

## **Publicity There for Those Who Work At It, Experts Tell Seminar Seminar report - From The Business Ledger Publication**

Anyone can find newsworthy information within their organization or industry if they just think about it, a publicist told a recent business gathering.

“The media has grown and wants your news,” said Caryn Amster, president of Custom Marketing Associates in Elk Grove Village, encouraging businesses to create public relations opportunities. “CNN interviews 25 business professionals each day.”

Amster teamed with Philippa Gamse, president of Total ‘Net Value, Inc., for a recent seminar “Profiting from Publicity through Virtual and Non-Virtual Public Relations” sponsored by Citibank in Arlington Heights.

Amster’s firm is geared toward public relations and Gamse’s toward business on the Internet. Both agree that virtual public relations complements any PR campaign.

“One feeds off the other,” said Gamse, explaining how a Web site can be used for damage control purposes.

“Microsoft is having a situation,” she said, using its Web page, which lists a number of “myths” and “facts” about the company, as an example of how a business can dispel rumors.

Gamse said that PR can draw traffic to a Web site and she emphasized that bad news travels faster in Cyberspace.

After a mini-van manufacturer announced a recall, Gamse visited the company’s Web site, hoping to find additional information, but the issue was not even addressed. Gamse was surprised since situations like this are an opportunity for experts to speak with the press and clarify any misunderstandings.

“Public relations opportunities are always available”, Amster said.

“Everyone is an expert in their field and know of industry trends,” said Amster, who think business professionals should find something within their industry to inform the public about each month.

She believes winter holidays are the perfect time of year to offer advice from an expert, because it’s a slow time for news.

“An accountant can give last minute tax advice in December and January,” Amster said. “An attorney, on Halloween, can create a press release about avoiding litigation fear. And a real estate agent, on Valentine’s Day, can offer advice on finding a home that a buyer will love.”

She admitted that the real estate example may be stretching it a bit, but that's okay if it works.

“There are 1,000 Web sites created each day,” said Gamse, who said that businesses should create Web sites with a definite purpose, rather than establishing one just to say they have one.

She recommends putting press kits on the Web page, thereby reducing shipping costs and allowing clients to obtain the information more quickly by printing it out.

Gamse said it's also important to [track the success of a PR campaign](#). Businesses can verify how many people read their press release by reviewing log reports from the host. If a company sends out many press releases, she said it's helpful to have the Internet server assign an E-mail address for each.

She offered suggestions for writing E-mail press releases. “Don't just use print, add: sound, video, clips, related links and E-mail.”

Related links should also include pictures to download, the company's history and mission statement, annual reports, a press release archive and published articles.

Her other suggestions were technical: Use the font Courier in 10-point with 60-80 characters; include a contact name, E-mail and web page address; and add a “grab me” statement for the subject.

Custom Marketing Associates, started in 1988, is a business-to-business marketing, advertising and public relations firm located in Elk Grove, Illinois. Amster's second business, The Marketing Coaches, specializing in speaking, training and consulting on marketing, direct mail, customer service and trade show issues, was started in 1990. For information, contact Caryn at (847) 895-6449, e-mail [Caryn@MarketingCoaches.com](mailto:Caryn@MarketingCoaches.com) and see the site at [www.MarketingCoaches.com](http://www.MarketingCoaches.com).

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