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USE NICHE MAGAZINES TO GET YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

"Many niche titles may not appear on the magazine stands yet are closely read within their industries"

Former Editor of *Small Farms Magazine*, David Mason-Jones, shares tips for getting coverage in specialist magazines

Small Farms Magazine is a full colour title distributed each month in Australia and New Zealand

Magazine Titles on the Increase

Despite falls in some newspaper circulation in Australia, there is a proliferation in magazines targeting specialist markets.

Fiona Moore, Editor of *Asset Magazine*, a specialist Fairfax title, says that people are becoming busier and the volume of information is soaring.

Moore says, "It can be hit or miss when you read the major papers. They are good for giving the broad news but may be lacking when it comes to specific interest groups.

"With niche magazines, specific interest groups are targeted directly with information relevant to their needs," she says.

"Niche magazines are in the business of packaging information for smaller and smaller segments of the overall market," says David Mason-Jones (www.journalist.com.au) who recently completed two years as Editor of *Small Farms Magazine* – an 84 page full colour monthly distributed in Australia and New Zealand.

"*Small Farms Magazine* certainly reaches its target market and, interestingly, also reaches readers from surprisingly diverse and influential backgrounds. Carrying out on-farm interviews I have met with directors of Westpac, senior management within Woolworths, economists, partners from the big legal firms, academics, accountants and CEO's," he says.

David, who has just moved to the Key Media group in Sydney in further niche magazine roles says, "Many niche titles may not see the magazine stands yet are closely read within their industries."

Tips and Tactics

David offers the following tips on working with specialist magazines to generate coverage for your issue:

Understand magazine culture

Editors are not rude people but they are not overly sensitive either. If they like an idea you offer, they may grab it straight away. If they don't like the idea they may dismiss it out of hand. Do not be offended.

Keep communicating with different ideas or wrap your original idea in "different coloured paper".

Research deadlines

Editors come closest to being nice people in the few days following their production deadlines. They are most stressed in the days just before deadline. Research these cycles and time your approach accordingly.

Understand the visual imperative

A magazine must have pictures or graphs. Have them ready.

Use query letters

Avoid sending an editor a completed 2000 word feature article. Send a query letter, 80-150 words – SELLING the idea of the article.

Understand the difference between news and features

There is a world of difference between the two forms of writing.

Understand subtext

The real message is often best conveyed in the subtext. For example: Avoid writing a story TELLING farmers they can survive a drought if they follow certain planning steps. This will always sound badgering. Write a story about a farmer who is doing well in the drought and slip in the moral of the story – good planning – into the subtext.

Keep positive

For example: With the age discrimination in employment issue, never write a story saying that older employees are facing discrimination. No one really cares and it can come across as badgering and moralising.

Instead write the story on the young manager who has found the great benefits that come from having older people in the office. Use subtext.

Make the story personal

Magazine readers are not interested in government programs or company initiatives *per se*. Build the story around a person.



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Offer further contact details

When sending media releases, always ensure that senior people in your organisation are offered for further comment. An editor may see value in your media release but may want to pursue a tangent not directly addressed in the release.

"Above all be sensitive about editors' time", says David. "This is a big one. Editors like direct speech".

Maine Street Marketing specialises in media relations.

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