

The Promise of Digital Media

By Bill Smith, APR

HAVE BEEN DOING PARKING PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) FOR 25 YEARS (I'm really old). In that time, I've seen the industry experience incredible change, particularly when it comes to the effects of technology on operations and customer service. As you might expect, technology has also had an extraordinary impact on public relations and how we publicize parking and parking organizations.

We've discussed the benefits of publicity in prior columns. There's no better way to reach large numbers of potential customers, strategic partners, and even employees. Publicity is a powerful tool that can increase your credibility, make prospective partners aware of you and your expertise, and help disseminate important messages to key audiences.

But to benefit from this tremendous media landscape, you need to take the initiative. Public relations should be part of every organization's marketing strategy, and the PR strategy should complement the rest of your marketing strategy.

Finding Your Audience

In looking for opportunities to publicize your organization, don't limit your efforts to local media and parking publications—although industry publications remain a strong first-line publicity tool. There are thousands of publications out there with an interest in parking. Many are daily newspapers and business publications that serve communities facing parking issues and with transportation, planning, and features editors and reporters who would love to have access to your expertise on those parking and mobility issues. If your organization is national or international in scope, such as a consultant or technology provider, these publications present many opportunities to promote your brand and raise awareness of your expertise.

There are also hundreds of non-parking trade publications serving many vertical markets to which you market your services. The most common verticals for parking organizations are real estate and development, building ownership and management, hospitality and casinos, airports, universities, hospitals, and government management. Each of these verticals has several media outlets offering publicity opportunities.

When online publications first appeared in the mid-'90s, they caused quite a bit of panic in the PR world. The conventional wisdom was that with everyone able to communicate directly, old-school media would disappear. The typical advice to publicists was, better start looking for a new career!

Reality

To say these fears were misplaced would be an understatement. While it's true that the advent of the digital age has had an enormous effect, the end result has been the introduction of thousands of new digital publications. Many are online versions of traditional publications; some are online newsletters, blogs, and magazines published by traditional media; and still others are online-only outlets that cover parking or parking-related issues. As a result, there are literally thousands more opportunities for parking organizations to publicize themselves and their services.



Beyond the Obvious

There are also less obvious media targets, such as technology media, engineering, and architecture publications, which also provide excellent opportunities to promote your organization. When seeking out targets, don't limit yourself to only the most obvious industries and categories. Opportunity often lies in unexpected places, and it's important to be creative and open-minded when seeking opportunity.

And of course, print publications represent just a fraction of the publicity opportunities open to you. For every print publication there are five online versions and online-only publications. Take advantage of them along with the traditional print vehicles.

Finally, when you generate publicity, that's not the

end of the process. Articles that you author or that mention you or your organization also make great marketing pieces. Make sure to post PDFs or links on your organization's website and social media platforms. Also share your coverage by sending the PDFs and links to your digital mailing list.

The proliferation of digital media provides a dramatically increased opportunity to promote you and your organization. Take advantage of this multitude of opportunities. ♦



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