

## Checklist

# Muster Your Own ‘Earned’ Media

Small Business Saturday is an opportunity to attract [FREE!] local media attention

A common misconception among news media consumers is that reporters are very selective about who they’ll speak to, put on camera or quote. Reporters may not bite on a tip that traffic lights in the city are timed to make motorists like you late for everything, but when it comes to a community-wide mobilization such as Small Business Saturday, you are not insignificant.

But, you have to earn it!

**‘Earned’ media, in communications parlance, is any free coverage that you generate by directing media gatekeepers — print reporters, broadcast channels, bloggers and vloggers — to your unique perspective.** How do you do that?

The answer is both simple and maddening — you grab gatekeepers’ attention.

This is hard to do because news media don’t typically highlight businesses just for the novelty of it. Their business model is largely advertising-supported, and that’s what advertising is — promotional coverage of a business that supports its interests.

Big holidays and community-wide events offer an opportunity for earned media. TV, radio and print — as well as bloggers and other online “influencers” — seek places to highlight the wider story, in this case Small Business Saturday.

### Let’s get started!

#### Lay all your options on the table

Your earned media plan really is a list or picture of all your earned media options. Because, once you “earn” it, the gatekeeper does the work for you (and for free!), your work is really just getting them to bite.

- ^ Make a list of all the local media in your market.
- ^ Show it to close friends and family and ask them to add anything like a really popular social media account or a local business review site you might have missed.

#### Frame up a “pitch” email or message

If you’re reaching out to traditional media, make this an email; if a social media account holder, a direct message or even public-facing post.

- ^ Keep the hook simple and punchy — why does your business deserve attention on Small Business Saturday?
- ^ Never, ever forget the four W’s of journalism — who (you), where (your business), when (Small Business Saturday), and most importantly, what — what specifically are you doing that warrants coverage?
- ^ How will they contact you?



## Send it to the right person

Nothing in earned media pitching is more overlooked than who to send your message to.

- ^ Find an email address.
- ^ Go to the organization's website and look for a "Contact" or even a "Tip" link.
- ^ If there's a staff page, even better! Look for editors.
  - ^ In traditional print publications, city and metro editors make up the "budgets" (lists of future stories) for news in your town.
  - ^ In television and radio, it's the assignment desk editor/producer. As you move up from editors — publishers, station managers — and down (reporters), you're likely to lose interest.

## Adventures in new media

Earning social media organically is a very different ballgame ... subject to many of the same influences.

- ^ For bloggers, reviewers and "influencers," be sure to reach out to them on their platform of choice. (It may be that on their profile page they say they prefer email — great! Be sure to say you got this information from their social profile page.)
- ^ Consider what it is they do and offer to show them more of it. If they're a reviewer, ask them to review. If they simply have a wide Instagram following, tease them with picture ideas.
- ^ Return the favor by distributing it strategically. You know what online content makers crave more than anything? Views. Tell them how you will help facilitate this once the content about your efforts around Small Business Saturday gets posted.

## Follow up with a phone call

Typing is now the leading way that we communicate. It wasn't always this way, and the old way has one substantial strategic advantage.

- ^ Call people on the phone. Cooperation improves substantially when a person being asked is forced to vocalize "no."

## Repurpose your efforts

All this work you're putting in to maybe get a news reporter, a reviewer or social media "influencer" to stop by on Small Business Saturday (or before) shouldn't proceed along just one trajectory.

- ^ Put it on your website. If you've taken the time to make a news release, specifically, put it up as a "banner" on your site. That's making your own news!
- ^ Let people know. If you've spoken with a well-known media organization or person, post that interaction on social media and tag the organization/person. A simple, "Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about my business and Small Business Saturday," will remind them of the pitch and, if they like it, certainly, share it, that's bona fide earned media itself!



## Earning media as a business mindset

One reason people try earning media and then stop after one or two goes is that it's kind of like online dating — after a while, it just feels like rejection.

- ^ Don't get down — get better. Media gatekeepers are always asking a very simple question: Will this appeal to my viewership/readership? Wow, that sounds just like retail!
- ^ Much like dating, people like people more once they get to know them (well, ideally). Get to know media contacts you make this Small Business Saturday!

For more tips and a very specific step-by-step guide for shaping that first written pitch, take a look at this **[checklist from PR News](#)**.

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<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2014/03/31/saying-no-psychology>

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-earned-media-faqs>

<https://www.prnewsonline.com/a-checklist-to-use-for-all-of-your-email-pr-pitches/>