on these top-of-the-line PR firms to publicize our various events on their company's behalf.

“During the six years I worked for the Boy Scouts, I got a very unique view inside most of Houston's ‘finest’ PR firms.”

Here's what she learned:

“Large PR firms are notorious for hiring account executives barely out of college. The routine is that the 'big guns' go in and sell the services and make all the promises based on their very impressive credentials. Once they have the account or the job, they often promptly turn it over to these fresh young things (almost all them are very well-spoken and good-looking young men and women) who are LEARNING PR ON YOU—and for the highest prices commanded in the city.

“Sometimes they do a good job. Sometimes they do a horrible job. Most clients have little knowledge of how little the 'big guns' are involved in the actual work. I did, however, because I am a public relations professional myself, and I could see what was going on.

“Since PR is a very inexact science, if things go wrong, it is very easy for the PR firm to blame it on the media. They never admit that they had an inexperienced person at the helm.”

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Lessons you can learn from this nightmare:

- During the interview, ask about everyone who will be handling your account and, if possible, meet them. Find out how long they have been in the business. Ask about other accounts they have handled. **Ask for references, call them and ask lots of questions.**
- Tell the firm's top representatives that you know that some firms assign inexperienced people to certain accounts, and ask how you can prevent that from happening. They will consider your questions a warning and might assign a more experienced person to your project.
- Dotson suggests that if you're sold on a bigger agency, at least interview a small or medium size firm so you can compare. "These smaller PR agencies usually have much more hands-on involvement by the leaders of the firm—the people with all the experience," she said. "Smaller firms have access to the same quality copywriters, graphic designers and printers. And they are not paying a huge staff or rent on an office building located in the best part of the business district."

The Publicist Who Can't Write

Casey Fryda, who does public relations for a Midwestern college, said she wishes her previous employer had asked for writing samples when interviewing publicists.

"We hired a firm and were assigned a PR writer who, as it turns out, did not write as professionally as our own staff," she said. "We had to go through the bother of rewriting the releases AND the stress of talking to the firm about the quality of the work."

The firm had someone on staff with much more experience who could meet the client's needs. "But I hate confronting people about poor quality work," Fryda said. "If it had been left up to me, we would have just taken our business elsewhere and the firm wouldn't have gotten a second chance. We were lucky this time!"

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Lessons you can learn from this nightmare:

- Ask for writing samples.
- Ask to see news releases the publicist wrote, as well as media placements that resulted from them.
- Pay particular attention to brevity and creativity on all news releases.

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Chapter 3: Where to Find the Perfect Publicist

Where you begin looking for a publicist depends on how much you can afford. **So before you do anything, determine your budget.** Come up with a range of how much you can spend.

If, for example, you are a self-published author who can afford no more than \$1,000 for a publicity campaign, a solo practitioner who is experienced in working with authors would probably be your best bet. You'll find hundreds of book publicists on the Internet. Later in this chapter, I'll tell you exactly where to look.

If, however, you're a company that wants major national coverage for a controversial new product, and your needs go far beyond publicity to include things such as shareholder communications and crisis communications, a large PR firm that has expertise in all areas of public relations would serve you better. These firms probably will be more expensive than solo practitioners but they offer more talent in a variety of areas.

Share with publicists you talk to—right up front and as soon as you meet them—what you expect to achieve from publicity. Also give them a range of how much you can afford. This will save a lot of time. Good publicists who think your expectations or price range are unrealistic will say so, and they probably won't want to work with you.

Don't "test the waters" by meeting with several different publicists without discussing fees, only to learn later—after they have submitted written proposals—that their fees are way out of your range. This wastes your time and theirs. Instead, be open about your budget. Give them a range of what you can afford. Then, if they're a top candidate, ask for a written proposal with a variety of options within your price range.

Don't use the excuse "I don't have a budget." If you don't have a budget, you shouldn't be looking for a publicist. You wouldn't walk into a car dealer's showroom if you didn't have money for a new car.

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And please. Don't call the publicist and say, "I don't have any money, but I'd love to talk to you about my project and pick your brain." It's the same as saying, "I want your advice but I'm not willing to pay for it."

Location, location, location

It isn't necessary to meet a publicist face-to-face before hiring them. Many publicists who live far from their clients do a wonderful job by communicating regularly.

But if you're on a smaller budget, there's no sense hiring someone hundreds of miles away. Look first in your own community. Whether the publicist understands your topic and has a strong track record of media placements are much more important than where the publicist lives.

19 Places to Look

- You'll see this suggestion in red type several times in this book because it's one of the most important things you need to know. It's also the very best way to find a publicist. That's why it's at the top of this list. **Ask for referrals from people you trust.**
- Contact your trade association and ask if any publicists are members of the association. They just might be. Publicists who represent authors, for instance, often are members of groups such as the Publishers Marketing Association.
- Ask your trade association for names of publicists who have worked for other members in your industry.
- Ask the trade association if it contracts with a publicist. The big advantage is that the publicist already knows your industry and has key media contacts.
- Identify high-profile, non-competing people in your industry who get great media attention. Call them and ask how they do it.

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- Join online discussion forums in your industry and ask for recommendations. You can also ask the group for feedback after you have interviewed candidates and you've narrowed down the list to your top choice. Throw out the name of your Number One choice and see what comes back.
- If you want a local publicist, start with your chamber of commerce, or a business networking group such as BNI (Business Networking International), the world's largest business referral organization. Check their website at <http://www.bni.com> for a chapter near you. For BNI groups in Canada, visit <http://www.bnicanada.ca>
- Check the Yellow Pages under "publicists" or "public relations firms."
- Unfortunately, there's no trade group just for publicists. But some publicists are members of the Public Relations Society of America at <http://www.PRSA.org> as well as the Association of Women in Communications at <http://www.womcom.org> and the National Association of Women Business Owners at <http://www.nawbo.org>
- Publicists from small, independent PR firms might be members of the North American Association of Independent Public Relations Agencies at <http://www.naipra.org>
- The Council of PR Firms at <http://www.prfirms.org> and the Holmes Report at <http://www.holmesreport.com> both have free databases of hundreds of PR firms that can be searched by name, state, client, size, etc. The Holmes Report is one of the most respected independent journals in the business, and most of its content is available online for free. So you can type in a firm's name and check them out.
- If you already have media contacts, and you know them well, call and ask who they consider to be the best publicists in your town, region, state or industry. If you are lucky enough to get just one or two names, consider these publicists top-notch, since the referral came from the media. (Note: Don't make cold calls to journalists you don't know.)
- Call the publicity department of any mid- to large-size publishing company and ask if they know good freelance publicists.

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- *O'Dwyer Directory of Public Relations* lists more than 1,000 PR firms. Available in most libraries.
- Musicians should refer to *The Industry Yellow Pages: The Official Music Directory of Booking Agents, Managers, Producers, Engineers, Publicists, Promoters, PR Firms, Talent Buyers, and Attorneys & Lawyers*. Available at <http://www.amazon.com>

2 Places to Avoid

Don't bother contacting your local college in hopes of finding a journalism student to do your publicity. If you are truly serious about publicity, you should be willing to pay a professional to do it. The tools and talents you need to attract the media—from compelling news releases to crisp, succinct story pitches—are difficult enough even for the pros. Students are not pros. They are amateurs. And some of them can't string a noun and a verb together.

Time and again, I hear from people who have hired college kids to write their news releases or create media kits. Most times, the client ends up babysitting the student.

Don't do business with spammers, either—people who fill your email box with promises of making you, your product or your book famous. They probably aren't reputable.

Susan Harrow, author of *Sell Yourself Without Selling Your Soul*, explains why: “You can assume that if companies are sending blanket email to the likes of you, that's probably how they are handling their contacts—or lack thereof. Journalists hate to receive email that has nothing to do with their beat. You want a firm with solid relationships and a track record.”

I'm amazed at the number of people who hire the first publicist they meet, then complain about the lousy service they received and the money they wasted. Start with a list of at least several names. You will need to do some research before you begin interviewing. That means first understanding the various ways publicists set their fees.

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Chapter 4: How Publicists Set Their Fees

Don't skip this chapter. Knowing how publicists charge will pay big dividends when it's time to compare your top candidates. You will understand your financial commitment. You will be able to determine which method of billing best fits your needs. And you will make a better decision when it comes time to sign a contract.

Most publicists set their fees one of four ways: hourly, retainer, by the project or pay-per-placement. Let's deal with them separately and look at the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Hourly

This is one the easiest billing methods to understand because it's a flat hourly rate. If you're not careful, it's also one that can prove the most expensive. Expect to pay from \$65 to \$200 an hour, depending on the experience level of the publicist, where they live, and whether they are an industry specialist. In the United States, publicists on the East and West coasts often charge more than those in other parts of the country. PR agencies usually charge more than sole proprietors.

Make sure you understand what the hourly rate includes and if the publicist charges the same rate for all tasks performed. Does the hourly rate include time spent traveling to and from your office or media outlets? Does it include administrative work such as creating monthly logs which the publicist gives you? Does it include time spent calling and emailing you? **The contract should be very specific.**

Does the publicist subcontract work done for clients? If so, ask if the rate they charge you is higher than what they pay their subcontractor. Some publicists charge an extra 10 to 15 percent to cover their own administrative costs.

Advantages of hourly billing:

- By comparing their track records, hourly rates and references, it should be fairly easy to compare one publicist to another and determine which is the best deal. **(A lower hourly rate isn't necessarily the better deal. Experience with media placements, as well as good references, should be given more importance than a**

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lower hourly rate.)

- You can use the publicist as much or as little as you want, depending on your own cash flow.

Disadvantages of hourly billing:

- The longer it takes the publicist to do a job, the more they get paid. So unless you ask, you may have no idea how much time it will take to perform a particular task, such as creating your media kit. That means you may be in for a rude awakening when you receive your invoice. **Ask the publicist to estimate in the contract how long each task will take.**
- Hourly fees often climb into the stratosphere when clients abuse the “two drafts and final edit” concept and instead make 12 rounds of editing, then feign shock when the bill arrives.
- Big PR firms that bill hourly are notorious for padding their accounts. They do this by spending many hours on “background” work such as researching whether a new service they are being paid to publicize will be welcomed by the public. Or they bill you for things such as “team meetings” of 10 junior and three senior staff to “discuss” your account. It can cost \$1,500 to \$2,500 just for one of those meetings.
- Depending on what your contract says, every time you want to call or email your publicist, you may be “on the clock.” Your invoice may look as though the firm is nickeling and diming you to death, particularly if you need to call or email them frequently.
- All billing is based on time units, not on value.

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Retainer

Many PR firms and some sole practitioners have a monthly retainer from which they can deduct fees and expenses.

They keep track of time spent by the person working on your account and bill it against the retainer. Let's say your monthly retainer is \$5,000. If Mary, your publicist, bills at \$100 an hour and does 20 hours of work this month for you, \$2,000 of your \$5,000 monthly retainer has been spent on her services.

Retainers vary from about \$1,500 to \$20,000 a month, depending on the size and reputation of the firm. When retainers are not collected, publicists sometimes end up getting stuck with the bill if the client will not or cannot pay.

When interviewing publicists, ask about the average monthly retainer their clients pay. What is the minimum monthly retainer? How much do they expect to charge you? What do you get in return? Can the unused portion of the monthly retainer be carried over to the next month? **Make sure the contract spells this out.**

Advantages of a retainer:

- You have a good idea of exactly how much you will be paying each month and what you will get in return. This helps with cash flow and budgeting.
- The publicist is often willing to apply an unused portion of your monthly payment to the following month.

Disadvantages of a retainer:

- Once again, you are buying the publicist's time, not necessarily the value that they bring to your project.
- Any billing method that relies on time units rather than on value usually doesn't emphasize collaborative relationships with the client. In other words, the

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publicist won't be encouraged to spend additional time on your project if it's needed to achieve your goals if he or she knows you're on a tight budget and can't go pay beyond the monthly retainer.

- You must ask up front if the firm or PR practitioner has a monthly minimum. If you don't know this and go through all the motions, only to find out later that you aren't a big enough client, you'll be wasting your time.

By the Project

Project fees let you know up front exactly how much your investment will be and what services and outcomes you can expect in return.

A project fee can work several ways. A publicist might charge a flat fee to create your media kit, regardless of how many hours it takes. Or you might be charged one fee for a 12-month media plan, pitching all stories to the media, creation of a media kit, writing and distributing up to two news releases a month, and all follow-up.

I frequently charge by the project and state in the contract that clients have unlimited access to me by phone, email or in-person meetings. **Not one client has ever abused the privilege.** And they like knowing that they can call on me without worrying about a meter running. Also, I am free to suggest additional areas of focus without concerns about increasing their fees.

Publicists who charge project fees might require half the fee up front, with the remainder due in 60 or 90 days. That means you will receive only two invoices.

Some publicists also will reduce the project fee by, say, 10 percent if you pay the entire fee within 10 days after the contract is signed.

If a publicist is charging a project fee, make sure the contract states exactly what the publicist will do. Be sure you ask about things such as whether you'll get a monthly log of all contacts made, if the publicist will share media contact information with you, how many other projects the publicist is working on besides yours, and if you will be responsible for any out-of-pocket expenses.

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Advantages of a project fee:

- You know exactly how much it will cost.
- You might be able to take advantage of a significant discount if you pay the entire fee up front.
- You can often call on the publicist at any time without the meter running.
- The publicist can spend more time with you if it's needed to reach the goals you both have agreed to, without you having to pay more.

Disadvantages of a project fee:

- Payments terms could be difficult for smaller businesses, or those with cash flow problems. But many publicists are willing to negotiate payment terms.
- Depending on the person you are working with, the publicist might be more inclined to give better service to those who they must continue to invoice on a regular basis.
- If the project takes the publicist much longer than estimated, the less-than-perfect publicist might be tempted to do B- or C-grade work to compensate. **Be sure you check references.**
- Unless the contract is very specific, confusion might arise as to exactly what the project includes.

Pay-per-placement

Pay-per-placement is exactly that. You pay only for the placements the publicist gets for you.

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The success of pay-per-placement firms depend mostly on whether the client is a good match. Some pay-per-placement companies will only work with clients who want coverage in big media outlets. That is, national magazines and newspapers, radio stations in the Top 25 markets, syndicated radio shows, or major TV shows. As a result, clients with small budgets are automatically eliminated.

Authors, experts and others who want numerous placements in various periodicals, without necessarily a targeted approach, would do better working with PR firms that charge hourly, on retainer, or by the project.

Here's an example of how pay-per-placement works.

Let's say a placement at a major business journal costs \$1,500. The firm might offer a pricing structure that discounts additional placements. The second placement might cost \$1,000, the third placement \$750, and so on.

Stories in national large-circulation print publications such as magazines and TV shows would cost you significantly more per placement than a story in a lower-circulation business journal because the story would be of greater value to you.

Each placement might also have its own pricing tier. For example, a placement that mentions an author's name as well as the title of the book might cost more than a placement that mentions neither. If you make it clear up front that you don't want a placement without the title of the book, the agency might try to determine by talking to the journalist whether the title of the book will be mentioned. If the journalist thinks it will be included, the publicist would keep pursuing the story. If, by chance, the title is edited out before the story is printed or aired, the client wouldn't pay.

If you're a good match with pay-per-placement firms, interview several companies. Ask them about their area of expertise and where they are likely to get a placement. Reputable firms will tell you whether they think they can be successful since they only get paid if they place your story.

If you want blanketed media coverage as well as placement in specific national magazines or on a few major TV shows of your choosing and the publicist you want to work with doesn't have a lot of experience with bigger media outlets, you might consider a team approach to publicity. That means hiring a pay-per-placement firm to

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concentrate only on the big media outlets and using a smaller publicist to pitch stories to the smaller media.

Advantages of pay-per-placement:

- This is the only form of billing in which the publicist can make you a guarantee: you pay only if you get the story.
- The agency assumes all the risk.
- The pay-per-placement fee usually includes things like creating a media kit and sending news releases.
- Pay-per-placement firms spend the majority of their time on contacting the media and little time on administrative chores that won't result in a placement.
- If you like the concept but you can't afford this method for your entire publicity campaign, you can use a pay-per-placement agency in combination with other publicists, particularly if you have a special need such as getting into several top-tier national magazines.

Disadvantages of pay-per-placement:

- It's not a viable option for clients who want massive coverage in numerous, untargeted media.
- While many journalists have gotten good stories from pay-per-placement firms, others might not look kindly on a story pitch if they know the person doing the pitching won't get paid unless the journalist bites because it makes them feel as though the publicist is trying to "sell" them a story.
- Because of the higher fees, this kind of service is often out of reach for many small businesses or those on a very limited budget.

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- If you suddenly get cold feet or change your mind when the firm gets a placement in a big outlet like CNN, the firm looks bad in the media's eyes and you have damaged your relationship with the firm. Some clients have been known to back down after the firm works like crazy to get them national publicity. Either they're afraid of being on national TV, or they're afraid of what the placement will cost them.
- Confusion can surface over the types of placements the client must pay for. If you're in a national newspaper today and the story is picked up by a national radio show four months from now, after your contract has expired, do you have to pay for the radio placement? **Be sure the contract spells this out.**

A Monthly Fee

Another billing method, though not widely practiced, is the "flat monthly fee" arrangement.

Lois Carter Fay of Strategic Business Partners in Massanutten, Virginia, who manages media relations campaigns, says it meets the needs of clients who want coverage in national as well as local publications. "The client pays a set monthly fee—say \$3,000 per month—that is not tied to actual hours or specific activities. Instead, the client looks for results over a period of time, generally one or two years. The client and consultant or agency review the results jointly two to four times a year."

Negotiating Fees

If you are tempted to ask the publicist to negotiate fees, don't do it. Here's why.

Let's say I'm the publicist and you're the client. I quote you an hourly rate of \$150. You really want to work with me but you can't afford me. So you ask me to lower my hourly rate to \$125 an hour. Reluctantly, I agree.

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I have three other clients, all of whom are paying me \$150 an hour. Guess which clients I will probably consider top priority and give my very best efforts? The other three, of course. If all four clients need me at the same time, your project will most likely end up at the bottom of the heap. That isn't necessarily fair, but it's human nature.

Also, the next time you want to contract with me for a project, you will already know that I'm willing to come down on my rates. So you may try to negotiate again to see if I'll go even lower. This is insulting. It will harm you in the long run. And it gets the relationship off to a rocky start.

You can, however, negotiate payment terms and ask whether the publicist offers special discounts if, for example, the entire project fee is paid up front. A publicist might agree to this because she gets all her money right away and can invest it in other areas of her business.

Which is Best for You?

Now that you know how publicists charge, you probably know which of those methods of billing you like best, depending on the type of work you need done and how you want to pay.

Make note of how you feel about the pricing issue, but don't lock yourself into anything. It's now time to do the necessary research before interviewing publicists.

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Chapter 5: What to Do Before the Interview

When it comes time for you to interview publicists either in person or over the phone, the good ones will also want to interview you. They will want to know what you hope to accomplish. Don't just say "I want to be in big national magazines." Instead, be specific. Say "I want to be in the major women's magazines such as Women's Day, Ladies' Home Journal, Cosmopolitan..."

Save time by first setting your goals and answering the following questions even before the first interview. Ask yourself:

- What do you hope to accomplish with publicity?
- Who do you need to reach?
- What do they want to hear?
- How do you want to be portrayed?
- Do you want print or broadcast, or both?
- How often do you want to appear?
- Do you want local, regional or national coverage?
- Why would the media be interested in your story?
- What makes your story different?
- What PR tasks, if any, can you perform on your own without help from a publicist?
- How much can you afford to spend? (Don't waste time by dancing around this issue. Choose a range NOW! You can always change your mind later.)

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Author Bernadette Williams says that at the first meeting, her publicist asked her for a “wish list” of what she wanted to achieve.

“This was great because it helped us both to get some clarity about expectations and to be realistic about the outcome of her work based on my available budget,” she said.

Paul Furiga, a former newspaper editor who now owns WordWrite Communications LLC, a Wexford, Pa. public relations firm, suggests that clients also come up with the answers to these two questions: “What is your definition of success?” and “What is your dream headline?”

“You get some great answers,” Furiga said. “Often, clients haven’t thought through what it means to achieve success. They should also think about the business objective they want their PR campaign to achieve. Mindless publicity without a well-articulated business objective is just that—mindless! I always talk about what we hope to do in terms of increasing sales, customer visits to a website, donations to a charity, etc. Not enough agencies talk about that—and too few clients ask about it.”

The First Phone Call

Now, call the office of the publicist you want to consider. **Tell them your budget and your publicity expectations right up front, even before you meet.** Candidates who are not a good match and don’t want to waste their time or yours will say so.

If you’re a small-business person, explain that you want someone who is sensitive to the financial restraints of small businesses. If they still agree to meet with you:

- Ask them to send you their standard marketing materials and any price sheets on retainer or contract relationships. Publicists who charge strictly by the project won’t have price sheets, however.
- **Find out if they have experience with placements in media you want to get into, or if they have worked with clients in your industry.** Authors should hire book publicists. High-tech companies should hire publicists familiar with high-tech

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publications and online media. Bankers should hire publicists familiar with the financial services and business media, and so on.

- Ask for background on their company.
- Ask if the publicist has a website.
- Ask if there's a fee for the initial meeting. If so, can the fee be applied against the cost of an eventual contract?
- Ask what they need from you to prepare for the meeting.

Now see how long it takes for the materials to arrive. Perfect publicists mail materials the same day. If it takes a long time to receive them, this is a bad sign. If they're this slow working with you—a potential new client—imagine how slow they'll be if a reporter requests your media kit.

While you're waiting for the materials to arrive, check the publicist's website. If they don't have one, this isn't necessarily a bad sign. Many don't, particularly those who work with only a select group of clients, or those in a certain specialty area. But if they have a website, visit it. Pay attention to anything that will give you a glimpse into their creativity. Check spelling and grammar. Do they have an online media room? If so, is it easy to navigate? What kind of image does their site project?

Look for articles or White Papers at the site. Sometimes these can be illuminating. So can books the publicist has written.

Author Rudy Wilson Galdonik of East Greenwich, Rhode Island, said he thought it was great that the publicist he was considering had written a book. Until he took the time to read it.

“It was awful!” he said. “The typos and writing style revealed that the book was only a means for him to call himself ‘a published author’ so he could market to others who sell books. Doing my homework provided good insight as to why I wasn't interested in working with this man.”

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Send Your Materials

To save time at your first meeting, send each candidate your marketing materials. If you will be working with a publicist to promote a particular product, send information on the product. Explain your objectives briefly and who you want to reach. You can also send a few recent reprints of articles about you.

Now that you've done your homework, it's time for the interview.

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Chapter 6: Questions to Ask During the Interview

First, let's get this out of the way.

Don't interview publicists for the sole purpose of "picking their brains" so you can get lots of free advice on how to manage your own publicity campaign, compile their ideas, then turn around and do it yourself. Perfect publicists might talk in general terms about your potential to get publicity. But the smart ones won't offer creative ideas about your project—and you shouldn't expect them to—until you sign on the dotted line.

Besides, great ideas are nothing more than great ideas. The execution is much more difficult. Selling a great idea to the media requires skill, experience and tenacity. Perfect publicists have all three. You probably don't or you'd be doing your publicity yourself.

Come to each telephone or in-person interview with a list of questions designed to help you determine which candidate is the best fit. Depending on the type and size of the project, here are questions you should consider asking.

Background and Experience

- What kind of experience do you have working with clients in the (fill in the blank) industry? If they haven't worked in your industry, don't dismiss them unless the industry is so specialized that it would take them weeks to learn about it.
- What kinds of publicity have you gotten for clients in this industry?
(Make sure they are experts in publicity, not in marketing or in niche areas like special event planning.)
- What kinds of contacts do you have in the (fill in the blank) media?
- Do you have contacts at local media outlets I want to get into?
(Make a note of names they mention. You can then call those journalists and ask what they think of the publicist.)

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- Do you have contacts at major media outlets I want to get into such as (fill in the blank)?
- What kinds of contacts do you have at radio and TV stations?
- Are any of my competitors your current clients? (If so, thank them for the interview and say good-bye. If at one time they worked for one of your competitors, this is an advantage because they have a hot and ready list of contacts.)
- What's the worst mistake you ever made on a client project?
- What did you learn from it?
- What kind of experience do you have with online media?
- How important is online media to my publicity campaign?
- Do you also do media coaching if I'm uncomfortable interviewing with reporters? If not, can you recommend a good coach?
- Does the coaching include taping the interview, then playing it back and critiquing me?
- Do you subscribe to ProfNet? (This is a subscription-based leads service that connects PR people with the media. It delivers up to 100 leads a day from reporters who are looking for specific types of sources. The perfect publicist subscribes to ProfNet. Learn more about it at <http://www.ProfNet.com>)
- Do you subscribe to a clipping service? (Most smaller publicists don't.)

Your Key Contact

- Who will be the key person working with me on this project?
- May I meet with them?

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- How much experience do they have?
- May I see a portfolio of their work?
- What happens if I'm unhappy with the job they are doing for me? Can I ask for someone new to be assigned to my project?

Written and Electronic Documents

- Will I have the chance to review and approve all documents before you send them to the media? **(The answer should be yes with the exception of email pitches.)**
- How long will I typically have to review a document?
- Will you share media contact information with me? That is, the media outlet, name of contact, address, phone and email address? (Most publicists, understandably, will not because their list has taken years to cultivate and they don't want you pestering their contacts.)
- Will all information (news releases, media kits, etc.) be given to me in electronic format as well as written, or is there an extra charge for that?
- Do you keep a media log that notes the progress and status of each media outlet we are targeting?
- In what format do you keep it and how often will you share it with me?

Communication

- What method of communication do you prefer—phone or email?
- How often will you update me on your progress?
- Can I call you after hours or on weekends or holidays?

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- Can I call when you are on vacation?
- If you are unavailable, who will be assigned to my project?
- Will you give me your home phone number and cellphone number?
- Do you have a policy on how quickly you respond to media inquiries?
(Perfect publicists leave instructions for the media on their voicemail messages, explaining how they can be reached quickly. So call their phone number and listen to their message.)

Priorities and the Scope of Work

- Based on what I told you about my publicity goals, what projects do you think should be included in the scope of work? (Media kit, news releases, media coaching, etc.)
- What do you think are the most important strategies of a good publicity campaign? **(Beware of the publicist who says “news releases.” These are not strategies. They are tools. They are important, but not nearly as important as a targeted campaign, building and establishing strong relationships with key media contacts, relevant and compelling story pitches, and follow up. Award extra points to the publicist who says “helping the media do their jobs while trying to achieve your publicity goals.”)**
- What do you think about the importance of articles written by me?
- Can you help me write those articles?
- What’s your philosophy on news releases?
- How long are the news releases you usually write? (The best releases are one page. Anything more than that wastes your money and the media’s time.)

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- If I showed you three news releases I wrote, would you be willing to critique them for me and explain what you would have done differently?
- What is your philosophy on media kits? (**Bigger is not better. Flashy isn't either. Media kits should be compact and concise and void of ostentatious trappings like top-quality paper stock and gold-embossed folders which will only drive up your costs. Award points to the publicist who suggests an online media kit without any prompting from you.**)
- What do you think of online media kits? (Beware of the publicist who says they aren't important.)
- Do you have experience creating online kits?
- How do you keep costs down while producing a quality media kit?
- To keep costs down, can we include in the media kit materials I already have produced, such as my professional profile and a fact sheet about my business?
- May I see three or four samples of print and online kits you have created for other clients?
- May I see the best three pieces of work (news releases, pitch letters, etc.) that show your creativity?
- If I get TV or radio interviews, will you accompany me to the interview?
- What will you do while I am at the interview? (Give points to the publicist who wants to be present at the interview, then later critique you. Or to the one who will be working the phones, trying to get you more interviews nearby on that same day, or keeping in touch with media contacts. Remove points from the one who wants to wait in the lobby and read a magazine while you're talking to the reporter.)

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- If I get a speaking engagement, would you be willing to come and hear me, then critique me?
- Can our work together include you training me on what you are doing, so that when our project is complete and I know what I'm doing, I can manage my own publicity campaign?
- What types of clients are not necessarily a good fit for you?
- What do you think about the possibility of working on this project?
(Listen for enthusiastic comments about your company, your product or your service. Or does the publicist sound like he's just trying to hustle another job?)
- Do you have any reservations about working on this project?
- What do you expect from me while I am working with you?

Measures of Success

- How will we know whether this publicity campaign is successful? (The client, as well as the publicist, must agree on these important points beforehand. **Make sure they are listed in the contract.**)
- Aside from a certain number of articles or TV or radio appearances, what else can we include in the measures of success? (In other words, what has to occur as a RESULT of the publicity in order for it to be successful?)
- What recourse do I have if the measures of success are not met?
- If we're at the end of the project and the measures of success have not been met, would you be willing to work with me at no additional charge until the measures of success are met? (**Be sure it is stated in the contract.**)

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- ❑ What can you guarantee me? (The publicist can guarantee that the strategies they will use are the best. Pay-per-placement agencies will guarantee you that you don't pay unless you get placed. **Beyond that, beware of any other guarantees, particularly promises that you will be covered by a certain media outlet.**)

You can add other questions to the list, of course. But asking the ones I've suggested will help you choose the candidate who is best for you.

Be sure to give the publicist time to ask you lots of questions, too, and to make a formal presentation. In fact, review the list of questions above and be ready to answer them if the publicist throws them back at you.

If you work in a large organization, give each candidate an organizational chart showing names and official titles of people who they are likely to work with. Ask candidates if they want other materials, too, such as your most recent annual report or a video about your company.

If at this point you like what you hear, and you ask the candidate to submit a written proposal, be ready to respond to this question which every smart publicist should ask:

“Who, other than you, will be responsible for deciding which publicist to hire?”

If your boss must make the final decision based on your recommendation, be honest and say so. The candidate might want to meet with the boss before spending time writing a proposal.

Why? To make sure that the boss's goals are your goals. To make sure that the boss's measures of success are your measures of success. To give the publicist a chance to impress the person who holds the ultimate power to hire them. Besides, you shouldn't be responsible for selling the publicist to your boss. That's the publicist's job. So put your ego aside and give the candidate a chance.

If you lie and say the final decision is up to you, you'll look foolish later if your boss vetoes your decision.

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Chemistry

During the interview, pay attention to how you feel about the candidate. If something bothers you, but you aren't sure what, it might be a sign that their personality or chemistry doesn't mesh well with yours. You can't always ask "chemistry" questions. Sometimes you just have to trust your gut.

You can also look for specific traits that will help you make the best choice.

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Chapter 7: Qualities of the Perfect Publicist

I asked readers of my ezine, “The Publicity Hound’s Tips of the Week,” to describe the qualities they look for—or wished they had looked for—in the perfect publicist.

My readers are small-business owners, public relations and marketing directors at large and small companies, professional speakers, consultants, executive directors of non-profits, and department heads at government agencies, to name just a few.

Here is their list, along with a few qualities I added. Several of these have been discussed in previous chapters. But I’m mentioning them again so you can use this as a checklist in determining your final candidates.

- Experience, with a strong track record of successes. **This is at the top of the list for a good reason.**
- Impeccable oral and written communication skills.
- They are well-groomed and present themselves well. Remember that they will be representing YOU in front of the media.
- Creative. They should suggest one idea after another on an ongoing basis, even after you’ve been working with them for months. How do you find this out during the interview? You ask the questions I suggested in the previous chapter. But also ask their references. More about references a little later.
- Curious. Make note of how many questions the publicist asks you during the interview. They should be curious about your background, experience, business philosophies—things that might lend themselves to story ideas later. Beware of the publicists who seem disinterested in you and talk only about themselves.

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- ❑ A sense of urgency. Make note of how quickly the candidate responds to your phone calls and emails. Do you have to wait a day or two for the publicist to get back to you? If so, that kind of responsiveness to media requests will be deadly.
- ❑ Disciplined follow-up. If your interview process is slower than you had hoped, and they don't hear from you for a week or two, do they follow up with you to see where the project stands—and do so without being a pest? When working with the media, follow-up is critical.
- ❑ Outgoing, energetic and determined. These should be given more points than “a big name.” I've met a few well-known public relations people whose names I had heard for years. But when I met them, they looked tired and listless, as though they wished they were working in any job other than P.R. Maybe they had a bad day. Or maybe they're always like this.
- ❑ Honest. Some of the questions in the previous chapter (their worst mistake, clients that weren't a good fit, etc.) are designed to get them to talk honestly about their past experiences. If they dodged the questions, beware. The perfect publicist will be honest with you.
- ❑ They offer value beyond what you would expect. You can find out more about this when you check references.
- ❑ Friendly. This is imperative. They don't need to be chummy with you or with their media contacts. But they must be open and approachable. And they must know how to accept “no” gracefully from gruff reporters.
- ❑ Professional from start to finish. Your reputation with the media hinges on how your publicist performs.
- ❑ Trustworthy. Was the publicist able to earn your trust without making outrageous claims or promises? If so, they can probably earn the media's trust, too.

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- ❑ Confident. Publicists deal with rejection almost daily. They have to bounce back from every “no thanks” they hear, knowing they’re that much closer to a “yes.”
- ❑ Enthusiastic. I wouldn’t hire someone to promote me who was less than enthusiastic about me or my business. You shouldn’t either.

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Chapter 8: Checking References and Signing the Contract

Once you've chosen your top candidate and reviewed their proposal, make a note of anything you think needs to be changed or added. That includes scope of work, measures of success, any joint accountabilities, or questions regarding fees.

Then check references. Don't let yourself become so giddy with excitement over an exceptional candidate that you miss this critical step. If you're tempted to jump ahead and just hire your top choice, go back and read Chapter 2: How to Avoid the Publicist from Hell. Several of those stories were submitted by people who admitted they never checked references.

References

If you interview four or five candidates, don't spend time checking references on each. Only ask for references from your top candidate, or the top two candidates if everything else is equal and it's a toss-up.

Ask if you can have the names, phone numbers and email addresses of three current or former clients.

Here is what you should ask the references:

- What kind of job did the publicist do for you?
- How many media placements did you get?
- Of those you mentioned, which were the most valuable and why?
- What did those placements do for you? (A CEO might like the cover story he got in Business Week because it stroked his ego. But ask about the VALUE of the cover story. What, specifically, did it accomplish?)

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- What measurable results did you see from the publicity campaign? (Did the publicity build on itself long after the publicist was gone? Does the media now view you as an expert in your field? Did the publicity do what you wanted it to do?)
- What kinds of additional value did the publicist bring to your project?
- What did you like best about the publicist?
- What did you like least?
- If they need improvement in any one area, what would it be?
- What's the best way to work with them?
- Would you work with them again?
- What advice do you have for me if I hire them?

When you ask your top candidate or candidates for references, also ask for the contact information for any client that fired them before a project was completed. You want to know if it was because the client was unhappy with the results of the project, such as too few media placements, which will reflect poorly on the publicist. Or whether it was because the publicist had what the client called “outlandish” ideas that the conservative agree with but that might be a good match with your ideas.

Also listen closely for “disagreements” between the client and the publicist. Some clients think they know more about publicity than the publicist.

Rank your final candidates

After you have checked references, it's time to choose your Number 1 candidate. Use the handy chart on the following page to assign points to the categories in which your top candidates will be judged.

USE THE POINT SCALE AT RIGHT TO ASSIGN POINTS IN EACH CATEGORY BELOW	Excellent (4 pts.)	Above Average (3 pts.)	Average (2 pts.)	Below Average (0 pts.)
A GOOD FIT				
I feel comfortable working with them				
Our personalities mesh well				
Enthusiastic about my product or service				
Asked a lot of questions to learn about me				
Billing method meets my needs				
Size of the company meets my needs				
Provides value-added services				
Has a plan for resolving conflicts				
Will communicate well with me				
Subtotal:				
BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE				
Strong media contact list				
Creative				
Measurable results for past clients				
Accountable for results				
Strategic thinker				
Experience with online media				
Strong track record				
References				
Subtotal:				
TRAITS OF A PERFECT PUBLICIST				
Friendly				
Presents themselves well				
Outgoing, energetic, determined				
A sense of urgency				
Honest and trustworthy				
Friendly				
Written communication skills				
Verbal communication skills				
Subtotal:				
TOTAL:				

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The Signed Agreement

Once you have made your Number One choice, ask for any necessary revisions in the proposal or contract. Then once it is acceptable to you, sign two copies, ask the publicist to sign them, and keep one copy for yourself.

Now, at long last, it's finally time to start your publicity campaign!

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Chapter 9: How to Work with Your Publicist

For every Publicist from Hell, there's a Client from Hell. This chapter will help you avoid becoming one of them.

Publicist Phyllis Evans of Mill Valley, California once worked with an attorney who wanted to announce his new conflict-resolution business to the local community. She wrote a pitch targeted to the business editor of the local newspaper, gathered names of satisfied clients and compiled a glossary of common legal terms that could be used in a sidebar.

“Just prior to sending the pitch, the client told me he had bought advertising in this publication, and the ad rep had offered to hand-deliver our pitch to the business editor,” Evans said. “I advised against this approach, warning the client that most reputable editors are not influenced by advertisers, and will often avoid covering them if it looks like there is something ‘under the table’ going on.”

The attorney insisted. After all, his business partner in a different part of the state had done the same thing with favorable results.

“Against my better judgment, I allowed the ad rep to give the pitch packet to the business editor,” Evans said. “The sad outcome was the business editor refused to cover any aspect of this business, even though it would have made a great feature article. There was a brief mention in the new business listings.”

That's a classic case of a pushy client just making a mess of things. When you hire a publicist, promise yourself that you will NEVER do that or any of these:

- Tell the publicist you think you know better than he does do how to do a certain task he's done for years, with great success.
- Rewrite the publicist's news releases.
- Go behind the publicist's back and send letters, gifts or anything else to media contacts.

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- Force the publicist to work within certain constraints because you're too cheap to spend the money to do your publicity campaign right. A publicist called me recently to complain that her client refused to make his news releases available to the media in anything other than a PDF attachment that is emailed. Most reporters don't bother opening email attachments. The publicist suggested that he post the releases at his website, but he said that was too much trouble and too expensive.
- Tell the publicist you want national coverage, then get cold feet and refuse an interview when a major magazine or a TV news show calls.
- Insist that the publicist ask a reporter to let you read a story before it is printed.
- Tell the publicist you don't want to interview with reporters who are out to write "bad news" stories about you.
- Demand that the publicist write and send a news release about something she knows is not newsworthy.

Now, here's a list of 15 things you SHOULD do.

1. Start with a plan. You and your publicist must know and agree which audience you are targeting, how you will reach them repetitively, how you will capture their attention and why they will buy your product or service.
2. Explain your work style. Do you like to be involved at every step of a project, or do you like to give direction and let the publicist handle the project?
3. Explain how you want to receive updates (phone, fax, email).
4. Be willing to educate the publicist on the product or service you are promoting.
5. Communicate frequently with your publicist. If you don't like an angle, explain why and listen to their response. The publicist knows how to sell it to the media and your other targeted markets. You should always have final approval of all

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materials, but your publicist must be fully behind the story angles to do the best job for you.

6. Revisit your plan often and decide whether to stay on track or follow new opportunities.
7. Ask the publicist what you can do to save money, such as Internet marketing, yet not compromise the effectiveness of the campaign.
8. Before you call your publicist, make a list of questions or concerns you have throughout your campaign and fax or email them so the publicist can return the call when it is most convenient. Ask your publicist when the majority of follow-up calls to the media are made, and avoid calling at those times.
9. Encourage your publicist. As they make your media calls, they hear “no” more than a salesperson and a 2-year-old combined. Ask what common rejections they are receiving so you can offer new ideas.
10. Ask the publicist how you will know what is happening throughout your campaign. Will you receive weekly reports? Reports as possibilities arise? Reports when results happen?
11. Get involved. If you let the publicist do everything and make all the decisions, you’ll be stuck once the contact has expired and you’re on your own. Ask the publicist to teach you a few skills you can use after the project is completed.
12. Be honest with the publicist and explain what information about your company cannot be shared with the media. Are any areas of your company off-limits to photographers? Are any executives not to be bothered with media interviews? Are certain clients never to be identified?
13. Take the time to answer the publicist’s questions so they can learn about your business quickly.
14. Mention problems as soon as they occur, before the problems have a chance to become even bigger.

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15. Ask your publicist periodically, “What can I do to help you?”

Follow these guidelines and you’ll be off to a great start!

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Chapter 10: Tips for Authors and Small Publishers

If you've written a book, you probably have spent many months toiling over the book proposal, negotiating with the publisher, writing the book, rewriting it, preparing your marketing materials and determining how to sell it. If you're self-published, you've probably done even more.

The choice of who to hire to do your publicity—or help with a portion of it—will be one of the most important decisions you will make. Don't blow it by hiring the first publicist you hear about. You can turn over the entire job of promoting your book to a publicist. But the more actively involved you are, the better.

Judith Appelbaum, a publishing insider and former managing editor of Publishers Weekly, offers this advice: “If you have a book coming out, you have to get heavily—and intelligently—involved in marketing it or prepare to see it fail.” Read the entire interview at the Writer's Write website at <http://www.writerswrite.com/journal/jun98/appelbm.htm>

Another mistake authors make is judging the success of their publicist on the number of books they sell.

“Selling books is not PR's job,” said Kim Dushinski, co-owner of Marketability, a public relations firm that works with authors. “It is a distribution function. That can mean bookstores, selling from your website, or through amazon.com, or through an 800 or any one of a number of other ways.”

She says it's good to share your expectations with your publicist, but don't place the entire job of sales on their shoulders.

In earlier chapters, I emphasized the importance of making sure the publicist has experience in your topic area. This is imperative if you are an author. But authors should take it one step further. **The perfect publicist should have experience promoting books in your genre.**

Author Carolyn Howard-Johnson explains.

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“You are buying her Rolodex of personal working relationships with editors,” Howard-Johnson said. “And those relationships must be, to a great extent, contacts who might have an interest in YOUR project. A book publicist who has had mostly experience with mystery writers deals mostly with bookstores that dedicate themselves to mysteries and has a HUGE file of names of reviewers interested in psycho/thrillers. But she probably won’t be able to do you much good if you write literary novels.”

She speaks from experience.

“Lukewarm results were not the fault of my publicist. She did a great job with what she had. She just didn’t have what I needed.”

Howard-Johnson explains why she hired her.

“The price was right and I thought that with my PR background and a reasonable amount of time at my disposal, that I could supplement her efforts effectively. It just didn’t work out that way. I just didn’t have a lot of effective contacts in the book world.”

Author Terri Casey, who wrote “Pride & Joy: The Lives & Passions of Women Without Children,” said she found publicist Joanne McCall a good fit. Not only did McCall know how to promote the book, but she filled a void that Casey didn’t anticipate.

“During my book tour, as I was going from city to city, interview to interview, book signing to book signing, it got pretty lonely out there,” Casey said. “All I had to do was call Joanne and she really knew how to pump me up and lift my spirits.”

That’s the importance of chemistry. And it often carries as much weight as having a publicist who has experience with authors in your genre and great media contacts in the outlets you want to reach.

McCall also has a word of advice for self-published authors who mistakenly believe that because they have a distributor, the rest is easy.

“Often they think that because they have a distributor, their books can get into stores,” McCall said. “This is NOT true! By far, the biggest problem for self-published authors

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is distribution. They mistakenly think publicity is all that's needed, but what they don't understand is that major publishers have sales reps in the field who call on bookstores.”

That's the kind of hands-on work that self-published authors need to do, too.

“Self-published authors also need to be in touch with bookstores, telling them about the media they're getting, etc.,” McCall said. “It's a lot of work! Many don't do it and would rather blame a publicist.” McCall says she takes time to educate the author and sometimes refers them to a marketing/distribution specialist, and makes sure a number of other things are already in place before she agrees to take them on as a client.

Where, then, do you find publicists who work mostly with authors?

- Visit <http://www.readersread.com/booklinks/> and find even more links and resource information for your particular genre.
- Ask other authors in the same genre who they recommend.
- Contact a trade association for authors and publishers and ask who they recommend. You can find links for more than 50 associations at the Midwest Book Review website at <http://www.midwestbookreview.com/bookbiz/pubassoc.htm>
- Midwest Book Review also has a wonderful resource at http://www.midwestbookreview.com/bookbiz/pub_mkt.htm where you will find more than 50 links covering everything from independent book publicists to resources for writers. You can probably spend weeks researching just the links on this page.
- John Kremer's Book Marketing Update site is a goldmine of resources for authors. At <http://www.bookmarket.com/101pr.html> you can find a list of more than 125 book publicists, media coaches and other resources for your publicity campaign.

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- Dan Poynter's site at <http://www.parapublishing.com/getpage.cfm?file=/homepage.html&user=%%user%%> has free articles, resources and special reports for authors and publishers.
- Post questions to online discussion forums for authors and publicists. The BookzonePro website features an online discussion forum plus lots of other resources. You can find a list of book publicists at <http://www.bookzonepro.com/sources/index.cfm>
- You can find book publicists at the I-PR (Internet PR) discussion list. Click on the link below to join the discussion group. <http://www.adventive.com/lists/ipr/summary.html>
- The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators has a discussion board for members at <http://www.scbwi.org>
- If your book has been published by a publishing house, but your contract with them has expired, ask for recommendations.

Look for a Good Match

Many publicists you will find from the sources above have very different service and pricing packages, and you must determine which one best fits your needs and budget.

Kim Dushinski of Marketability at <http://www.Marketability.com> said her firm discontinued its monthly retainer billing arrangement with authors because "the return on investment just wasn't there." The retainer was \$3,000 to \$5,000 a month and even though the company had a string of publicity successes for its clients, most authors couldn't sell enough books to make that kind of investment worthwhile.

Today, the firm offers a \$5,000 "PR QuickStart Campaign" for authors whose first print run is under 10,000 copies. It includes a written news release, collaboration on the best story angle, a hand-selected media list, broadcast fax, paid ads in publications such as Radio/TV Interview Report, a clipping service and posting the news release to Internet

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sites. It's much more affordable, she said, and it has produced results such as placements on the "Jenny Jones" show and "Today" and in the Associated Press.

Interview several publicists, and compare their prices and services.

11 Ways to Help Your Publicist

If you're hiring a book publicist, get a head start by understanding what you can do to play an active role in your publicity campaign. The more you can do, the less the publicist has to do, and that means you don't need as big a budget.

Because you are a writer, you have a huge advantage over people in many other industries who must rely on their publicist for everything. For example, you can write your own how-to articles, opinion columns, tip sheets and letters to the editor. You can create a list of questions that will be submitted later to radio talk show hosts. You can create fun quizzes which your publicist can pitch to newspapers and magazines.

Here are other ways to help. Don't do any of these things, however, unless you first discuss them with your publicist.

1. One of the biggest mistakes authors make—whether or not they are working with a publicist—is trying to create media attention by pitching only their book, or the fact they are an author. I frequently tell publicists, "Don't pitch authors! Pitch issues."
2. Don't pitch only your book. Think broader and pitch an entire TV show. For example, if you wrote a book about how children of divorced parents suffer long-term effects well into adulthood, don't try to entice TV producers with the book. Entice them with an entire show around the topic of "Children of divorced parents: Do they ever recover?" Then suggest two or three other guests that tie into your topic who also could be interviewed, preferably someone who is on the other side of the issue. If you can do that, you've just given producers an idea for an entire show, and they're more likely to bite because you've done their work for them.

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By Joan Stewart, The Publicity Hound

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3. Be sure you have a good quality professional photo of yourself. I'm amazed at the number of authors I write stories about who don't have photos I can use. Discuss with your publicist how many photos you will need and whether you should have the photographer take more than just the standard above-the-shoulders shot.
4. Use a "tip sheet" in your media kit that ties into your topic. Example: You write a book about how to discipline children. Your tip sheet might be something like "9 Tips for Calming Your Child's Temper Tantrum." Each tip should be no longer than one or two short sentences. The media love these tips because they can reprint them as a sidebar to a longer story. (See Special Report #16: How to Write Tips Sheets That Catch the Media's Attention" at <http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/reports.html>)
5. Place your contact information on the home page of your website. Sometimes when trying to contact an author, I go to their website and then search in desperation for contact information. Don't make reporters work hard to find you.
6. Don't be afraid of controversy. The more controversial you are willing to be, the greater your chances of coverage by the media, particularly broadcast. Radio shows in particular don't want only light. They want heat.
7. Write an opinion column that takes a strong stand on one side of a controversial issue that ties into the topic of your book. Then target the column to the publication that is read by people who you want to buy your book. Just be sure the topic is a good fit with your target publication.
8. If you want to get into a particular publication, call the advertising department and ask for a copy of their free Editorial Calendar. This is a listing of all special sections and topics planned for the year. Review the calendar and find a specific issue where your topic would be a good fit. Then call the publication, ask for the name of the person who edits that section, and write or e-mail them with your story idea. Do this several months before the publication is printed.
9. Get onto the speaking circuit. You can sell books from the back of the room and use public speaking to position yourself as an expert. Read lots of free articles on how to be a great speaker at Tom Antion's

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websight at <http://www.kickstartcart.com/app/aftrack.asp?afid=43188>

10. Piggyback story ideas about your book off your own holiday, or other holidays or anniversaries. Two great references are Chase's Calendar of Events at <http://www.chases.com> or in the reference section of major libraries, and the book Celebrate Today! by John Kremer at <http://www.celebratetoday.com> Also, see "Special Report #45: How to Generate National Publicity from Your own Day, Week or Month of the Year" at <http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/reports.html>
11. You'll find many more ideas in my "Special Report #40: 42 Publicity Tips for Authors and Small Publishers." Order at <http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/reports.html>

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Chapter 11: Tips for Musicians

Jana La Sorte, the founder of Janlyn PR, an independent agency which specializes in jazz, writes for the “In 10” column at the All About Jazz website at <http://www.allaboutjazz.com>

She has given me permission to print several columns she has written on how musicians can find and work with publicists. She serves on the board of the Telluride Jazz Society, which produces the annual jazz festival in Colorado. She has served on PR panels at George Washington University, The Kennedy Center and Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, among others. She is also the co-creator and producer of “Sidemen Steppin’ Out,” a Monday night jazz series in New York City which gives lesser-known sidemen (and women!) the opportunity to step out as leaders. You can search the All About Jazz site for other columns she has written. [Mailto:jana@janlynpr.com](mailto:jana@janlynpr.com)

An Introduction to Music Publicity

By Jana La Sorte

1. Publicity is a subset of PR.
2. Publicity is the only PR tactic that relays information to a “gatekeeper” audience—the media—in order to get to the larger audience: the public.
3. The direct audience for publicity is the media most important to the client’s objectives.
4. A person who works in publicity is called a publicist.
5. A publicist in jazz usually works with a record label, an artist or an organization to get their information to the media that covers jazz: reviewers, critics, writers, radio programmers, TV producers, Internet editors, etc.

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6. Record labels often have staff publicists who hire independent publicists to focus on specific artists and CDs, because there is too much work for the label's publicist.
7. Independent publicists like myself are consultants to the label, artist or organization for agreed-upon periods of time and money.
8. Whoever hires—and pays—the independent publicist is the direct client.
9. The publicist's goal is to get the client's information to the media in order to obtain coverage for the client and its CD, show, event, etc.
10. Coverage can mean a CD review, a show review or preview, an interview feature story, a radio interview, a TV appearance, etc.

When You Need a Publicist

By Jana La Sorte

1. You don't know how to implement a media outreach campaign.
2. You don't have any time to conduct a campaign.
3. You have no interest in reaching out to the media.
4. You don't know who the appropriate media are to reach out to.
5. You know who the right media but don't know how to find them or get updated contact information.
6. Your label is not giving your release much—or any—publicity support either through in-house PR or contracted PR help.
7. You think you need some help creating an interesting, updated press package.

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8. You want more exposure for your work on a local, regional, national or international level.
9. You want to change your image using media attention for a new project, etc.
10. You want the additional impact using media attention for a new project, CD, tour or event.

How to Find a Publicist

By Jana La Sorte

1. Contact artists you know and admire and ask for their referrals.
2. Contact local clubs and radio personnel for referrals, especially if you're seeking a more localized PR person.
3. If you're looking for more nationally-oriented PR help, contact record labels and artists you admire for their suggestions. This can include their websites too because the PR agents might be listed there.
4. Read industry and music magazines—both local and national.
5. Make notes of artists who seem to get a good deal of coverage. There is probably a good publicist behind the story. Seek out this artist, their label, website, etc. to track down the PR person.
6. Once you track down the publicists, contact them directly and ask them to exchange packages and information in hopes of possibly working together.
7. Discuss the timeline of your project and everything that goes with it—touring, special concerts, partnerships, etc. that can provide solid media angles.
8. Discuss your media history—who has covered you, how you were covered, etc.—and your goals for the new project.

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9. Discuss your ideal PR targets and results.
10. Discuss fees and negotiate if possible. This may involve renegotiating the agreed-upon work load.

The Job of a Music Publicist

By Jana La Sorte

1. The first step the publicist takes is to meet with the prospective client to discuss the specific project, goals, timing, budget, etc.
2. After that meeting, the two parties agree to the terms of the contract (time period, reporting periods, fee).
3. The publicist then collects all background materials from the client such as old press clips, bios, press releases and CDs, then reviews and prepares new bios, press releases, fact sheets, quote sheets, etc.
4. The client approves the press materials.
5. The publicist tailors the media list to the project: type of music; budget; national, regional and local contacts; tour-related media, etc.
6. The mailing is sent to the media list.
7. The publicist contacts media on the list to make sure each outlet received the materials and will review and consider it for coverage.
8. The publicist contacts all media again for the same reason. And again...and again...and often again...
9. The publicist works with media contacts to confirm information, get pieces placed, coordinate interviews and (re)send materials.

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10. The publicist informs clients on a regular basis with reports detailing media coverage status and advises where they left off at the contract's end.

How to Work with Your Publicist

By Jana La Sorte

1. Make sure you and your publicist are “on the same page” in terms of goals, expectations and measurement of performance.
2. Provide your publicist with all important background information from your past experiences: awards, touring, press clips, significant radio and TV appearances, partnerships or sponsorships you have.
3. Work with your publicist on finalizing the press kit materials so you feel they represent your style, personality and experiences as best they can.
4. Be timely in responding to your publicist with approval on materials, interview availability, contact information, etc.
5. Pay your publicist promptly per the schedule you both agreed to.
6. Provide your publicist with your tour dates and other professional activities as early as possible.
7. Do not make assumptions—ask questions if you do not know what is happening or why.
8. Be a strategic partner to your publicist. Realize your relationship requires that both of you constantly inform the other in order to best find and convert opportunities for coverage.
9. Understand the limitations of a publicist—they can only present information and work to persuade writers and editors to write a piece. A publicist cannot write or publish the piece itself.

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10. Think of publicity like baseball—your publicist is pinch-hitting for you. (S)he wants to hit a home run for you but has to take a lot of swings before it might happen.

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Chapter 12: Tools for Publicists and Self-Promoters

If you're a larger organization, sometimes it pays to hire a full-time media relations director to spearhead your publicity campaign, or train your current director on how to do it right.

That's what the Milwaukee Repertory Theater decided to do in 2000 when it was seeking national media coverage. Media relations manager Annie Jurczyk said that's when she started her job, and one of her first goals was to tackle the age-old question of whether to add a publicist.

"To guide my decision, I called 10 theaters across the United States that had been in national publications and simply asked how they accomplished the task," she said. She purposely stayed away from New York City theaters.

"Half the group did use a publicist and half did not," she said. "Of the half that did, I asked if it was worth the time and money. They all responded no."

Her theater even went so far as to meet with a few of the New York theater publicists and was told "No one cares about theater in the Midwest."

"We decided to educate ourselves on the process, thus my first Publicity Hound seminar," Jurczyk said. "Although it has taken two years, our world premiere of *Moby Dick* last September had reviews in the *New York Times*, *Variety*, the *Chicago Tribune* and listings in the *Wall Street Journal*. In December, we made *Time* magazine's 'Top 10 theatrical experience' list. Needless to say, we were thrilled!"

If you're hiring a fulltime PR director, a part-time publicist, or contracting for a large or small job, you and your publicist can take advantage of a variety of tools that will help achieve your goals:

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“The Publicity Hound’s Tips of the Week,” delivered every Tuesday, is a free weekly ezine on how to generate free publicity. Subscribe and receive free the handy checklist “89 Reasons to Send a News Release.”

<http://www.PublicityHound.com>

The Publicity Hound, an 8-page print subscription newsletter, is delivered 6 times a year and will be delivered in PDF format only starting in July 2003. If you like my free tips of the week, you’ll love this newsletter with articles that are more in-depth than those you get for free. Back issues available.

<http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/ph.html>

Content-rich, in-depth Special Reports in electronic format show you how to solve a particular publicity problem. Choose from 45 titles. Only \$9 each.

<http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/reports.html>

Media Relations Power: 199 Ways to Get Free Publicity for Your Company, Cause or Product includes 21 of The Publicity Hound’s most popular special reports, delivered as an ebook.

<http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/ebooks/mediarelationspower.html>

If you have a particularly publicity problem, there’s probably a CD or audio cassette that can help you. Choose from more than 30 titles. Most are recordings of my popular teleseminars.

<http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/tapes.html>

How to Plan and Promote Sizzling Special Events includes six one-hour audio tapes and a list of 15 must-have checklists on CD. Perfect for anyone who plans simple to spectacular special events. <http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity/promote.html>

How to be a Kick-Butt Publicity Hound, a 300-page ebook, is a one-stop shop that shows you how to manage a publicity campaign from start to finish. Co-written with Tom Antion.

<http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity/publicityhound.htm>

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“Savvy Media Relations: How to Get FREE Print Space and Air Time” is my most popular workshop, customized for your industry and perfect for your next convention or in-house training program. For availability, call 262-284-7451 or <mailto:JStewart@PublicityHound.com>

There you have it, Publicity Hounds. Please feel free to email me with questions or suggestions about anything in this ebook.

Best of luck with your publicity campaign. And let me know about your success. [Mailto:JStewart@PublicityHound.com](mailto:JStewart@PublicityHound.com)

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Glossary

Don't make your publicist spend a lot of extra time explaining terms to you. Many of the terms you and your publicist will discuss are listed below.

Advertising—Paid space in a newspaper, magazine, newsletter or other print media. Or paid airtime on television or radio. The space is usually used to sell a product or a service, or deliver a key message.

Advertorial—Paid advertising made to look like a news story. These often appear in special sections within newspapers or magazines.

Arbitron—A rating service that measures audiences for radio stations. Arbitron ratings are used to determine a station's advertising rates.

Art—Any pictorial matter such as photos, illustrations, cartoons, charts, maps or graphs.

Assignment Editor—The person at a TV station who assigns reporters to cover stories. This is usually your key contact.

Bar graph or bar chart—A method for displaying statistics through the use of bars in various lengths.

Beat Reporter—A reporter who covers a specific topic such as the environment or lifestyle issues, or a specific industry such as banking or manufacturing. Beat reporters are often more valuable contacts than editors because they must come up with story ideas every day.

B-Roll—Video footage that provides interesting visuals about your company, for use by TV stations. It is used as background information and usually accompanies the station's own interview.

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Bite—A slang term that’s short for sound bite, a small portion of a taped interview which is edited into the reporter’s story. A sound bite can be from 5 to 15 seconds and usually includes the most interesting, descriptive part of someone’s quote.

Bright—A short news item that can be funny, entertaining or enlightening. Brights are usually used as filler throughout newspapers and magazines.

Bullets—These are the circles that are used to highlight major points in a print story. Use bullets in your how-to or advice articles, or when writing an opinion column.

Bylined Article—An article that identifies the author, who either works for the media company, is a freelancer, or is a reader who has submitted a column or other piece. A byline looks like this:

By Joan Stewart
The Daily Woof

City desk—The desk in a newspaper newsroom through which most of the local news flows.

City editor—The editor in charge of local coverage such as politics, police news and other breaking news.

City room—This is an out-of-date term used to describe the newsroom in a newspaper. Today, it’s simply referred to as a newsroom.

Clipping Service—A company that monitors print and broadcast media for stories about your company. You pay a fee and, in return, the clipping service forwards articles or video in which your company is mentioned.

Copy—Another word for story or article. Ad copy refers to the words that are found in an ad.

Corporate Backgrounder—A document written for a media kit that provides background and context about the company. This should be factual and not promotional.

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Correction—A small notice in a newspaper or magazine that “corrects” an earlier news story. If your story includes errors, always ask for a correction.

Editor—Usually the person in the top position in a newsroom. There may be a variety of other lower-level editors such as the managing editor, city editor, features editor, sports editor, etc.

Editorial—An opinion piece, usually unsigned, that states the newspaper’s opinion on an issue and usually appears on the editorial page. If you don’t agree with an editorial, you can respond to it through a letter to the editor.

Editorial Coverage—Refers to all publicity given to your company (excluding advertising) in media outlets spanning print, broadcast and Internet.

Editorial Page—The page that includes opinions expressed by the newspaper through editorials, by columnists through syndicated columns, and by readers through things such as letters to the editor and opinion pieces.

Exclusive—An important story given to one media outlet, which will usually guarantee you more coverage from that one outlet than you would normally get if everyone else had the story.

Fact Sheet—A one-page information sheet that allows reporters to view a summary of the company at a glance. Fact sheets help increase the accuracy of a story.

FAQ—Frequently asked questions, along with the answers. FAQs should be included in your media kit.

Feature—Unlike a hard news story, a feature story is less timely and takes a more in-depth look at a particular person or issue.

Freelancer—A writer who is an independent contractor and provides occasional articles for a media outlet or a variety of media outlets. A freelancer can also be a photographer, artist or designer who does piecemeal work.

Hard News—Hard news is timely, breaking news, such as accidents, police news, world events, major announcements, etc. Hard news usually takes priority over features.

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Hit—A slang term that refers to media coverage obtained by your company.

How-to Article—An article that explains how to do something, or how to solve a particular problem. Can be written by reporters, or by readers who are experts in a particular topic.

Industry Backgrounder—This is not for publication but provides background that explains the current state of the industry and how your company fits into it. This should be part of your media kit.

Illustration—A drawing, painting or a sketch. Reporters sometimes will ask if you have any ideas to illustrate a story.

Jumpline—A term used when an article must be continued or “jumped” to another page. A jumpline looks like this: “Continued on Page 5” or “Continued from Page 1”.

Key Message—The major point you want to make during an interview with a reporter.

Letter to the Editor—A letter written by a reader and submitted to a newspaper or magazine for publication, usually on the editorial page or the op-ed page. The best letters comment on previous stories, or state a strong opinion on an issue.

Logo—A graphic or the name of your company, or a combination of letters and a graphic, that is your corporate identity, always with consistent colors. A company’s logo is usually trademarked so its identity remains unique.

Masthead—The block of information in a newspaper or magazine that lists the publisher’s name and address, subscription details and names of staff members. Sometimes includes their extension numbers and email addresses.

Media Database—A list of reporters, editors, producers and other media contacts who will be interested in covering your company, along with contact information such as phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses. Should include as many specifics about each media outlet as possible, such as deadlines, what topics they cover, specific ways you can help them, whether they want to receive news releases by mail, fax or e-mail.

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Media Directories—A list of media outlets and their employees, including contact information such as phone, fax and e-mail addresses. The directories, also known as media guides, are usually broken down by geographic area such as by state. They are available in hard copy or in CD-ROM and can cost several hundred dollars each. Be sure you are using the most up-to-date media directory, and always call the media outlet to verify information before you send anything.

Media Kit—A folder of materials that includes information about your company. The materials are not promotional but should be written in a factual manner, much like a news story would be written. Media kits can include executive bios, the annual report, photos, price lists, a glossary of industry terms, a list of story ideas, a list of experts within your company, backgrounders, FAQs, recent press releases, and a company brochure.

Media Relations—A coordinated approach to dealing with the media. Media relations can include forming relationships with reporters, writing news releases, submitting opinion columns, suggesting story ideas and offering yourself or your company as a source in your area of expertise.

Medium—Any single media, such as a newspaper, a magazine, or a television or radio station.

Nameplate—The name of the newspaper or magazine, usually at the top of the front page or at the top of the cover.

News Advisory—A one-page document that is sent to targeted media to alert them to a newsworthy event. This doesn't have to sound like a news story and can simply be a list of facts that explain who, what, when, where and why.

News Release—Same as a press release. A story written by your company or PR person that is used to announce news. This can be as short as a few sentences, for example, if announcing someone's promotion, or it can be written like a factual story that a reporter would write. The best news releases are one page and their purpose is to give reporters a short amount of compelling information so that they call you for the rest of the story.

Op-Ed—The page opposite the editorial page in a newspaper, usually used for columns and letters to the editor.

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Pitch—An attempt to get editorial coverage for your company. This can include a pitch letter, call, fax or email, or an in-person pitch. A pitch must be targeted to the specific media outlet, quick and concise, and of great value to the reading or listening audience.

Press Release—Same as a news release. A story written by your company or PR person that is used to announce news. This can be as short as a few sentences, for example, if announcing someone's promotion, or it can be written like a factual story that a reporter would write. The best news releases are one page and their purpose is to give reporters a short amount of compelling information so that they call you for the rest of the story.

Producer—The person who decides how a radio or TV newscast will be organized and how they will be produced.

Public Relations (PR)—A planned, deliberate process that encompasses all activities undertaken by a company to enhance its public image, increase visibility, and establish relationships that are mutually beneficial between an organization and its various publics.

Publisher—The person who is responsible for the overall operation of a newspaper or magazine. The editor, advertising director and circulation director usually report to the publisher, whose position is similar to that of a CEO.

Slow News Day—A day in which little news is happening. This is a good day to pitch a story idea to an editor.

Sound Bite—Short, pithy comments that TV and radio stations choose from a longer interview with a news source. A sound bite can be anywhere from a few seconds up to about 15 seconds. Learn to talk in sound bites.

Story Angle—The most enticing or interesting slant to a story that catches the media's attention. The story angle should be targeted to the media outlet where you want coverage and dovetail nicely with the needs of that particular audience. A story angle can include a profile story, a trend, a follow-up to an earlier news story, the local angle to a national story, etc.

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Subhead—A brief heading placed inside a long body of copy to break up a long block of text. If you are writing articles for publications, consider using sub-heads to break up the gray type and inform the reader about the topic you are writing about next.

Sub-Messages—The three or four key points you want to make that back up your key message during an interview. These can be written on a sheet of paper and taken with you to an interview so you remember them.

White Paper—A research paper that delves into a specific topic. You can interview sources for your White Paper, quote them in the report when you present your findings, then send the White Paper to the media, along with a news release that explains its key findings.

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