

The Tricks to Using Publicity to Build Your Small Business

Ms Evancich: This is the Small Business Big Marketing show with Tim Reid and Luke Moulton. This show is lovingly put together for small business owners by small business owners to get practical ideas about attracting more customers more often. So, if you're serious about building your business, strap in for the ride. Now, here's your hosts, Tim and Luke.

Luke: Welcome to Small Business Big Marketing. G'day, Tim, how are you going?

Tim: Lukey.

Luke: That's good.

Tim: Listeners, from around the world too.

Luke: From around the world.

Tim: How do you know that?

Luke: If this is the first time you've listened to us...

Tim: Luke, how do you know that they're from around the world?

Luke: Because we're on the web, Tim.

Tim: And the fact that we're getting emails. I got an email from...did I get an email from...

Luke: Greenland.

Tim: No. No, not Greenland. I have had an email from Germany and I have had an email from San Francisco, so that's kind of cool...

Luke: It is, very cool.

Tim: ...seeing as we're sitting in a little studio in Melbourne.

Luke: Very cool.

Tim: Sorry, what were you going to say?



Luke: If you're a first time listener, Tim and I are here talking about Small Business Big Marketing. So some little tips to hopefully help your small business boom.

Tim: Well big tips, not little tips. If they were little tips I wouldn't listen.

Luke: Yeah, true.

Tim: Guys, if you're listening for little tips, stop, because they're big tips for little businesses.

Luke: Big tips for little businesses.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, say that fast. Big tips.

Luke: I might start saying something I shouldn't.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, don't.

Luke: Yeah. So, Tim, who are we talking to today?

Tim: We have got Flip Shelton. And Flip's a really interesting character. I've known Flip for a number of years. And Flip is a publicist, first and foremost a publicist. She also happens to be a muesli maker, a triathlete, a bit of a media personality.

Luke: Indeed.

Tim: And I think she's got another number...quite a number of strings to her bow. But she's here to share with us her views on publicity. She spent years and years getting other businesses into the media. So she's going to sort of share how's she done that and it's kind of interesting.

Luke: It is very interesting.

Tim: Yeah.

Luke: She shares some pretty fantastic insights.

Tim: Yeah. And if you are then hoping that you hear her talk about muesli and fibre and stuff, maybe we'll save that for another time because the publicity stuff is where we're at at the moment, isn't it, for small business...

Luke: Yeah. And there's a lot in there to digest.

Tim: Here we go, Flip. Flip, welcome to Small Business Big Marketing.

Flip: Thank you.

Tim: What's on your business card?

Flip: Well it says writer, presenter, broadcaster, muesli maker.

Tim: Wow. Triathlete?

Flip: Well I've taken that off because I'm sort of partially retired from that point and I couldn't hold my head up high at the dinner table with that on my card.

Tim: Yeah.

Flip: But I will return to that. But the small business has somewhat taken over my life so I can't dedicate the hours that I want to to that. So that's why it's been removed.

Tim: So Luke and I are going so where do we come at it from a point of talking to Flip. And the great thing is that you've got this...you've got a small business because you make muesli and you make porridge, or oats. So you've got this Flip's Muesli?

Flip: Yes. Well it's Flip Shelton's Natural Muesli and Porridge.

Tim: Okay. Dot com dot au?

Flip: Well it's Flipsmuesli.com.au, yeah.

Tim: Okay. Let's not sell too hard, Flip, because it gets a little embarrassing. But tell me, and then you've got like...I met you when you were a publicist, okay.

Flip: Yes.

Tim: So let's kind of talk a little bit about the publicity thing first. So publicity is a kind of thing that maybe is sort of like left to the corporate boardrooms of this world but shouldn't be and what is it...

Flip: Well, yeah. No, pub...PR I think is very much corporate land. Publicity I think everyone can have a go at it. And there's a lot of hacks out there doing really really bad jobs, with the shingle saying they're a publicist. But, you know, anybody...

Tim: Just be a little more honest when you talk about stuff like that.

Flip: Right.

Luke: Name some names.

Tim: No, no.

Flip: Yeah, thanks. I live in a small town. So but basically the gist of publicity is harnessing the media to get your message across. Whether it's about a service, whether it's about a product, whether it's about you. So that's just how I see it. It's different to advertising where you can take out advertising space and you can have complete control over that space. So you design the ad, you put your message in and the ad runs over X amount of weeks. With publicity you have to generate interest in you, your product, your service, with a journalist. It's not like feeding a baby candy, you know. The journalist is not just going to run a story because you've rung up and given them an idea. They want something with edge, they want

to make sure that it's not going to run in a competitive newspaper, they want to make sure that it's going to reach their demographic and it's basically going to pump their tyres up. So you've always got to look at it from the point of view of the journo. But the most important thing about publicity is getting your message right and getting it into the right marketplace.

Tim: Okay. So they're two things we should talk about. Let's...could we use a case study of saying, okay, accountants.

Flip: Yes.

Tim: How...does an accountant need publicity?

Flip: Well, yes.

Tim: Okay.

Flip: Because I suspect it's a very competitive market for the accountants out there. I mean, I've got my accountant that I went to through word of mouth. But if I was looking for a new accountant I wouldn't know where to go. So...and I generally don't read the business sections of the newspapers and I probably wouldn't believe an ad, I would want to believe an article that had been written, say, or had been profiled on, say, small, you know, Kochie's program on Sunrise...on Sundays on, you know, following Sunrise, I think it's Small Business Builders or something like that. I would want to go to a place like that to get that information.

Tim: Okay.

Luke: How does an accountant go about developing a compelling story about themselves and their business?

Flip: Well that's really good. It's absolutely fantastic if they're one legged and blind.

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Flip: And got no fingers because that's...

Tim: Yeah, but assuming they're not.

Flip: That's quite an interesting angle.

Tim: Yep.

Flip: I mean, if you're just a run of the mill accountant, you know, you kind of do have these boring old images.

Tim: Wow, did you hear those brakes, Lukey? That is because this notion of boring old images and just preconceptions that people have, whether it be about accountants which, yes, many people carry this perception, the boring old farts type stuff.

Luke: Indeed.

Tim: But I think every business probably has a preconception of what it stands for and what it is. So this is where PR can work so well. Because if you go back a step and say, well advertising is manufactured. So less people believe advertising, okay, because you go well that's what the business wants to say. Then with PR you can actually...you have the opportunity of creating your own story. That's what I love about PR.

Luke: So find a unique point of view about yourself or your business to explore.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, like the ability to actually...well you've got more time to say stuff, you know, you've got to hope that the journo picks up on what you're saying and doesn't spin it in a way that kind of isn't who you are. But PR does give you the opportunity to create articles, create press releases, and build a story around who you are as a business and what you have to offer in a much more authentic way. So this opportunity of like for an accountant to address this notion of being boring, just the fact that they're going out and doing PR and getting a story into the marketplace is really interesting.

You know, I spoke to my accountant only yesterday actually, I went in to do my tax and I ended up talking more about her business than she did mine, but she was talking about how she can actually get out into the marketplace with messages. She's actually going to run webinars for her clients once a month where...

Luke: Fantastic.

Tim: Yeah. Well which is kind of like PR. It's actually her sharing her business story with her clients. So her clients are going to dial into her once a month, they're all going to sit there while she talks about, you know, current tax issues or...

Luke: Yep.

Tim: You know, things that are happening that are going to affect their business financially. So I think that's a great...

Luke: Did you encourage her to do that, Tim?

Tim: I did.

Luke: Fantastic.

Tim: I did, yeah.

Luke: I bet you did.

Tim: I'm going through a bit of webinar thing at the moment, which we might talk about in one episode because it's...

Luke: Yes, you are on the webinar horse.

Tim: Yeah, absolutely.

Luke: Yeah.

Tim: Well it's such a good way of educating and training and being sort of a one to many type business model. But we'll talk about that again another time.

Luke: Yeah, we'll have a chat later. Let's head back to Flip.

Tim: Back to Flip.

Flip: I think for, you know, accountants; they need to tap into the place where people might go searching for information. Now, I would say that that is the business sections of newspapers, there's probably some trade magazines, you know, to get into the heavy end. But just say there was an accountant that was wanting to tap into like students, then he would go to the different universities or the techs and put a flyer up and make sure that it reaches those people with those messages. So...

Tim: Is that publicity though or is that...

Flip: That is publicity.

Tim: Is it?

Flip: That is publicity.

Tim: But it's not using the media.

Flip: It's not using media but it is using...you're still promoting your business.

Tim: Right.

Flip: Publicity can cover a whole range of things. It could cover those free postcards that you see in some cafes. You've got web, you've got podcasts, you've got sponsorship of different events. That is all publicity.

Tim: Is it?

Flip: Yeah.

Tim: That's really interesting. Because I always...I pigeonhole publicity into using the media, i.e. journalists from television, radio, press, whatever, to give a newsworthy story to in the hope that they'll write a story or quote you in their story.

Flip: Well I think you're technically correct. But I just don't think in this day and age that you can sort of be so pigeonholed especially in your approach. Okay, let's say perhaps that we have ventured into marketing and publicity, this little topic here. But I just don't think that things exist in isolation. And you need to be...have a multipronged effect. So, you know, you might even take out for an accountant some advertising, some publicity in a whole different range of outlets. So whether it was trade press, whether

it was just flyers, whether it was, you know, a little website even. So, yeah, that's what I consider publicity.

Tim: You've talked about then, going back to what you said earlier, you've got to, from a publicity point of view, you've got to figure out a story, what to say.

Flip: Yeah.

Tim: And then figure out who can I give it to in order for them to say it. So how would you...how's an accountant figure out what's something newsy that I...I just do the books, you know.

Flip: Okay. Well the obvious time when an accountant should be doing publicity is end of financial year. So he might have read something in the newspaper that said, you know, students have got these massive loans or there might have just been a story on 60 Minutes about how Gen Y are in these...in this massive debt. So his message might be I can get you out of that debt. So then he might ring up Kochie's Business Builders and say I specialise in getting students out of their debt and I promise to reduce their debt by 20% in a year's time.

Luke: So essentially he sells himself as the expert.

Flip: Yes, he does.

Luke: And therefore gets picked up by the media.

Flip: Yep.

Luke: Yep.

Flip: So but, you know, there might...

Tim: Nice, Lukey, nice. A bit of personal branding.

Flip: There might be 15 other people to do that but you do have to find a little niche, a little hook. You've got to think of yourself as a fisherman, how are you going to get that bait, how are you going to attract that person. But once you've...say you've attracted interest from The Age then you've got to work out what's going to be of interest...

Tim: The Age being a local newspaper.

Flip: A local newspaper. Then you've got to work out what the Sydney Morning Herald might be interested in or the Melbourne Herald Sun or, you know, The West. So you've just got to work it all out. When you're pitching stories interstate it doesn't matter so much. When you're pitching stories into the same market you must deliver a different message. The best way to burn a bridge with a journalist is to pitch the same story to two different places and they'll see what's happened.

Tim: They love an exclusive, don't they?

Flip: Yeah.

Luke: How do you get your story in front of one of those journalists?

Flip: Well the most important thing is to read. Read the newspapers. Get to know your journalists. So you could actually construct a profile of that journalist. Now, I've spent years and years and years doing that. I always take a note of a byline. I'm always interested in what they have to read. Because you just file that away for another day and you go, well I know that journalist is actually a vegetarian or I know that journalist is actually a cyclist. Or I know that journalist, you know, is really left wing, or whatever it might be. So then when you're pitching your message in you might say well, you know, I'm doing something for students and this is why I'm doing it and, you know, that might appeal to the left wing journo or something like that. Or you might...you've just got to think of your different angles. So you must make personal approaches to these people. There is no point ping-ponging off an email to somebody that doesn't know you and you don't know them. Because journos receive, you know, 250 emails before breakfast. And, you know, they just have a delete policy. I mean, journalists have told me time and time again. So, yes, maybe start with an email, always follow it up with a phone call and if they don't like the idea, say well what do you think might be of interest to your readers. So then they say, well, you know, you really need an angle along these lines or whatever it might be. Then you work with them and you go, okay, well let's try and develop something. I can get something going here.

Tim: What are you going to say? Come on, what have you got, what have you got?

Luke: Okay. We're just going to hold Flip up right there and we're going to talk quickly about how you get to know the journalist in your particular area of expertise.

Tim: You've got a good little sort of lead here, Luke.

Luke: Yeah, well if...you may have heard about Twitter. If you haven't, you've been under rock.

Tim: Here we go, Tweet, Tweet.

Luke: And there are...Twitter is a great way to actually connect with people and hear what they're saying in 140 characters. Anyway, that's the short of it. But there are lists of journos out there with their Twitter ID. So you can actually start following those journos and hopefully respond to them at times and perhaps try and get in front of them with your ideas.

Tim: Yeah. So the idea would be you could go to Twitter, you could do a search on a particular journo if you knew their name.

Luke: Yep.

Tim: You could even search on particular newspapers as well within the find people button on Twitter.

Luke: Correct.

Tim: So it is a good way of actually connecting. And it's amazing, there is this...there's this weird thing, this weird phenomenon, that when you connect with someone over a social network you have a higher likelihood of actually really connecting with them, as opposed to picking the phone up and ringing them. I'll give you an example, a bit of name dropping here, are you ready?

Luke: Yeah.

Tim: Are you ready?

Luke: Yeah.

Tim: I had a bit of a Twit-athon with Jamie Oliver...

Luke: Fair dinkum?

Tim: ...on the weekend.

Luke: Really?

Tim: Yep, yep, just back and forth a few times talking about his website.

Luke: Knowing you, Tim, you would have probably tried to give him some advice, I'd imagine.

Tim: Luke, you are absolutely spot on, absolutely spot on. And I did, I sent him a note saying I thought his website was a bit ordinary, for good reason. But we won't go into that now. But the point being if I'd have tried to have rung Jamie Oliver, well (a) I don't have his phone number, (b) hard to get, blah, blah, but I sent him a Tweet and next thing I know we're having a bit of banter about something. And I think there is the opportunity...don't underestimate the power of getting to know an influential person within your industry, i.e. in this case journos. Back to Flip. Have you got any other muesli jokes? You cracked one earlier in the...no. Okay. That'd be a bit rough.

Luke: Nothing...yeah, a bit rough, yeah.

Tim: Yeah, okay.

Flip: Especially in Melbourne with mX, that's a very visual driven newspaper. So if you're an accountant that is desperate for new business you might...I can't think off the top of my head, (14:57) not working exactly as how I wish they would at this time, haven't had enough coffee.

Tim: Yeah.

Flip: But you might think of something really clever. And then you would pitch it into the pictorial editor, not straight into a journalist.

Tim: Okay. You know, no matter what part of marketing, Lukey, we find ourselves talking about, whether it be publicity or whether it be running an ad or creating a promotion, it always comes back to relationships, you know.

Luke: Absolutely.

Tim: It's the way of the world. And to expect anything by flicking off an email would be ridiculous.

Flip: Yes.

Tim: But to the idea of actually building a profile of...you know, the journalists that write articles about the industry in which your business operates and then sort of...because it's not as if...well in Australia, it might be different in America or in England or other places, but it's not a big market.

Flip: No.

Tim: And, you know, there might be one, two, three journos that write about what your business, the industry your business is in so...

Flip: And never be afraid to ring them up and ask them out for coffee. Because even though 99% of the time they won't and, because they're too busy, it just sets you apart a little bit and it says, look, I think I'm important enough...

Tim: Yep.

Flip: ...without being too showy.

Tim: What about, because I can imagine a lot of our listeners are going, oh, they won't be interested in me, they're too busy, I'm not highfalutin enough, all this stuff. The fact is they've got...you read about this in marketing textbooks, but they've got column centimetres to fill, they've got seconds to fill in radio, TV, online, whatever it may be, what do you say to those small business owners who are going, they won't care about me?

Flip: Well they're 99% true.

Tim: Okay. So, Flip, stop, stop right there where you are. This is a good reason to try even harder. You know, this 99% true type, they won't be interested in me. Yeah, well she might be right and, you know, many people will go, oh, just...well therefore I'm not going to do it.

Luke: Yep.

Tim: So what's the option, not do it, throw more money into advertising or more expensive communication options, or actually be one of the 1% of business owners and marketers who do chase the journo.

Luke: Quick little story there.

Tim: Love a story.

Luke: Been listening to Tim Ferriss' book "The 4-Hour Workweek" again, for about the fifth time.

Tim: Yeah.

Luke: One of my favourites.

Tim: Yeah.

Luke: He actually used to do some lecturing and he set his class a task of contacting a celebrity and, you know, class of about 30 or 40 and gave them one week to contact a celebrity and come back with proof. So the class came back a week later, no one managed to do it. No one had actually tried. They all thought it was too hard.

Tim: Oh, wow, yeah.

Luke: And he had actually given...proposed a prize of a world trip.

Tim: Oh, no.

Luke: A world trip but everyone thought it was too hard so didn't try. So a bit of a lesson...

Tim: Did they know about the prize?

Luke: Yeah. I should have lead in with that first.

Tim: Yeah.

Luke: So a bit of a lesson for you. Most people won't try.

Tim: Yeah.

Luke: Be one of the ones that does.

Tim: Yeah, be a one percenter.

Luke: Yes.

Flip: They're not interested in them.

Tim: Okay.

Flip: You have to make them interested in you.

Tim: Good point.

Flip: And that's why you need to...you have to be a really good salesperson. You have to really toughen up on your skin as well. You have to grow a rhinoceros skin. Because most part they will, you know, pretty much say, no, I don't have time. The other most really important thing is to work out when their deadlines are. You do not want to be ringing at deadline time. That's another way to ruin a relationship. So you've just got to be really aware. So always ask, you know, if it's a daily newspaper you know that they're going to...they're on deadline at four o'clock, they'll be haemorrhaging at that time. You do not want to be ringing them then if it's a daily newspaper. If it's trade magazine, it's probably monthly. It's

again very very different. So just get a grip on sort of taking note of when things are coming out. But, yeah, they're not interested in you so you have to pitch really hard, really quickly, really succinctly when you get them on the phone. Hi, it's Tim Reid from blah, blah, blah, I've sent you an email, just following that up, what do you reckon? You know, get straight to it.

Luke: Sounds like a lot of work for probably the average small business person.

Flip: It is a hell of a lot of work and you're kidding yourself if it's not.

Luke: What's it going to cost to hire a publicist or a PR agency?

Flip: Well that will depend on the quality of the publicist and PR agency. Obviously the bigger the company the more overheads there are and the more expensive they will be. However, there are absolutely some fantastic one man shows out there and it's literally a matter of, and again you've got to choose your right publicist as well. There's no point having a relationship with a publicist that you can't feel comfortable asking the dumb questions, well what about this and can we do that.

Tim: Doesn't get you.

Flip: Yeah. So and they have to...you know, there's no point...yeah, you've just got to have a marriage there. Every little step of communication has to be a happy little marriage.

Tim: This conversation five or ten years ago would have been very much based about getting your news stories in the advertising mediums, you know, the above the line we call them, radio press, newspaper, TV type stuff. Now, on...below the line is huge. So there's also...and it doesn't have to be that...it might be a cheaper option to find out who's blogging or who's writing articles about my industry and finding those people. Because, you know, bloggers in particular are writing heaps of, I mean, they're, you know, they're writing content daily.

Flip: There's, you know, what I call, you know, early adapters and opinionaters and gatekeepers, and with my business I spend a lot of time trying to develop relationships with those people. I send them a lot of product for free, I just say this is the latest thing that I'm doing, thought you might be interested to know. I send a lot of my product to on air talent, whether it's radio or TV. Not necessarily to get them, and I do not expect them to talk about it on air, but those people are out there in the community. They're, you know, probably real go getters. They have got a great circle of friends and, you know, even if they...you know, and for the most part they do get a lot of free stuff, you know, it's not even going to be a blink, you know, in their eyes. But then you do strike a chord with a few people and I've had some great responses. Like I sent a whole lot of stuff to, say, Gabriel Gate. He, as it turns out he loves my muesli and then one day out of the blue I saw a little compile piece in the food section of the Herald Sun, Melbourne's Herald Sun, and it said favourite muesli Flip Shelton's Natural Muesli.

Tim: Oh, God bless him.

Luke: Wow.

Tim: Hey, Flip, thanks for coming in.

Flip: Thank you for having me.

Tim: Really appreciated. Seeya. So that is Flip, Luke.

Luke: Yes.

Tim: And wasn't she wonderful?

Luke: She was wonderful.

Tim: And she's quite pretty. We'll put a little...

Luke: And talented.

Tim: And talented. And intelligent. And, you know, the...we'll put a little show note, what do you call it a show note and a picture?

Luke: Yeah.

Tim: If she lets us.

Luke: A bit of a profile picture.

Tim: A bit of a profile pic, yeah. She'll have a profile pic, knowing young Flip. But, you know, like the thing is, PR lesson for me out of that, not for the fainthearted but I think has high rewards. You know, like if you're willing to roll up your sleeves, approach some journos, put a bit of time into your story and get it out there amongst the people who can actually report on your business then I reckon you're in for a bit of a winner. And a great profile builder.

Luke: Yeah, look, give it a go. And...

Tim: What, me? You mean me give it a go?

Luke: The listener, Tim, the listener, our listeners.

Tim: The listeners?

Luke: Yeah.

Tim: Hello, listeners.

Luke: Give it a go. And at the end of the day if it's too hard, hire a PR agency.

Tim: Well you could, yeah, you could. But that's not...we know that many of our listeners aren't in the position to hire a PR agency.

Luke: Correct.

Tim: So hopefully some of the learnings here are going to...

Luke: But perhaps today has also given them an idea of the value of a PR agency as well, you know.

Tim: Yeah.

Luke: It's not as simple as writing a blog post.

Tim: No.

Luke: You've got to develop relationships, develop your own brand, develop a story.

Tim: Yeah. And, you know, like the thing is with PR, it's an ongoing thing, you know, like you can develop a bit of a campaign and put things out at certain times of the year, seasonality around particular events that are relevant to your business or industry.

Luke: Yep.

Tim: I mean, someone in every industry has to position themselves as a leader. I mean, let's not...

Luke: Correct.

Tim: Let's not beat around the bush and use us as an example. We're doing this podcast, (a) because we want to share, but (b) because we want to position ourselves and our businesses...

Luke: Yep.

Tim: ...as people who understand, I guess in this case, marketing and marketing communication. So I hope that's coming across.

Luke: Indeed. And another good tip that I heard too...

Tim: Luke didn't find that funny, listeners, a straight face. But, yeah, last tip, come on.

Luke: Is to perhaps go and do some talks for professionals. So whether it be going and doing a lecture at a university then you can say, you know, I've lectured at...

Tim: Getting it out there, yeah.

Luke: ...XYZ University.

Tim: Yeah.

Luke: Or going and talking to your local...

Tim: Yep. Yep, you got it.

Luke: ...finance group or...

Tim: You've got it.

Luke: So, yeah.

Tim: We've run well over time.

Luke: We have.

Tim: We were going to do a listener question which you were going to do this time but we won't because we are running over time and we'll do two famous last words next time.

Luke: Next time.

Tim: Guys, thanks for listening. Visit the website www.SmallBusiness...

Luke: SmallBusinessBigMarketing.com.

Tim: Dot com. And if you do have questions you can send them to?

Luke: Questions@SmallBusinessBigMarketing.com.

Tim: That's it. And until next week, it's goodbye from him.

Luke: And it's goodbye from me.

Tim: And me. Seeya.

Luke: Seeya.

Ms Evancich: You've just come that little bit closer to getting your business booming thanks to the Small Business Big Marketing show with Tim Reid and Luke Moulton. Please keep in mind that the information, opinions and ideas expressed in this show are those of the hosts and interviewees and theirs alone and they don't necessarily reflect those of their past, current or future employers.

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