

Start the presses

I'd like to get the name of my practice mentioned in the media. What's the best way to figure out who to contact in the local media?

Unlike paid advertising, publicity is information considered newsworthy by your local newspaper and TV and



Linda Wasche

radio stations, says Linda Wasche of LW Marketworks in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. It's also a powerful, no-cost way to build awareness. But local media will pick up your story only if it gets the attention of the editor or

news director—both are looking for ideas with audience appeal that don't smack of self-promotion. Wasche says the first step is to determine which media are most likely to use your type of news.

1. Identify and prioritize media outlets in your area. List those you know and search for more at media directories like mondotimes.com. Include pet-related publications and Web sites, newspapers, radio and TV stations, and business or chamber of commerce newsletters. Become familiar with their content and their circulation or broadcast area.

2. For each media outlet, identify specific topics. Consider the types of stories you will be pitching. Subjects might include:

> Pet care information such as tips on health and well-being, seasonal hazards, diet, and nutrition.

> Business news about practice growth, a new location, new staff, accolades, and awards.

> Technological advances such as new equipment, new diagnostic services, and lifesaving procedures.

> Human interest stories with happy endings or featuring extraordinary pets.

3. Compile a list of contacts. Identify editors and reporters who cover pets, health, families, features, business news, technology, and more. Go to each news outlet's Web site and obtain names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of editors and

reporters covering those beats. These are the people you'll contact with the details of a story you think the news outlet might want to cover.

4. Build your database. Assemble your contact information into a database that can be easily updated and sorted by topic area.

5. Keep your database current. Check your list about every six months to make sure that information is still accurate. Make any additions or changes as necessary. ■