

Case Study Series: What's Working in Marketing & Selling Professional Services

A Blueprint for Professional Services Reinvention: PR Maven Turns Free Services into a 6-Figure Business

By M. Sharon Baker

Overview

After offering professional public relations services to small and medium-sized companies for seven years, Nancy Juetten, founder of Main Street Media Savvy, realized she spent too much time having coffee or tea and giving away free publicity advice to prospects who ultimately could not afford her services. Rather than look for ways to halt such requests, Juetten, a solopreneur in Bellevue, WA, saw it as a market opportunity and used that information to reinvent her business, a move that helped Main Street Media Savvy thrive despite the recession.

Situation

The Challenge: Identify Hidden Revenue Opportunities When Asked For Free Advice

It's a great thing when people start tapping you as their go-to resource for your particular expertise, but shifting through the crowd to identify the ones most likely to become revenue opportunities is often difficult. Rather than declining coffee requests, Juetten thought strategically about what the people inviting her to meet wanted and brainstormed how she might be able to help them and grow her own company. For years, Juetten had provided public relations services for a wide range of clients who typically paid her on a monthly retainer basis.

Approach

"It seemed timely to shift my focus from working one-on-one with clients to working one-to-many through information products and other means, such as speaking and training," Juetten says. "I knew it was going to take some time to make the shift, and I was prepared to keep serving clients AND create these new ways to be of service."

Her first step, in the summer of 2006, was to create tips booklets "as a different and more far reaching way to be of service to small business owners in my own backyard and beyond."

She tried selling \$10 tips booklets in bulk to big box office supply retailers, professional groups, commercial business banks, and other organizations working with small businesses. Unable to gain much traction this way, she switched to selling them from her web site. A favorable mention from Publicity Hound Joan Stewart's e-newsletter delivered sales from all over the nation.

Easy Ways to Share Expertise: Tips, Toolkit, Blog, Columns

The tips booklets earned favorable reviews and when Juetten began to pursue professional speaking, she suggested meeting organizers purchase the booklets to share with audience members. If that wasn't of interest, she brought along the tips booklets and sold them after her speech.

Buyers of the tips booklets often engaged Juetten's services. "Many also wanted to go deeper in their learning," she says. "Two tips booklets soon became the Media-Savvy-to-Go Publicity Toolkit – a \$97 "comprehensive bundle of audio and print elements that guides users in the step-by-step actions they can take to get seen, heard, and celebrated in the media in their own backyards and beyond. It's a very high-value, helpful guide for do-it-yourself publicists."

She also launched a "Rent Nancy's PR Brain by the Hour" service so clients could get their DIY publicity questions answered and get custom publicity advice and ideas over 'virtual' coffee or tea. To increase her marketing reach, Juetten approached a suburban business journal in late 2006 asking if she could write a column called Media Savvy to Go. The editor liked her pitch, and less than a year later, she leveraged her expertise and moved the column to a larger business journal in Seattle.

"The readership is upscale, large, and influential," she says. "The column continues to provide me the opportunity to add value for the readers and earn new followers and fans of my work."

That same month, September 2007, Juetten added a blog called Main Street Media Savvy to her website as part of the plan to engage customers, to increase her exposure, and to build traffic. As her exposure grew, Juetten started fielding invitations to speak on teleseminars, podcasts, radio shows and webinars.

"I've put a lot of time and effort into building my platform as a subject matter expert and this is lending fuel to the growth of the DIY publicity elements of my evolving publicity training and tools business," Juetten says.

Reach More People In Different Ways: Audio Products, Workshops

At a workshop by information product guru Fred Gleeck, Juetten learned appealing to customers' best learning styles was essential. "That was why I created audio files and a live workshop," she says. "Not everyone learns best by reading. Some want to listen, and some want to be in a workshop setting. Learning that was really an "aha" moment for me."

Adding training events to the product line was the next logical step. A good friend suggested she combine her love of chocolate, tea, connection and conversation to create an event. "She said I could call it the Publici-Tea™," Juetten says. "Immediately I had a sense this was a brilliant idea. I've been the 'comfort and joy' publicist for some time, so this idea seemed very on brand for me."

Two hours after sending an email to ezine subscribers inviting them to the first Publici-Tea half-day workshop, 22 people signed up. Subsequent Publici-Teas, held in Juetten's home, sold out at \$297 a seat.

Convinced that the idea was a hit and realizing that her home limited her to about 15 guests, Juetten moved the teas to a local venue. She later refined the concept, adapting it for a lecture-style presentation and a year later, started inviting other content experts to join her.

"What started as intimate groups of 10-14 publicity-seeking business owners gathered around my dining room table has now turned into groups of 60-85 people gathering at the Plaza Conference Center at Seattle Design Center, which serves as the venue sponsor," Juetten says. "Instead of being an interactive session, the Publici-Tea™ Express is a lecture style workshop experience that allows me to share the message with larger audiences of publicity-seeking business owners."

Results

Two and a half years after launching her first tips booklets, Main Street Media Savvy's 2009 revenues are on par with those of 2008 -- even in light of one of the most daunting economic recessions. Revenues for the business are about \$250,000. "What used to be a business that was 100% based on fee-for-service consulting has shifted to 50% fee-for-service consulting and 50% from all other sources, including Publici-

Tea™ training, info products, speaking, and affiliate income,” Juetten says. Associations and groups are now inviting Juetten to present the Publici-Tea Express to their audiences.

Now that she has a wide following and national appeal, Juetten’s goal for 2010 is to further expand her reach with new products and programs (such as her recently introduced Bye Bye Boring Bio Action Guide) and add more professional speaking engagements—all of which she believes will continue to grow her revenues.

Additional insights from Main Street Media Savvy’s Nancy Juetten

- **Don’t assume or be afraid that others already have your subject area covered.** Juetten thought Publicity Hound Joan Stewart and others had cornered the Do-It-Yourself publicity market. “I thought Joan had nailed it, so there was nothing more for me to do,” Juetten says. After studying her products, Juetten believed she could do it differently. “Joan was a journalist who comes at PR from that perspective. My tone is softer, engaging and friendly and I can appeal to customers I serve, which tend to be coaches, consultants, solopreneurs, aspiring speakers and infopreneurs.”
- **If you want to become a speaker or presenter, invest in Patricia Fripp’s Speaking School.** Juetten began as a terrified and a hold-on-to-the-podium-for-dear-life speaker. But she’s now a comfortable and confident presenter who doesn’t need to crib from her PowerPoint presentation. “People have remarked to me that they’ve notice a remarkable difference since I took Patricia Fripp’s class in 2008,” Juetten says.
- **Craft a compelling brand message that resonates with the customers you want to serve.** Juetten’s brand message is “Get seen, heard, and celebrated in your own backyard and beyond,” and her brand is Main Street Media Savvy. “Getting to a real, emotionally-charged, and unique selling proposition has been a huge “aha” for me, and it’s been a very magnetic tool to invite people to do business with me,” she says. If you are struggling to create your brand, Juetten says to figure out “What is it that you really do for your ideal customers? Describe your customers in exacting detail. How does it matter to them? There’s probably a pearl of a brand idea residing right there.”
- **Have fun giving your events a sassy, memorable, branded name.** Publici-Tea is an idea and a visual that really resonates with her ideal customers. The tea cup logo with chocolate truffles on the saucer communicates the nurturing nature of the event.