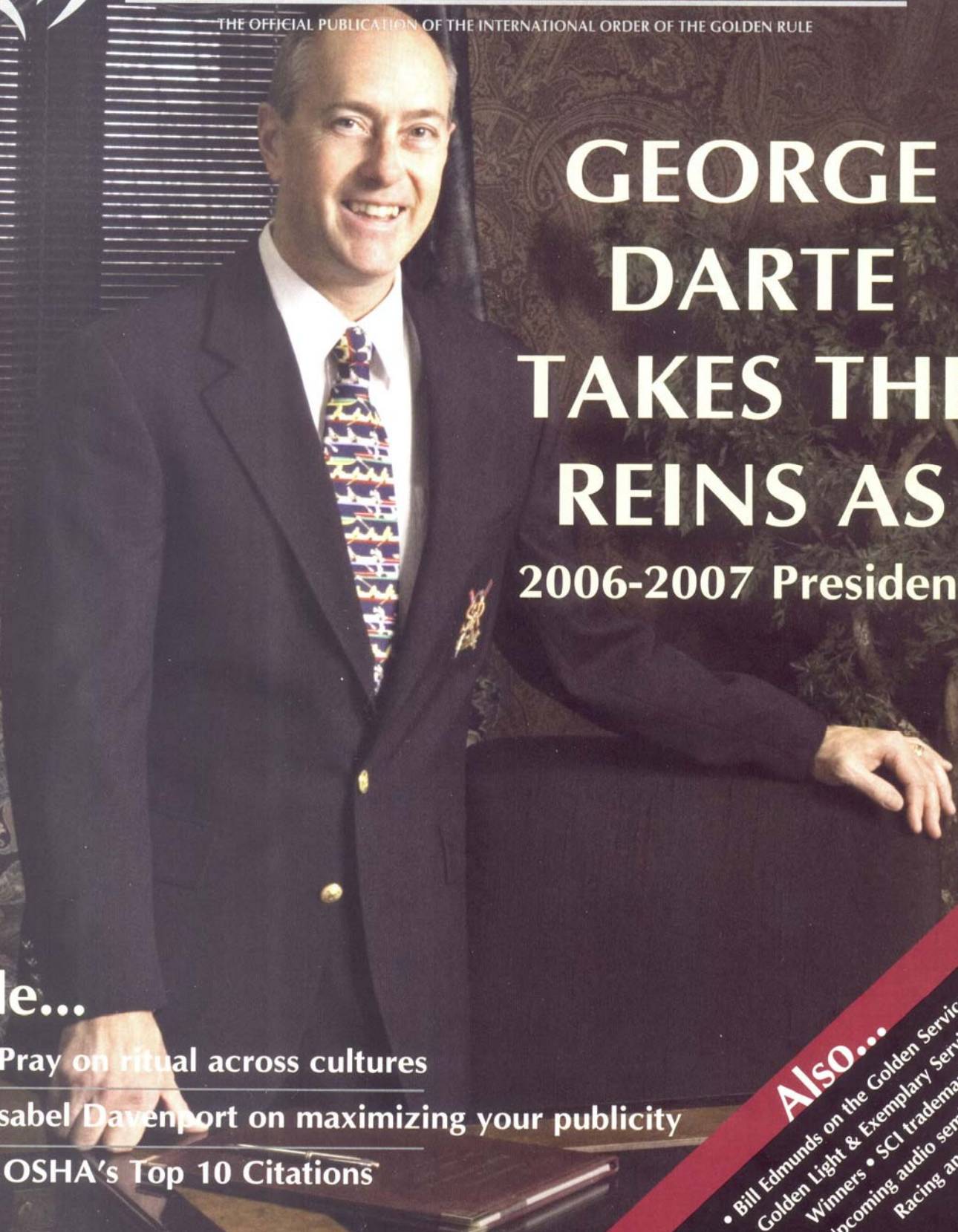




# THE INDEPENDENT<sup>®</sup>

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## GEORGE DARTE TAKES THE REINS AS 2006-2007 President

### Inside...

Tyler Pray on ritual across cultures

Julia-Isabel Davenport on maximizing your publicity

Learn OSHA's Top 10 Citations

### Also...

- Bill Edmunds on the Golden Services Group • Golden Light & Exemplary Service Award Winners • SCI trademark fight • Upcoming audio seminars, Speed Racing and more!

# How to Maximize Your Publicity

By Julia-Isabel Davenport

**H**ow to distinguish yourself from your competition, to attract clients through your doors, is a chief concern of every funeral business. With so many marketing options available, sometimes the public relations aspect is overlooked. Public relations is the marketing function that creates publicity and good will within the community. It is done by educating the media about your services which, when done effectively, increases your credibility and visibility to attract new clients.

Publicity helps build more credibility than advertising. An article written about a business increases the importance of that business in the eye of the reader, as opposed to an ad. Publicity is a community service commonly provided by news media free of charge to businesses, as opposed to paid advertising.

## Newsworthiness is Key

To create an effective public relations campaign, however, you need to know what is *newsworthy* about your business. The next step is transferring that information into a media release and then delivering it to the appropriate media contacts in time for their publication deadlines.

## There are 11 newsworthy angles from which most businesses can benefit:

- Launching new products or services
- Offering a solution to a current hot topic
- Staff promotions or expanding your staff
- Community outreach
- A grand opening, moving or closing
- Celebrating your business anniversary
- Receiving a new contract or customer
- Reaching a milestone, such as the 1,000th family served
- Holding a seminar or conference
- Serving in leadership capacities for organizations (such as OGR)
- Giving or receiving an award

Be sure to write a **media release** when you have added to your staff. Include a head shot photo to accompany the release. This type of release is considered an “evergreen story,” meaning, since it is not tied to a specific date for an event, it might take several weeks before it is printed.

**Community outreach** is fundamental to a good public relations campaign. While requiring some planning, it does the



most effective job of creating good will.

Community outreach activities can range from holding a drive to collect food, clothing, blankets or toys for a community charity, to sponsoring a walk to raise funds for charity, donating a portion of proceeds to a charity, or even giving away services or products

in celebration of a unique date. Be sure to allow enough time in planning the event that you can meet publication deadlines to maximize your publicity. That could be as long as three months out. Some funeral homes let community organizations meet in their facility free of charge. It would be appropriate to write a press release to let more groups become aware of the community outreach service.

**Awards** are a wonderful way to let the community share in your successes, whether you are giving or receiving an award. Awards can be given to celebrate employee of the year, vendor of the year, employee volunteer of the year, etc. Including a photo of the award presentation is another plus for you. Be quick to nominate yourself for appropriate awards. Typically, award programs run by chambers or other organizations do not get large responses, so your chances of winning are greater than you might think. Additionally, it is beneficial to apply simply to get your information in front of another set of eyes to raise their awareness of your business.

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When writing the media release, the idea is to concisely communicate the who, when, where, what, why and how much, preferably in one page and not more than two pages. By providing the highlights, the goal is to get the editor's interest. If there is space, the editor may do a feature story with an in-depth interview. Editors will often use exactly what you send, or they'll extract a portion. Use your best grammar, avoiding industry jargon or undefined abbreviations.

A release usually comprises three paragraphs. The first paragraph summarizes the release. The second paragraph is your quote relating to the subject of the release. The third is the closing paragraph that identifies your uniqueness. It should always include contact information, whether you give a web site, email address or phone number.

Once you have determined what is newsworthy about your funeral business and have written the media release, to whom do you send it? It's fairly logical. If you are having an event that gives back to the community, send it to the community editor. If it is announcing your business anniversary, send it to the business editor. The key is to send it to as many reporters and editors that would be interested, even at the same publication. I once had an article appear in two sections of the *Phoenix Business Journal* on the same day!

The **media list** is your tool for distributing your media releases. Creating a list is easily done. Begin with publications you receive at your home or office. Identify the correct contact persons and their preferred method of contact. Email is the usually most efficient method. Visit the local library to find publications you may not receive. The *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* contains a list of every media contact in the world. When creating your list, be sure to only select publications that would be interested in some angle of your story.

Add new contacts to your list as you find new publications, establish new angles or hear of personnel changes. It is helpful when compiling the list to identify if the publication is daily, weekly or monthly and its corresponding deadlines. A release that is sent after a deadline is a release that is wasted.

In summary, to help you distinguish your funeral home from your competitors, add public relations to your marketing efforts. Identify what is newsworthy about your business and create a publicity plan.

Begin writing and distributing the releases to your media contacts. Be persistent with a goal of one news release per month. Then enjoy the increased visibility and good will you will receive. ■

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Julia-Isabel Davenport** is president of *Maximize Your Publicity*, a marketing strategies firm for small businesses and associations based in Glendale, Ariz. She is the publisher of the 2006 *Publicity Planner*, creator of the *Community Megastar Award* and author of *Effective Ways to Attract and Receive Publicity*. For more information, visit [www.MaximizeYourPublicity.com](http://www.MaximizeYourPublicity.com) or call (623) 572-8201.

## PR TOOLS FOR MEMBERS

OGR provides a number of tools to help members publicize themselves in their communities. Take advantage of these helpful resources:



**GOLDEN RULE LOGOS** – use on letterhead, business cards, web site, ads, etc.

**PRESS RELEASES** – available on web to promote funeral home news and provided to announce conference attendance, honors, etc.



**AWARD PROGRAMS** – OGR's Quality Standards Council provides consumer-oriented tools to promote achievement.

And coming this fall – **NATIONAL FAMILY APPRECIATION MONTH**, OGR's new outreach program connecting members with their communities each October!

