

Presentation by M2S Media for Wellington Chamber of Commerce 27th April 2011

Introduction

We're going to take about 15 or 20 minutes and you can ask any questions at the end, please, just to save time, or else we might end up taking up an hour or more.

In the next quarter-of-an-hour we'll tell you a little bit about M2S Media and what we do, but this isn't a sales pitch; we're here to help you as fellow chamber members, so we'll be showing you how the media works and how you can take advantage of the media to benefit your own businesses.

We've tailored this for local businesses, so most of what we talk about will be relative to the media that is important locally, like the Wellington Weekly.

We'll give you some tips on how get publicity for yourselves at little expense – Sue won't want to hear that, I'm sure! And there's a handout at the end which you can take away afterwards.

By the end of the presentation, I think you'll never read a newspaper in the same way again, and you'll be able to go away and start doing some PR for yourselves straight away.

If you think of a good PR idea but get stuck when doing it, feel free to give us a call for advice and we'll happily point you in the right direction again

We offer all chamber members a free one-hour one-to-one workshop, so we'll come and sit down with you and go through it in more detail if you want. Just call or drop us an email.

Who We Are

John Thorne and Julia Netherton – both journalists by profession and former newspaper editors. Julia started M2S Media after leaving newspapers in 2001 and John joined in 2002.

We work from home as we have an office at the back of the house where we can shut the door to keep it separate from home life. People can ring the work ophone 24/7 and it doesn't bother us.

Julia also works outside the business as Town Clerk in Ilminster – formerly Assistant Town Clerk here in Wellington – as the business doesn't support two of us full-time.

And for another week, John is still a TDBC Councillor, having served four years on the council representing part of the Blackdown Hills.

Because of our journalism background, we know not just how to write a press release, but also how to get it used. Anybody can write a press release about an interesting story, but not anybody can write it in a way which makes the story interesting – and the real trick is to make an uninteresting story sound interesting. If they could, then we'd be out of business.

Some of the Stuff We Do

In the space of three weeks recently John was a Gay Parade spokesman live on BBC Radio Devon's breakfast show and the a mental hospital spokesman in an ITV Westcountry television interview!

No, John's not gay, nor mentally ill – well....

The workload can be very varied day to day and very interesting.

Currently, we're helping a Bridgwater company in the Waste from Energy sector to access European Union funding. Hardly PR – but it's all about the use of words and perceptions of what people do. If you say you do something and say it in a way that sounds like it meets EU funding criteria, then they'll give you the funding.

We're also engaged in helping to form, or rather change, public opinion about the provision of mental health care.

We are raising the public profile of an Air Ambulance charity and a children's nursery and a Not for Profit further education sports organisation.

The Media Today

A couple of questions to start with, and prizes for correct answers:

Q – Anybody tell us how many newspapers report Wellington news?

A – It's thousands, all over the world. If a story's good enough/interesting enough, it'll be picked up by anything from The Los Angeles Times to The Australian to Le Monde to Der Spiegel to Malayala Manorama (one of the largest circulating newspapers in India) to the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong

Example – Minehead story of Benson the Dog falling off cliff – show laminates

Q – Here's a copy of today's WDP – its typical of regional daily newspapers – it's the 'South West Daily Newspaper of the Year'

How much of today's WDP is news that happened yesterday? 90%, 50%?

A – It's around 5% to 10% (excluding sport, of course)

Example – P2 biker killed story happened Saturday/Badminton Horse Trials theft happened Good Friday – we're now on Wednesday

Another Example – today's Wellington Weekly News front page on skatepark – story written on 15th April, photo taken on 18th April (landowner's consent given 14th March). Ditto P5 dog cancer story – written 16th April and photo taken 12th April

The point we're making is that nowadays Daily Newspapers are weeklies which publish every day, and weekly newspapers are like monthly magazines that publish weekly.

A lot of the 'news' is old – but it's 'new to you' because it's the first time you've read it.

The way the media works is that they feed on each other – so the dog cancer story in today's WWN, today being Wednesday, will be read by somebody at the WDP and maybe BBC Somerset, and they'll want to do it for themselves, so it'll be picked up and appear in the WDP possibly next Monday and on BBC Radio possibly on Friday or later; Then a news agency will read it in the WDP and rewrite it and sell it to the national papers so by the end of next week it could be in the Daily Mail; then national TV will see it and want it and they may cover it on Sky News at the end of next week or the beginning of the following week; and so on.

The moral of the story, as we tell our clients, is that you might 'only' be talking to Chris Alder at the WWN but you should think about how you'd feel if you were talking to Bill Turnbull on BBC Breakfast or one of Rupert Murdoch's newspaper editors – because it could be the same thing.

Part of the reason behind this is one of the reasons we both left journalism – lowering of standards. Media want to cut costs so they employ fewer people and people of lower quality.

But we live in a 24-hour news environment and so today there is more and more that those staff are expected to do and they can't do it all, so they rely on somebody giving them the news to report.

That's where M2S Media comes in – we give them 'oven ready stories' which they can warm up a bit and shove straight into the paper.

Ideas for PR

We're handing round a sheet with some tips on it for you to take away

How to Get Your PR Used

Research who you're sending your press release to, find a name and email address.

Send the email to them directly - don't blind copy emails – and start with a personal covering message, ie 'Hi Chris, hope you're well, please find copied here a story about'

Then they know it's actually for them.

Put the magic word 'Wellington' in the subject line, ie 'Wellington charity raises £10,000'

Sum up the story in no more than six words and use as a heading – they'll write their own headlines but you want to instantly tell them the gist of the story.

Paste the story into the body of the email – don't attach it as a Word Document – make it as easy as possible for the journalist to read it. They can 'cut and paste'

Always, always, always ... send a picture with every press release, even if it's just a logo. All media have websites, even radio stations, that want images to go with words. Use jpeg format and make the file about 1MB in size, no larger unless they ask, and not less than 500 kbs.

Don't put anything in notes to the editor that you would like to see in the story. – put it in the story instead.

Only use notes for the editor for info you don't want published.

Always put as many contact details as possible – your business number, home number, mobile number, email, Facebook page, your grandmother's phone – wherever a journalist may get hold of you.

Always be available to take the call or answer the email – you'll be lucky to get a call at all, so don't waste the opportunity.

You have to meet the media's deadlines – they don't have to meet yours. Try to think of the last time you saw a blank column in the WWN because somebody didn't get a story to them on time? It just doesn't happen, they'll fill it with somebody else's news.