



Anthony

No Such Thing as Free?



Story by Scott Anthony
Photo by Josh Keown

Editor's Note: Scott Anthony is guest-writing this month's "Marketing Matters" column.

Free publicity? Nothing is free these days — or is it?

I know one thing for certain. When it comes to press, I don't want my pizzeria just randomly mentioned by whomever, whenever or wherever. Ultimately, I'd like to control the image I have created and to generate more awareness of myself and what my business is all about.

None of us have the resources of a major corporation. We can't advertise on prime-time network television or do weekly mass mailings. But, there are little things we can do to make a big noise. They aren't secrets, either. They're simple little tricks of the trade that we all know — yet we don't always execute them in the proper way to get the desired results.

First, you have to decide who you want to be (USP) and how you want to accomplish that. Then convey that message to your demographics. Gear your marketing and media placement in the direction to develop your niche.

Examples:

- ❖ Be community-minded. I sponsored a parade, hosted a fundraiser and buy local ingredients.
- ❖ Best Pizza – Why can I say that? What separates me from the rest?
- ❖ Gourmet Pizza – I offer healthy alternatives, unique products.
- ❖ Sporty Image – I sponsor a baseball league, I display sports memorabilia, teams eat here, a famous athlete ate here.

Develop your business around this theme or image. Make your community aware of it and make them like you by showing the positive benefits your business brings to them. Creating this awareness lends itself naturally to bringing on the free publicity.

Remember that you are part of community. You are not on your own, so make a list of those who you can align with to help promote your image.

Examples:

- ❖ Police – I support safe driving; I use anti-theft devices; my drivers always wear seat belts.
- ❖ Red Cross – Am I there when a disaster strikes? Do I help others, do I donate?
- ❖ Make-a-Wish – Is there anyone who does not have a soft spot in their heart for a sick child?
- ❖ Fire Department – Everyone loves, respects and needs these guys.

Do you?

- ❖ Big box stores, like Wal-Mart, are generally willing and have budgets to donate to a good cause. Wal-Mart, for example, has a set goal to raise a specific amount of money for the Children's Miracle Network annually. Can you provide a fundraiser?
- ❖ Think of other local businesses or organizations that are influential in your community.

The PR departments in these types of organizations have great resources that will help you promote your image for free just by aligning yourself with them. They also have their own employees and databases that are now being made aware of you and your product! And they all like to talk about good things going on around town. Be part of that.

It is a good idea to have some kind of relationship with each type of media. Don't just approach them when you want something for nothing, and don't burn bridges by throwing the nagging salesperson out when they come calling.

Know the editor(s), news directors and food critics, and be familiar with their work – what exactly they do and how they do it. When was the last time you sent a free pizza to a media outlet and attached a note saying, "I really enjoyed your last article on....." Just let them know you are around.

Also, bear in mind that an editor's job is no walk in the park. If you can make their job easier, your chances of having your story published increase significantly. ❖

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