

Tips for Attracting Local Media Attention

In general, news outlets such as a local newspaper, television and radio stations are looking for news stories. They are not looking to promote your business for free, but they will cover an event if they believe it would of interest to their audience.



News that would capture their attention and likely be published is as follows:

Public Interest:

If you have some news that warns the general public about a danger or concern in their community, news agencies will be interested. For instance, if raw sewage was seeping into the local water sources, it would be of great concern to the general public and the news stations would want to cover the story. In our case, it is the opposite. Giving a story to the local news outlets explaining how portable sanitation prevents the spread of disease and protects our environment may be of interest to the local news media. That alone may not make the news, but you could make it newsworthy.

For instance, if an international operator came to the PSAI convention you could use that as an occasion to create news. Invite the international operator to your facility and show him how your company operates. At the same time, inform the local news outlets that you were hosting an international operator at your company because he (or she) wants to learn best practices to take back to their country. If that person comes from a country that is struggling with poor sanitation, then the news organization would have the opportunity to interview him (or her) and ask about their situation and in the process, show how a local company is doing a great job with sanitation and protecting the community. The news agency gets to report on how a local company helping to solve the problem of improper sanitation in a very needy part of the world.

Human Interest Story:

Using World Portable Sanitation Day (WPSD) as an example, it is very possible the local media would like to cover the event. We are suggesting that operators do a “treasure hunt” or “restroom painting” on WPSD. If an operator does the treasure hunt, it is a community event. The treasure is a sticker placed in a random portable restroom and the first person to find it can win a cash prize. This is a city-wide event and anyone could be the winner. It is a very unique and fun story to cover because everyone seems to have a strange interest in portable restrooms.

The “restroom painting” idea involves inviting non-profit organizations to participate in a restroom painting contest to raise money and awareness of their organization. The “art contest” is a fun human interest story that news agencies love to add to their programing or community events section.

General News Story:

News organizations like to keep stories on file for filler. If you wrote up a story about portable sanitation and how it works, it may get published. People like to learn about “behind the scenes” stories. Include in the story the following:

- Physical description of your business – where it is located, how many units and trucks you have, number of employees, area your trucks cover.
- Types of work you do – events, parks, industrial or commercial, etc.
- Profile of the owners or an employee and how they got into the business and what impact they have had on the organization
- What is the job – how is it done, where does the waste go, etc.
- End it with how portable sanitation helps the local community by providing safe, dignified portable restroom facilities. It protects the environment, public health and is a life saver in the case of natural disasters.

Who to Contact:

News organizations are easy to contact. If you go to their website you can find the “contact us” tab and send an email explaining what you have planned or have written and submit it online. Avoid seeming to be self-promoting. Present it as “this may be something your audience may be interested in”. Downplay your company. Focus on the benefits to the audience.

If you are personable, have something of interest to offer and provide very specific information they can easily use, it stands a very good chance of being published or broadcast.

If they don’t respond and cover your event, take pictures and write a story as a follow up and send it to your local newspaper. They may use it in their next issue as filler. It puts the story in front of them and the next time you have the event they may see it as worthy of coverage.

If you can get one of the media outlets (newspaper, radio or TV) to cover your event, it is likely that the next time it is held you will attract more media coverage from those who feel like they “missed the story” last time.

Conclusion

These are a few ideas you can use to gain local media attention to your business. There are many more. You will find that once you make the effort to get in contact with the local media it will become a beneficial, long-term business relationship, if you continue to cultivate it. Remember, what people read and see in the newspaper has more credibility than any advertisement you do for yourself. Take advantage of the many opportunities to promote your business and the benefits of the portable sanitation industry.