

Observer TRICKS OF THE TRADE



MAKE NOISE: Neither are Brad Pitt, but when these two celebs from TV's *Survivor* visited Ruby Tuesdays, the media was alerted.

Publicity Stunts That Work

How well you communicate with your audience, and how deeply and effectively your message penetrates into that audience will inevitably influence your organization's bottom line. Public relations tactics add a great deal toward that effort.

The idea is to raise your company's profile. What follows are some publicity stunts that do just that.

- **Take food to local radio stations.** Contact the promotion director. Schedule a time to deliver food along with gift cards for DJs to give away on air. You'll get free mentions and airtime if the DJs talk up your place and get listeners to call in to win.

- **Hold a VIP tasting event.** Invite local dignitaries, counsel members, the mayor and local TV, newspaper and radio people to try new menu items. This creates word-of-mouth buzz from the key influencers in your community about the delicious menu.

- **Cooking shows.** Most local TV stations have morning and noon shows on which guests do demos. Preparing a dish on air is a great way to get exposure and talk up your restaurant.

- **News around holidays** that relates to your business. Plan ahead and pitch TV and radio stations about activities in your restaurant for a particular holiday. Chevys Fresh Mex restaurants has "owned" Cinco de Mayo for many years. Each year, a local radio station broadcasts live in front of a Chevys from a pool of fresh made salsa...yes, a kiddie pool filled to the top! It's fun, different and gets tons of exposure.

- **Fundraisers** are always a great idea. Research area non-profit organizations and find which has the most members and largest following, or choose one about which you feel passionate. Pick a day to donate a percentage of proceeds to the organization. Give the organization flyers to pass out, e-mail and send invites and issue a press release announcing the event to get as many people as possible to come to the restaurant. Hold a special check presentation at the end of the day. Take a photo of the "big check" being handed to the executive director of the nonprofit. Submit this to the local newspapers along with the amount of proceeds donated to the organization.

- **Celebrity sightings.** Always call the food editor of your local paper when a famous person eats at your restaurant. Guests *love* to dine where the rich and famous do.

- **Seasonal promotions** are great customer drivers. The

Left Bank Restaurants hold an Oyster Week during oyster season. They invite the local oyster company to demonstrate at each of their locations, and run a special and a contest. Guest who receive a golden oyster (painted with gold paint) receive a free dozen oysters on their next visit and are entered to win a night at a local bed and breakfast. (The bed and breakfast trades room for food.) The customers are entered into a database, and the local newspapers have several great angles to write about for a really newsy item.

These are just a handful of tactics to get you thinking. The greatest tool your restaurant has to get the media excited is food, so get it in the right mouths and they will talk about it for years to come!

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