

PMQ Pizza Magazine / June 2015 / Linda "Marketing Maven" Duke outlines 5 ways to get free publicity for your pizzeria.

Linda "Marketing Maven" Duke outlines 5 ways to get free publicity for your pizzeria.

Positive media buzz can start with a simple handwritten note to a reporter or a smartly crafted press release.

BY LINDA DUKE



In last month's column, we discussed the advantages of hiring a public relations professional to promote your pizzeria. A strong PR campaign helps educate guests and potential guests about your menu, builds credibility, drives increased sales, and generates a positive image and reputation for your business. Of course, you may simply not have the money to pay a PR professional to help you out. Fortunately, there are some PR strategies you can implement on your own or with the help of key staff members. It helps to recruit the assistance of a person with strong writing skills, such as a person with a degree or strong background in English, journalism or marketing. If you have someone like that on your staff, press him into service as part of your PR team—it gives that person an opportunity to help your company grow and to grow with the company! Once you have the right person in place, follow these tips to garner positive publicity for your restaurant:

Start with a note. Craft a simple handwritten note inviting local lifestyle reporters, restaurant critics or food writers to visit your restaurant. The note should be brief and to the point, covering the high points, such as key menu items or signature pizzas that you're proud of, and wrapping up with a friendly invitation: "Please come join us for lunch or dinner at your convenience. We want to earn your business, your friendship and your support!"

Submit a guest column. If you're an expert on, say, Neapolitan pizza, work with your PR person to write a guest column on the topic for a local news publication or website. Or write about local or regional pizza trends that readers may find interesting. For example, you could delve into the local sourcing movement and talk about your support of farmers and growers in your area.

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Send out occasional press releases. Announce your newest signature recipes or the latest entry on your appetizer menu. Have you rolled out a new gluten-free pizza or a lower-sodium recipe? Do you have a new menu with lower-calorie items? All of these new products are worthy of a smartly crafted press release.

Focus on human interest. Do you have an employee or a favorite guest who has overcome challenges or adversity in his life? Tell his story in a press release or guest column. If your local publication doesn't seem interested in publishing it as a story, submit it as a letter to the editor.

Create a publicity stunt. One great way to garner media attention is to create a publicity stunt that will get people talking about your pizzeria. Try to create a menu item that will make it into the Guinness World Records, for example. Give away free meals for a year to some lucky customer. Create a sweepstakes or raffle for a valuable prize. Whatever you choose to do, write it down, explain it in sufficient detail (while keeping it brief) and send out a press release.

You can't expect the news media to cover your restaurant just because it's there. To be newsworthy, you have to create some news. Work closely with your PR professional or in-house PR team to develop a hook, craft a pitch and go after all of the free positive exposure you can get. You may be pleasantly surprised at the results!

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