# BECOMING AN EXPERT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

# Annie Payne, History from the Heart, Founded in 2006

Have you been ‘muddling along’ in your life story business for some time but haven’t reached your target clients? Maybe you attended a workshop or two on Marketing, but the concepts mentioned haven’t produced the results you want?

The answer to your problem is learning how to use PR (Public Relations) to become a well-recognised expert in the niche business of life story preservation in your city or state.

**Story telling is the secret of successful public relations**.

We all have stories to tell about our unique business and your stories deserve an audience. When you tell your stories, they resonate with people reading, listening to or watching you tell the vital stories about why life story professionals touch the lives of people everywhere.

Your stories can be personal, professional stories or stories that let people know who you are, what you stand for, what you do. Once you start telling your stories, people develop a relationship with you, which enhances your role as an expert or thought leader, as THE life story professional in your community.

Once you have become recognised as an expert in your niche business, your target audience, key organisations and the media will pay attention to you. This results increased sales, more speaking engagements, more referrals; doors start opening for you and the new opportunities you dreamed of begin to happen.

What’s the catch, I hear you say?

The secret is to examine the stories you want to tell and to then see them through the eyes of the editors and program directors you are ‘pitching’ to, packaging them in the way that the media expects. You will be in a much stronger position to get the media coverage you need to promote yourself.

# Background History

Having worked as a marketing manager and taught marketing/PR to event/conference management students at a tertiary level, once I’d decided to open my own personal history business in 2005, the major problem I identified via my SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, was that no-one in my country knew anything about personal history.

I made a big decision to start raising both my own profile and that of personal history in both Perth (the world’s most isolated capital city) and around Australia.

I made these two decisions before I started on this journey:

1. To stand in my own power. I had questions about my ability to tell my story:

* Did I know enough?
* What if I ‘blanked out’ while speaking to a large group?
* Was I really an ‘expert’ in my field?

I backed myself, knowing that I had the skills and knowledge to make my own personal history business succeed (I’d been doing this work since 1988!) – I stood in my own power!

1. To explore my motivation about why I wanted to create and develop my media profile?

Ask yourself about your motivation to construct your profile as an expert? If your sole reason is to get more sales, your audience will know that and won’t like it!

After much soul searching, I learned that what I wanted to do wasn’t about me; it was about raising consciousness about the importance of preserving life stories for the future.

I have used monthly media releases since January 2006 in both Perth and Adelaide, meaning that I know they really work and, *I have never paid a cent on advertising or marketing my business!*

**Before you start:**

* Remind yourself that you are an expert in your field – if you believe it, so will others.
* The more people who know about you and your business, the more opportunities you have of gaining new business.
* People trust people they know. If they read about you in their local paper and then hear you on radio, your reputation grows and you’ll be the first person they’ll call when they want a personal history project done for the family.
* Remember - the process of raising your profile to the public is not about you, **it’s about them**. You can help them to solve a problem; use that perspective: helping others. This is the essential element in building your life story business.

**The Media and You**

Learning how to use the media to promote your life story business, FREE, means adhering to some golden rules.

1. Draw up a list of every newspaper, local magazine, TV magazine program, radio station in your city and state, noting address, phone number, email and website. Keep this list up to date.
2. Phone each media outlet and ask to speak to the journalist who handles community issues and events. Obtain their name, contact details and the ‘best time’ to speak to them.
3. Phone the journalist and provide your ‘elevator speech’ to explain what and how you work.
4. Invite the journalist to meet for coffee (your treat) and, when face-to-face, talk about the importance of saving personal/family life stories. (I talk about ‘preserving Australia’s living history’).
5. Provide them with an Information Pack about your work, experience, background (I talk about my nursing years and Social Work training, years of personal history experience, etc.), several Media Release samples, business cards and a jpeg. standard professional photo of you, for their use. I also put all of the above on a USB.
6. Don’t forget to show interest in the journalist! I try to find some common ground with each journalist, forming a friendship. I send Christmas and birthday cards and meet face-to-face 6 monthly.

Note the following points:

* Which weekday is best for your media release to be received?
* Morning or afternoon?
* Format?
* If for radio/TV, provide a list of 10 questions for interviewer.
* Check what details about your media release can be added to their website.

**Interview Day**

1. Arrive 20 minutes before live radio/TV interview time to enable producer to check contact details, provide a free handout for listeners/viewers etc. Befriend the producer!
2. If interview is for TV, do own hair and make-up and dress carefully – you have one chance to make a good impression.
3. Take a deep breath and smile as you reply to questions and don’t forget a touch of humour!
4. Remember that the interview focuses on your media release – NOT you! Provide examples of your topic e.g. Writing a love letter for Valentine’s Day – I like to read one of President Reagan’s romantic letters to Nancy or provide a list of suggested questions to add to the Mother’s Day Memory Jar. If it’s a TV interview, I take along a Memory Jar for viewers to see (props are essential for TV).
5. Mention your contact details at the conclusion “for anyone who needs further help.”
6. Send a thank you email to your journalist/interviewer and the program producer the following day. Going the extra mile makes you memorable!