

# Small Business Success

April 2015



Community  
Futures Newsask



## Make Yourself a Local Media Star

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

Guess whose company made the local TV news last night - and it wasn't you. If it was your competitor, you may be scratching your head (or banging it) since you know that you are much more knowledgeable about the industry and you're sure you would make a better interview.

It could be that the reporter or producer knew her from a previous program but the most likely case is that she has worked a strategy to get to know those in the media, making them aware of her product and her knowledge of the industry.

So, build your own strategy.

### Social Media

- Building a relationship with the media, as with all basic networking, is a matter of targeting reporters and editors in advance and finding where they hang out online (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook).
- Monitor their Twitter hash tags; often reporters chat with the public on Twitter and you can respond to comments they make.
- Compliment a reporter via Twitter, Facebook, or e-mail on a story he or she did.

### Networking

- Introduce yourself to reporters at chamber of commerce mixers. Just be friendly and don't be too obvious. Any good reporter can smell a pitch a mile away.
- If you can write and you live in a small town with a newspaper, be aware that the editor is always looking for material. See if you can submit a guest editorial that isn't overtly self-serving. This is a great way for them to get to know you.
- Write a positive post on your blog highlighting a story by a local reporter and e-mail them the link.
- Visit city council meetings in your town. Typically there's a reporter sitting around bored, who you can build a relationship with.

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- Treat journalists with respect. You'll set yourself apart just by being friendly and uncritical.

### **Become Indispensable**

- Never say no if a reporter wants to interview you that day, even if you're on vacation.
- Offer occasional suggestions of angles you think would make great follow-up stories, and they don't have to be anything to do with your business. Most stories are ongoing aspects of long-running issues, so reporters always need additional story follow-up ideas.
- Offer to connect reporters to experts you know (and who might say good things about your company).
- Be a source for stories that fall within your expertise by letting reporters know you're available when they need a source.

### **Leverage Your Advantage**

- If you've created a YouTube video where you're talking about your company - use it as a resource by including the URL in your blog and sending the link to a reporter you've met.
- Never put-down your competition; rather, say something like, "We've got several good companies in this area in the marine industry; our firm has concentrated on serving one segment of the business..."
- Frame your story as a local example of a national or international issue currently in the news. If the government is debating education and you've developed a unique program for schools, you've got a pitch.
- Be prepared to answer the obvious questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How - and rehearse your answers.

### **Plan Ahead**

Pre-write tweets and a blog post, so you can immediately tell friends, family, clients and supporters when the story runs. The bottom line is: reach out, be helpful, and activate your strategy. The publicity is there for the taking. All you have to do is ask.



## When One Customer Praises You - Others Follow

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Many businesses share a similar life cycle in regards to their customer base. From the time of launching their business they push for new patrons using word of mouth and advertising. After a time they find they have a stable base which is sufficient to sustain the business. Too often the business becomes stalled at that point, and even paid advertising may not be sufficient to stimulate growth. One effective way to move forward is to use the process of client referral and endorsement. It has been said that one referral will bring ten more customers.

With today's technologies it's easier than ever to gain testimonials using sites like Facebook, Pinterest and LinkedIn - but to be effective these sites require careful management on your part; checking them regularly to see that people are saying good things about you and moving quickly to address a negative comment.

Building a following on Twitter or a Blog will also lead to a sense of familiarity that if you harvest it right will lead to referrals and even written testimonials. By producing your own story and content on a regular basis you're going to get noticed in the digital world.

### Pay it forward

There's a good argument for establishing a strong presence on LinkedIn, which includes recommendations from colleagues and clients. But don't just wait for people to recognize you. Give three or four LinkedIn referrals first, without being asked; it's kind of like once we receive a Christmas card we're compelled to send one back.

### Get People Talking

It's one thing to do good work - but another to have people be aware of how good you are, so tell your story, share it with customers and don't be afraid to ask good customers to spread the word through their Facebook site and click the 'thumbs up' (like) on your Facebook page. One of the most effective tools is also one of the simplest - word of mouth. The higher standard of service you deliver the more likely clients will share their experience with friends. "I was blown away by my accountant this week. She went out of her way in the evening to deliver my updated file to my home office."



### Consider a focus group.

Ask six or eight of your customers to join you for a sandwich lunch where you seek out their views of your company and what additional services they might recommend you offer.

First off, they will be flattered to be asked and as they see more of your passion they will be motivated to say good things. And don't be afraid to ask them directly to endorse you.

Asking them to participate is best handled in person, or at least on the phone, rather than via electronic means - it adds the personal touch. And since you don't want either of you to be embarrassed, you need to have a pretty good idea that they will agree to your request before you ask.

### Take the long view

Sometimes, testimonials happen almost organically, but often, nurturing referrals is a long process. Staying in touch with customers is critical. Like any good business strategy, it's important to be patient. Building good business practices over a period of time and gaining the trust of customers will more likely result in them recommending your services.

Most of us like to say good things about the people with whom we do business. Sometimes we just need to be asked.

## Cartoon

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At last he had found the Regulatory Guidelines.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Municipal Infrastructure Conference

Hosted at the Evergreen Conference Centre in Nipawin, the 3rd Annual Municipal Infrastructure Conference will provide over 25 learning opportunities in a plenary and concurrent session format. The Conference presents an ideal opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss best practices and network on innovative ways of building, managing, procuring, and financing infrastructure in rural and urban municipalities.

*Confirmed conference sessions include:*

- *Learning from an Early Adopter Alan Mapstone, Jeff Roorda and Associates*
- *Alternative Infrastructure Implementation and Management; Ron Hymers and Steve Hollett, Community Infrastructure Financing*
- *Building Together: Avoiding Infrastructure Pitfalls; Saskatchewan Construction Association Panel*
- *Benefits and Challenges: Developing Credible Asset Management; Municipal Panel moderated by Gordon Sparks*
- *Naming Rights Municipal Building and Facilities; Judy Haber, Performance Sponsorship*
- *Integrating economic development principles into regional infrastructure planning: Gordon Molnar, Pilar Consulting*
- *Alternative Revenue Generation for Communities: Trevor Forrest Saskatoon Community Foundation, Doug Eddy, Northern Sask Economic Development Council*
- *Dissecting a Successful P3- the players, their roles, the process; Dan Ferguson and Brad McClellan, Weir Foulds*
- *Leveraging existing inventory data to build the infrastructure plan Gordon Molnar, Pilar Consulting*
- *Cost recovery and project development for municipalities under 3000, Miller Thomson*

*Visit the conference website for more information on these sessions and ongoing program updates. Don't be disappointed – reserve your accommodations early.*

**Early Registration Fee of \$250 available until March 13, 2015.** All registrations received prior to March 13, 2015 will be entered into a draw for a FREE IPAD, to be awarded at the conference banquet on April 22.

**[www.municipalinfrastructureconference.ca](http://www.municipalinfrastructureconference.ca)**



## YBEX 2015

14th Annual

### Youth Business Excellence Awards 2015

Each year since 2001, Community Futures Newsask has been hosting an awards event for our **Business Plan Competition**.

Choose one of the following three categories:

1. Business Plan – Take a business idea and develop a business plan.
2. Business Venture – Report on the operation of your actual business.
3. Business Venture 2 – Significantly expanded or improved business that you previously entered.

In three age divisions as an individual or group:

- Grades 6 to 9
- Grades 10 to 12; or
- Under 30 out of school or attending university or technical institute with permanent address with our region.

Check out our website for the Guidelines, Application, and Awards breakdown, [www.newsaskcfdc.ca](http://www.newsaskcfdc.ca)

(Click on YBEX Awards on the left menu.)

Check them out, start planning your business and enter our competition.

**Submission Deadline:** Thursday, April 16, 2015

**Awards Event:** Saturday, May 2, 2015



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