



(l-r) “Max” and Pauline “Polly” Elmore

Public Relations: How to Develop A “Nose for News”

By Max Elmore

You may know that terriers are bred to “sniff out” small animals, such as mice and squirrels, that may become a nuisance to the homeowner. Since I am a yuppie puppy and spend most of my time on the deck, I have developed another specialty: I sniff out the news. Working in public relations with my friend and partner, Polly Elmore, I have developed a “nose for news.”

Polly has shown me that a news release sent to the local newspapers can be an easy and cost-effective way to get out your message and attract attention. When clients, prospects, friends and relatives see you in the local newspapers, you can develop a celebrity status. For example, while walking through the neighborhood recently, I was recognized by a fan and reader of the *Fairfax County Women Journal*. “Why that’s Max!” she said. You too can become a media darling! Here are some pointers:

Turn your pet project into a news event.

Local newspapers cover special events. They especially like events which offer photos of babies and pets. So if you want to get your event in the news, you should feature the people and pets involved. Contact the reporters who cover your particular community or subject matter. You should be able to find the appropriate person for a news or feature story either on the newspaper’s web site or within the publication itself. Call or email that person with information. If your event is open to the public, make sure to send a notice of the event to be included in the newspapers’ community calendars. You can find guidelines for submission of calendar items on the newspapers’ web sites. Most require that you submit your calendar item at least two weeks before the date you hope to have it published.

To create extra interest in your event, choose a charity as a beneficiary. For example, you might have an auction to benefit a local animal shelter. Make sure to take plenty of photos at your event and send your photos electronically to the local newspapers. Identify everyone in the photo from left to right. You must have permission to use a person’s photo in your publicity efforts. So it’s best to have a form, called a photo release, for them to sign.

Winning Awards Can Make You a Top Dog!

If you or someone in your group wins an award, make sure to send a news release and photo to the newspapers. How can you get in the running for an award? Join an organization that interests you, volunteer for a committee and become involved. You can find opportunities through your local chambers of commerce or through service organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis. Another avenue of involvement is through a professional group. People who give of their time and talents will become recognized. Awards will follow.

Become an Expert... but tie your advice to something timely and relevant.

Everybody is an expert at something. Share your expertise. Write a how-to column and submit it to an appropriate publication. Before submitting your column, read and understand the publication and how your article would fit the format and the audience. Tie it to current events or current controversy. Post the article on your web site. Using my expertise in training people, I helped Polly write a column about customer service. Like your canine companions, your customers require constant care and feeding... and an occasional scratching behind the ear.

Strut Your Stuff! Major Achievements Make the News.

If you have ever watched a Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, you know what I mean by strutting your stuff! If you accomplish something really spectacular, you deserve recognition. An example would be selection as “best in breed”... or perhaps election as chair of your local chamber. Don’t be modest. Send the information to the media. You will soon find yourself in demand. I’m waiting for a book deal.

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Pauline “Polly” Elmore, owner of PRWorks, provides comprehensive public relations services for small businesses. For more information, call 703-631-1922 or email Polly at prworks@cox.net.