



The Pen is Mightier than the Sword

July 16, 2012 - Front Section

The Power of the Press. The Pen is Mightier than the Sword. Where do these phrases come from? What do they mean?

Most people tend to believe what they read. This being an undebatable fact, the Journal constantly impresses upon its clients the value of publicity. In other words, if you don't blow your own horn, who will?

The question becomes, where do you blow your horn to reach the most people in a successful and influential manner?

Direct Mail: I believe in this type of promotion and use it myself, but find that the purpose served is one of information and nothing else. It is very difficult to sell through direct mail because it is obviously coming from you - the seller. It is even more difficult to sell an image. Let's face it - if I send out a direct mail piece announcing how great I am, who wrote the piece? I did. Aren't I going to be somewhat biased? And, who's going to believe me?

Advertising: I can't knock advertising because it's how I make my living. If no one bought ads, the paper wouldn't exist. In my humble opinion (49 years in marketing), advertising is a 50% promotion. It informs on a bias level. Everyone knows that if you buy space in a newspaper, magazine, TV or radio you can claim any damn thing you please.

Publicity: In my opinion, this is where the Power of the Press and The Pen is Mightier than the Sword come into play and is the other 50% of a successful promotion. People believe what they read in the newspaper or magazine, not necessarily in a direct mail piece, brochure or an ad. A good publicity campaign tied in with clever advertising can sway a lot of readers and unearth new clients.

I've had clients tell me that they don't have time to send in a story about their company or an activity they are proud of. I say - they can't afford not to find the time. Remember - people believe what they read. If they read nothing about you - as far as they're concerned, you don't exist.

How strong an effect does publicity have on the reader? Several years ago in my little weekly hometown newspaper, the editor became offended at a selectman candidate. When the proud candidate was asked if he was going to apologize, he laughed and said: "That little news-rag. Who the hell is going to be influenced by that old editor and what he thinks? He can't intimidate me." Needless to say, the candidate didn't apologize. What happened next? The irate editor used his paper to vigorously campaign against the candidate (who would have won the election) which led to a terrible defeat which led to the ruin of the candidate and his eventually leaving town, where he had lived all his life. Power of the Press? Yes. In action. Too bad. A simple apology or stroking of the press might have changed the candidate's entire life. The pen killed the candidate? Who needed a sword?

We deal with many executive directors of organizations - many of them with pseudo pride, fixed

incomes and little foresight. Of course, I'm not talking about you and if the shoe doesn't fit, don't wear it. It goes without saying that all of them should invite the press to their dinner meetings as guests (big deal). That type of stroking would go a long way in making friends with the press, which we can see is mighty important if someone truly cares what people think. The fact that executive directors don't get paid any more money whether they make friends with the press or not, hampers their decision to do the right thing and makes them the hardest type of people for us to deal with. Unfortunately, most of them are overly impressed with their title and falsely believe they have the power. If I were an organization president, I would install a prime prerequisite of the director's job to make friends with the press. They would have to prove it by how many times the press attended the dinner meetings. If the director didn't believe in the value of this exercise, I would fire him/her and seek someone who understood and cared about the job.

Don't forget, I told you that I have dealt with these people for over 48 years and the greatest executive director I ever dealt with, the late Andy Hickey, head of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, received his training at the late daily newspaper, The Boston Post. Do you think he knew about the Power of the Press and that the Pen is Mightier than the Sword? Of course he did and that was his strength.

If you are an executive director who is reading this message and would like to change your ways, call me and invite one of my publishers to your next event. I guarantee he/she will attend with a smile, take pictures, interview your president and run an article in the influential Journal, which is read by close to 30,000 people who tend to believe what we tell them. You will be a hero.

If you are the president of an organization who isn't now receiving the valuable coverage you feel you might need in the industry, call me and tell me the name of your executive director. I'll call him/her and report to you the reception.

One uncooperative director (you know who you are, lady) of a Boston business environmental organization refused to invite my editor to a breakfast until I said that he wouldn't eat. She reluctantly said okay - but then never again invited him. Is she a lightweight? - or what? Maybe if I campaigned against her in the paper she would lose her job, just to prove The Power of the Press and The Pen is Mightier than the Sword.

I won't do that. Life is too short and Journal space is too valuable to waste.

Roland Hopkins is founder of the NYREJ, Norwell, Mass.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540