

How to Obtain Free Publicity

Seven Simple Steps to Get Your Company in the News

A news story about a company is worth as much as 10 times as much as you would have to pay for an ad the same size. Publicity is so valuable because most people view it as an objective third-party endorsement of your company and the heating and cooling products you sell. Here are seven steps to help you obtain this valuable—but free—publicity:

1. **Find a story to tell.** Publicity always begins with a story. It may be a new product, a new idea or a new development at your company. Success in obtaining publicity is simply a matter of finding that story and telling it to the right people. Here are some ideas:
 - **New products** – Whenever ICP introduces a new furnace or air conditioner, tell your local news media and regional trade publications that you have it in stock. You can obtain photographs and press releases about ICP products by calling John Mott or Faye Cox at 1-800-315-4370.
 - **News about your company** – Have you hired a new employee, opened a new branch, or made a significant capital investment? If so, tell the local news media and regional trade publications.
 - **Special events** – If you have a dealer meeting or another special event for your customers, invite the regional trade press editors in your area. In smaller cities, the local newspapers may also be interested in attending the event and writing a story.
 - **Create news** – Give an air conditioner to a school or help renovate a historic building. And, be sure to tell the local news media and regional trade press about it.
2. **Become an instant home comfort “expert.”** Newspapers are always looking for helpful consumer-oriented tips. And, they are really interested if the information is written by a local “expert.” You can become that local expert in an instant. Your home comfort columns are already written—and they’re free from ICP. All you have to do is add your name and company name. (Or, better yet, let one of your dealers add his name.) To obtain the columns, call John Mott or Faye Cox at 1-800-315-4370 to obtain copies of the consumer-oriented newspaper columns.
3. **Choose the right media for your story.** You do not need to be able to write a press release to obtain publicity about your company. If you contact the right news media people, they will usually write the story for you. When you do need an **ICP press release**, it may already be written. For example, with **ICP** new product announcements, you can obtain press releases from John Mott or Faye Cox by calling **1-800-315-4370**. Here are some tips to help you find the right media to tell your story:
 - **Start with dealers** – Before you announce a story to homeowners, announce it to dealers—both your current customers and potential new

ones. The first news media on your list should be the regional HVAC trade publications that dealers read in your area.

- **Look at your own advertising** – If you advertise locally, either in trade publications or consumer media, you'll get more attention from media where you're already known as an important customer.
- **Look at your dealers' advertising** – When you are announcing a new product, you may be able to capitalize on your customers' relationships with media people. If there is a particularly large dealer in one city, let him announce the product in his favorite media.
- **Give the story to everyone** – Don't overlook any newspapers, radio stations, television stations, magazines or other media. Even if you think they won't run the story, give it to them anyway. You might be pleasantly surprised. (The one exception to this rule is the home comfort expert articles mentioned above. Give them exclusively to only one newspaper.)

4. Customize the press materials. Local news media are far more interested in local stories than national ones. If you use national press materials on, say, a new product announcement, be sure to transform the national publicity materials into local publicity materials. Just retype the press release, change a few words to make it an announcement from your company and print it out on your company letterhead. Press releases are available electronically via email to make this job easier.

5. Start with your friends. Do you know a reporter at the local newspaper? Do you attend church with an announcer at a radio station? Are you in a civic club with a newspaper editor? Do you advertise in any local or regional media? Start with these people. They can handle your story for you or direct you to someone who can. After you exhaust all of these opportunities, take the story to people you haven't met yet.

6. Follow up. Follow up. Follow up. Once you've delivered a press release and photos, stay in touch with your media contacts until your story hits the airwaves or appears in print.

7. Reprint the articles and mail them to everyone. Everyone doesn't read the local paper or listen to the local radio station. Even when they do, they don't read every article or hear every story. When your announcement appears in print, make copies and send them to all your potential customers. That way, you can be sure to reach your primary target audience, no matter which publication prints your story.