

EFFECTIVE PUBLICITY

Seven ways to make your PR program more valuable.

By Don Kreski

Susan Lewis knows something about publicity that most people don't. She knows that what you do with an article after it's published is often more valuable than its original appearance in the publication itself.

"A published article has a shelf life of 30 to 60 days," Lewis says. "But the handouts we make from those articles help us for at least two or three years."

Lewis, the CEO of Lewis Sound & Video Professionals of Waukesha, Wis., also believes that a reprint made from a press clipping is far more valuable than a handout or brochure that's self-generated. "The perception of our clients is if something has been in the media, it's more objective and it carries more weight."

One problem with a press placement is that it reaches an audience who may or may not be ready to buy. But hand that same article to a potential client who is making a buying decision, and it can have a very big influence on the sale.

Once you have a published story, there are at least seven ways you should consider using it. Always be cognizant, of course, of who owns the right to reprint the materials. In some cases you will own the copyright for the text and photographs; in other cases, you may have to ask for or purchase the rights to reuse materials (see sidebar).

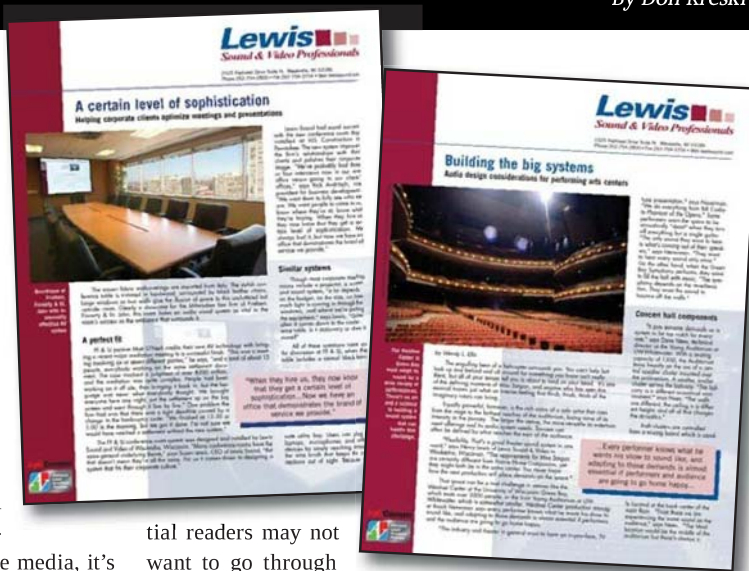
1 PUT THE STORY ON YOUR WEBSITE

Most potential clients go to your website to learn more about you, so including news stories on it can be especially valuable. You may want to:

- Add links to recently published stories in a prominent place on your home page
- Add an "In the News" section to your site and include press placements
- Add links as appropriate to your customer gallery and other sections of the site.

If you can secure a PDF copy of the article, together with permission to use it, you may find it more attractive to potential readers than a link to the publication's website, for three reasons:

- Some publications require a login to access articles, and poten-



tial readers may not want to go through the effort to register

- The PDF layout is often more attractive visually than a web layout.
- Some publications drop articles from their archives over time, whereas you determine how long a PDF will reside on your own web server.

2 SEND A REPRINT OR HANDOUT TO CUSTOMERS AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

Almost every publication will sell you reprints, either in printed or PDF form (many will give you PDF copies), and in many cases, you have the right to create your own handouts without permission, using your own layout and the text and photos you own.

- Use printed copies in packets you hand to new customers and prospects.
- Hand out copies at tradeshows.
- Mail or email the story directly to your prospect list, together with a cover letter.
- Use excerpts or short quotes in brochures and catalogs.

3 SEND THE STORY WITH QUOTES AND PROPOSALS

It's very helpful to offer evidence of your ability to do the project you are quoting on, so be sure to include printed copies or PDFs with quote letters in bid packets and formal proposals.

- Consider building a file of printed reprints or handouts.

- Put PDF copies on your web server, with a single menu for easy access by sales people (and probably clients as well).

- Encourage (or require) your sales people to include links to the PDF copies with email quotes and attach printed copies to written proposals.

4 PUT IT IN YOUR NEWSLETTER

Extend the life and usefulness of a story you've placed while, at the same time, adding interest and variety to your customer newsletter.

- Include excerpts or a brief summary of the article in your newsletter, together with a link to its full text on the publication's website or your server.

5 HANG IT ON YOUR WALL AND YOUR CUSTOMER'S WALL

Some AV integrators like to have plaques made from published articles and hang them in their lobby or conference room. It's easy to find a service that will create these plaques online.

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

It's important to realize that the creator of a given article owns the reprint right unless it is a work for hire. In that case, the person or organization that pays the author owns the rights.

I am not an attorney, so you may want to get an attorney's advice before you act on what I'm about to say. Still, most people recognize that if you submit a story you have written to a magazine and they have not agreed to pay you for it, you own the reprint rights. If you hire someone to write that story for you and then submit it for publication, you still own the rights. You should not need permission to reprint the text.

On the other hand, if you submit a story idea and the publication assigns a staff or freelance writer, then they own the rights and you cannot use the piece without permission. They own the rights to the page layout they create, no matter who owns the text. You cannot make reprints from a PDF copy of their layout or use a PDF copy on your website, without permission.

Ownership of photography is a little more complex. Generally, if you submit photos to a magazine and they have not agreed to pay you for them, you retain ownership. If they hire a photographer, they own the reprint rights and you will need permission to reuse the images. That being said, your agreement with a photographer you've hired also comes into play. Quite often the photographer will retain the copyright and may charge you each time you want to use an image. You need to agree who will own the rights to photos.

The courts have not been clear about your right to link to an article on a publication's website. Most people assume they can link to any web page anywhere, and most publications are happy to have the incoming links. If, on the other hand, someone asks you not to link to a given article or web page, it's best to respect that request, as there is a possibility that you could be liable for damages if you ignore them.

- Consider having plaques made for clients whose projects are featured in these stories. It's one more way to cement the relationship. It's also a way to tell visitors to your customer's site that you did the AV system and subtly solicit referrals.

- Hang large prints of the photos you shot of the projects that have been published.

6 SEND THE STORY TO YOUR SUPPLIERS, BANKERS, FINANCIAL BACKERS, AND YOUR EMPLOYEES

Reinforcing the idea that you're a leader in the industry can help with stakeholders as well as potential customers.

- Doing so can help motivate staff and suppliers to take you seriously and work hard on your behalf

- It also shows financial backers your company is a great investment.

7 SEND IT TO THE PRESS

You can establish credibility with editors you don't know in much the same way that you do with potential clients. It can be especially helpful to send previously printed stories when you approach an editor outside of the AV industry, in the business press, or in radio or TV.

- Consider adding a press section to your website with story reprints as well as background materials. Include a link to this section when you send story proposals and press releases.

CHOOSING A TARGET PUBLICATION

Note that the publications you target for press placements may be very different than for an advertising campaign.

If you're choosing a place to advertise, you need to be very careful about circulation, demographics, and cost per interested reader. You want to spend your advertising dollars on publications read by your target market.

But in PR, the rules are different. If you start with the premise that what you really want are links and reprints, then what you need are publications that potential clients will see as credible. It doesn't matter if your prospects actually read these magazines, as long as they respect them.

For this reason, placing stories in the AV trade publications can be very effective, even if you're an integrator and most of the magazine's readers are other integrators

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who rarely, if ever, buy from you. Most end users will see *Sound & Video Contractor*, for example, as a very credible, reliable source of information, and they will respect the fact that this magazine has published stories

about you, your projects, or your customers.

The PR process does not end when you successfully place a story. Take that story to clients and company stakeholders in additional ways and you'll take your business to another level.

More Online

Including Video on Your Website
svconline.com/avcontrol/features/including_video_website_1109

The Online Press Release
svconline.com/columns/features/online_press_release_107