

LAUREL'S LEADS

Publicity Practices

Publicity costs nothing, but it's worth a lot. Your visibility, credibility and profitability all increase when you're featured in a newspaper or magazine, seen on TV or heard on the radio.

Become a source for reporters. They need authorities to quote in their stories. Sign up for a free subscription at www.helpareporterout.com. You'll get three e-mails a day with media queries. When you see a story that's a good fit for your business, respond quickly and on point.

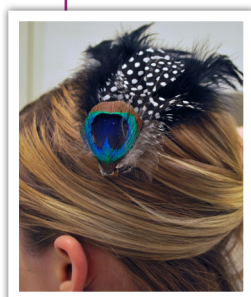
Whenever you've got a story, send reporters at local newspapers and TV or radio stations a brief e-mail with a captivating subject line. Let them know in the first few lines how their audience will benefit from knowing about what's going on at your store. Mention any sales, discounts or special deals; tell them about any non-profits you're aligning with. Then follow up with a quick phone call.

What are newsworthy events your local media would be interested in covering? Here are a few ideas I've seen work for retailers in the past.

➡ **Plug Into Current Events.** "Dancing with the Stars" begins its 14th season this month, so invite dancers and local celebrities to an event in your store. Let customers buy chances to dance with them, and donate the profits—plus a percentage of your sales for the evening—to a charity.



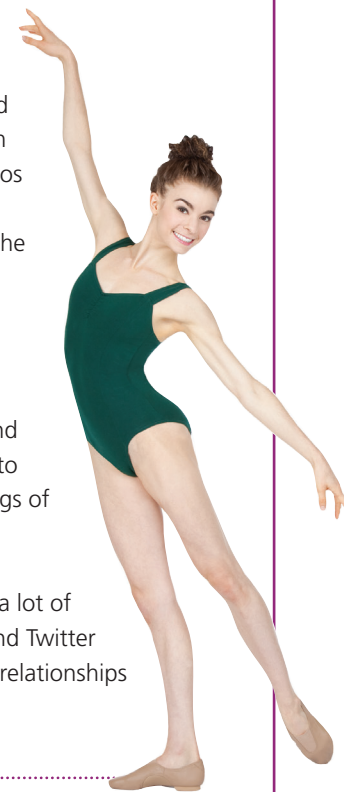
➡ **Partner With a School or Community Group.** You can literally march sales into your store this month by honoring your local high school's marching band. Invite them to perform in your parking lot or on your street. (Make sure you've got permission from your neighboring police precinct.) Band members are the right age to become your customers, and they'll bring their friends and family. Then donate a percentage of your sales that day to their uniform fund or yearly trip.



➡ **Pick Up on a Trend.** The fascinator frenzy set off by The Royal Wedding is still big this year. Capitalize on this trend by showcasing the gorgeous hairpieces you carry. Partner with a hairdresser, who can teach dancers how to create easy up-dos that will stay in place during class or performance. Make sure to get pictures of customers all dolled up, as a way to entice the press, and also to use in all your own social media outlets.

➡ **Celebrate a Holiday.** St. Patrick's Day is all about the "wearing of the green," so put green tights and leotards on sale, and also offer a discount to anyone wearing green. Bring in an Irish dance troupe and serve Irish soda bread and Irish breakfast tea. Be sure to send these details to your newspaper to be included in their calendar—they commonly run listings of local events before big holidays.

If you don't get attention the first time, don't give up. You have created a lot of good things that you can share on your website, through your Facebook and Twitter accounts and in your newsletter and blog. You've also opened the door to relationships with reporters that will benefit you—and them—in the future.



Laurel Tielis is the founder of Laurel Tielis & Associates, a retail consulting firm. She has over 15 years of retail experience, most recently serving as a marketing and public relations consultant for small businesses.

Got a marketing question for Laurel?

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