

PR: Get Your Story Straight, Then Tell It
by Jim Rauh

So I'm in a business lunch line. I start yakking with the guy behind me. Quickly, I learn that he owns an old-line, but well-positioned, retail furniture store. Quickly, he gets that I'm in the communications biz.

Comes the quick question: "So why hasn't the regional news media ever done a story on me?" Comes my answer: "Give me one reason why they should?"

He paused. Then, in a huff, he blurted, "Well, my store has been in Portland for decades and I have dozens of employees!"

"You expect the news media to come running merely because you exist?", I said. "Do they owe you something?"

This was a platinum opportunity to help get a business owner's mind right on public relations. It would take a few minutes. He appreciated candor. I was happy to help. Let's call him "Dave".

I asked Dave to consider the following PR thinking points:

Does your latest line of furniture represent green manufacturing? If "yes", what does it save or protect? What's renewable or sustainable about it?

Is your product line recommended by doctors and/or chiropractors for posture and spinal support?

Does your product line represent a significant shift in lifestyle trend? Can you document this? Has your product line received national or international awards/recognition for distinctive style? From whom?

Does your company perform community service? Do you encourage or offer incentives to your employees to perform community service? What sort of community service? Where? When? Who did it benefit?

What's been your gross revenue over the last year? Three to five years?

What's your market demographic? Who's buying? Profile your average customer.

Dave's eyes opened wide. He knew where I was going with this. I wanted him to think of his operation as a continuing news story. No fluff. Was his company a leader within the industry? Was he giving back to the community? Was his company somehow connected to a national or international story already in the news?

The news media represents constant vigilance. They look for the local connection: regional stories that tie to larger stories elsewhere. They look for exclusivity, particularly if they're a weekly. They look for stories that haven't been published or aired in their market by a competitor or are fresh on the internet. They look for trends, breaking news, human interest, style, community service, humor and a host of other story angles.

There's more than one way to go at the business of public relations: business or consumer news; public appearances, event sponsorship/tie-in; internet website and targeted blog visibility to name a few. But you have to get out there. If you have a timely, newsworthy story --- one with positive impact --- shape it, get it straight, make it concise and tell it in all the right places. Lunch lines included.

What's your story?

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About the Author

James Rauh is an independent, Portland-based strategic communications consultant, former corporate marketing officer, and former news anchor for the CBS-TV affiliate in Portland, Oregon. His firm, [JR&A Marketing Communications](http://www.jramarcom.com), has [created message development, brand-name recognition, and credibility solutions](#) for companies around the Northwest and nationwide. Visit: www.jramarcom.com