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**Scott Cytron** • Dec. 01, 2009

### **Exclusive Online Feature**

While public relations and marketing professionals have lots of tricks up their sleeves, one tactic that continues to work, time and time again, is to leverage media attention based on a current news event.

Relax my fellow PR colleagues; I'm not releasing anything proprietary that is top secret. In fact, this is pure common sense.

There are two kinds of public relations that generates media attention: proactive and reactive.

When you are "reactive" to something that happened to your firm or business, it signifies that you were largely unprepared for the situation at hand. Here's an extreme example. Suppose one of your clients was in trouble with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), with the media covering all aspects of the client's activities. When the media knocks at your door for comment, it puts your firm or business in a reactive stance.

Instead, the better solution is to proactively seek out the media and tell your part of the story. Although not all situations involving sensitive information can be handled this way, contacting the media before they contact you shows you are smart and really know what you are doing and saying. You'll also gain the media's respect much faster by contacting them in these situations before they contact you.

As you can see, it's better to be proactive than reactive. This stance

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1. A new retail development designed to strengthen the local economy has just been announced for your city, but first, an economic feasibility study must be conducted to ensure the project makes sense from a financial, long-term leasing perspective. What's the land worth, and what can the owner expect long term?

These are questions a business valuation expert can best answer ... and it just so happens your firm offers that service with a qualified CPA/ABV or appraiser on staff. In this case, you would contact your local paper and business journal, and introduce the professional to the reporter covering this beat or area of news. Explain your story angle to the reporter; perhaps your proposed story has to do with how the land itself is valued, for example.

2. Leveraging a story on changes to the tax code is always a good idea. However, since most firms have a tax practice, you'll have to think about how your practice is different. Most of the time, I find the differences within the firm's clients themselves ... and that's where your story can take on a more exciting tone.

Let's say, for example, that you have a client that owns a popular chain of restaurants. Your story has just become "consumer" oriented to generate interest from the media on how your client will handle the new change to the tax code. While the tax information itself may sound mundane, the chain, itself, will generate interest and it's a win-win situation all around. You and the client gain publicity.

3. Veering somewhat away from the accounting angle, how about leveraging a human resource story about recruitment or retention?

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above, try to brainstorm all the different story angles you could propose to the media if something like this were to happen, either to your own firm or even outside your firm. Have the story angle list ready and waiting; you'll be able to contact the media right away should a situation occur ... and it will show you're ready and willing to speak up as a firm.

These simple tactics should generate attention. Good luck!

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For more than 20 years, Scott H. Cytron, ABC, has worked with CPAs and accountants, providing public relations, marketing and communications services, and teaches firms how to use social media more effectively. Author of *The CPA Technology Advisor's* MarketingWorks column, he tweets, and is on Facebook and LinkedIn. Contact him at [scottcytron@cpata.com](mailto:scottcytron@cpata.com).

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