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Tips for Working with Freelancers

In a Little League of Their Own

By Marika Flatt

For the past four years, I've worn two professional hats: the owner of a PR company primarily dedicated to the book industry and small businesses and also a freelance writer for two local magazines. You can say I live on both sides of the fence: pitching and being pitched. I've developed a good track record for working with other freelancers, which is in some ways an untapped market when it comes to PR pitching.

Freelance writers are not in the newsroom constantly receiving press releases and phone calls from PR practitioners. Therefore they typically are not as jaded when it comes to receiving pitches because they are not as inundated as those journalists working on staff. They make their living by querying publications with certain pitches that get accepted and then they write the features for that particular editor. Therefore, it's to their benefit to hear about targeted story pitches. *Targeted* is the key word here. If you can tap into this type of journalist, you've got a captive audience. Here are a few tips on how to best build these relationships:

1. It is imperative you know what type of publications the freelancer writes for so you can be as specific and targeted as possible. Don't pitch a book review of a travel book to a freelancer for a sports magazine unless you want to burn a bridge. As always, know your audience. The good news here is that freelancers typically write for a variety of different publications so you've got a better shot with multiple client pitches than you would when pitching to a specific magazine editor. For instance, as a freelancer I write for both a women's magazine and a fitness magazine.
2. Be patient when working with freelancers. The process can be lengthy when it comes to this type of pitching. It looks something like this: publicist pitches freelancer; freelancer likes the story and develops a query to their editor; editor says yes; freelancer does interviews and research and gets the story written; freelancer sends to editor who edits the story, possibly deleting some parts; it runs in an issue several months down the road. Therefore, it can take quite a long time between when you pitch and when it actually runs in print. Be patient and don't become a pest checking in with the freelancer every week. Checking in with a freelancer once a month is often enough.
3. Stay in touch with your freelance contacts, asking them what they are currently working on and if you can help them find sources or research. Freelancers, like most journalists, are extremely busy and appreciate any help that you can offer. Keep your eyes and ears open for experts and resources that might help the freelancer, even if it's of no benefit to you. They will remember how you helped them and will be more willing to help you down the road.

4. If you're pitching a product, keep the description as concise as possible and also provide all the important details a freelancer would need for a story, such as price, where it can be bought, a website for more information and also a jpeg for artwork purposes. The more you anticipate what the freelance writer will need, the more time you save him/her...and who doesn't love to save time!

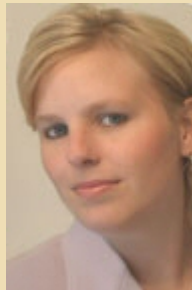
5. Now you need to know where to find freelancers, since we can be quite elusive. Here are a few suggestions:

- The Gift List www.giftlistmedia.com
- Bacons online database www.bacons.com
- Attend conferences where you can meet freelancers face-to-face, such as:
 1. National Publicity Summit put on by Bradley Communications
 2. Book Expo America, www.bookexpoamerica.com
 3. American Society of Journalists & Authors convention
- Keep on the lookout for other opportunities.

Once you find freelancers, you want to make sure you keep a good database for their contact information and to keep notes as to what they like and dislike. Each one will be very unique so you want to keep yourself up-to-date on what they are looking for and help connect the dots.

I hope you can use these tips to build stronger relationships with this seemingly untapped market of journalists. I feel quite sure it will pay off for you in the long run. Yes, you have to "work it" on your end but I think you'll be pleased with the results.

PR by the Book



Marika Flatt is the owner of [PR by the Book](http://www.prybythebook.com), a media relations firm dedicated to helping clients spread the word about their books, products and small businesses. Flatt launched PR by the Book, LLC in 2002, combining her love of the media and public relations. After garnering experience with her own cable television show, her college newspaper and TV station, and the NBC affiliate in Dallas, Flatt spent seven years with an Austin-based book publicity firm. She was the director of the publisher services division, managing key publicity campaigns and serving as the company's spokesperson. Flatt is a regular speaker at conferences around the country, educating audiences on topics related to publicity and overall promotion tactics.