

How to Get in The New York Times.
by Colin Flaherty
Flaherty Communications
wearethesun.com

Our clients have been in the New York Times more than most.

When you are 3000 miles away and your client has no business within thousands of miles of the paper, getting the attention of The Times is difficult.

But the reason we are talking about it here is because it is also instructive.

So first, let's talk about the ways I hear the most: My friend/college roommate/ brother/ sister/cousin/ girlfriend/future girlfriend/past girlfriend works at the Times.

And he likes me. Owes me a favor. Owes me money.

You see where I am going with this.

It does not work. Which most of the time is harmless. But if you are working on a really tough story where someone like the Times is going to be covering it, relying on that kind of poppycock will most definitely hurt.

But that is not the scenario for most of us. For most of us, our problem is drawing attention to our business, not responding to attention.

If you need to get into The Times tomorrow, I do not know what to tell you, because at Flaherty Communications, we are playing the odds, increasing our chances of success, not narrowing our focus and reducing our chances.

But if being in The Times over the next several months would be useful for all the credibility it would add to you, the visitors it would bring to your web, and the leads it would create for your sales people, then read on.

Here's how:

Start small. Get something published or covered somewhere. I don't care if it is the least read community paper on the wrong side of the tracks.

And once you get it published, see to it that other people see it.

Can't avoid this question: How do I get something published?

Let's talk about your story: Whatever you are doing to sell your customer something, you are asking and answering the same kind of questions that reporters ask and answer.

What about my company is unique? What are the benefits of my products? Why do my customers choose me?

Those are some of the questions you ask. Reporters want to know where can I learn about something no one else knows about? Not just unique, but also beneficial?

See how closely they are related? They are not identical, but related.

So you write a reporter a letter, telling him something that your customers are excited about. Or something in the industry that people don't know about.

The reporter writes something. You spread it around -- mostly to other reporters.

Then write another reporter. Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

How about a commentary for the local paper? Same deal: Write about something in your industry. It gets published, you send it to talk radio, offering your dulcet tones.

You send it around some more.

If you do it right, it gets picked up in your trade papers, or a bigger paper.

Do it a few times, and all of a sudden people start calling spontaneously.

Then one day, you are going to get a call that starts, "Hi, I was just surfing the internet for someone to talk about solar power on rice farms and your commentary came up. Can you be a guest on Fox Business with Neal Cavuto tomorrow?"

Or, from the editor of the New York Times op-ed page: Thanks for email you sent me about broken sewer pipes. I passed it along to our reporter. (Reporter writes a huge front page story on it ten days later.)

A week after that, the phone rings: I know you are busy, but we just had another sewer spill here and do you have time to write a commentary on it?

We squeezed it in.

And once you get in The Times, then people lower on the rung take a bigger interest.

And they pay more attention to the letters you send them, the offers to appear on their talk show, and the commentaries you offer to their op-ed pages.

And while all this is happening, what do you think is happening to your web site? Tons of new traffic, highly motivated and interested and impressed.

And what about social media? This is the question of the hour. When you are in The Times or Fox Business, or any national outlet, the bloggers and tweeters and Facebook people go crazy.

More traffic to your web. More links to your site. More sales. More credibility.

And you thought this was just about getting into the New York Times. Really this is about moving up and down the media ladder.

How do you get into The Times? Here's one way.

Here's another question: Does it really matter? No. Not if you take the press you get and make the most out of that.

Happy to talk.

Colin Flaherty
619-379-6156