

# DO YOUR OWN PR

## MARKETING & PRODUCT

## FIVE QUICK WINS

If you can get into the habit of promoting your own business, you will extend your practice reach and reputation. It doesn't have to cost much, and can be done in odd moments once you have created a plan and developed your skills in writing press releases. Why invest your spare time in PR? It is a low cost way to promote your business, independent media coverage builds your business's credibility and influence, and it extends your reach in a way you couldn't do yourself.

- 1. Who do you want to reach and how will you reach them?** Your first step is to think about the people you would like to attract to your practice. What do they read, what do they watch or listen to? Build a list of contacts at the relevant local media: nowadays you want email addresses, twitter handles and mobile numbers.
- 2. What stories make the news?** Your second step is to look at your choice of local media and analyse what they are covering. Listen to the local radio station: what makes the news slot, and how long does each story last. Seek out slots where experts are interviewed. What 'hook' is used to start off each interview? Identify which programme or page might be a good place to showcase your expertise. Remember: think about what readers and viewers want first, think about what the producer and presenter want next. Only then should you consider what story you want to pitch. Ask yourself, 'Is it newsworthy?' and 'Does this story need to run now?'. Timely newsworthy stories are most likely to get coverage. Something that is mainly of interest to you as the business owner won't get covered. Stories that aren't time-dependent can get bumped by more urgent news.
- 3. How do you tell your story?** Writing a press release can sound daunting but it's not complicated. You really just need to email a named contact with the 'Who, what, where, when, why and how' of

your story. If you have a fundraising event, explain why you are holding it, where and when it is, and how to get involved. Finish with the action you would like people to take: 'Call into John Smith Opticians on Saturday to take part', and your email is ready to send.

- 4. How do you sell your story?** Go back to your list of contacts, and put the content you have written into a quick personalised email. Don't send attachments. Do use their name. Get to the story quickly without lengthy preamble. And if you have their number, follow up the next day with a quick call. Be ready to supply photographs or be interviewed straight away: the press needs to move fast to stay timely.
- 5. How do you capitalise on press coverage?** Getting media coverage is only the start. If you have coverage, link to it via practice social media. Put it on your website, print it out and display it in the practice. Once you have one bit of coverage, make plans for ideas for press releases every month or two. Look for national events related to eyecare and make sure you let your press contacts know you are available for expert comment. Make PR part of your weekly management tasks, and you will raise your practice profile.

