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Janice Hostager: 0:00

Would you like to end up in an article in the New York Times or maybe be featured on the Today Show? As a business owner, that seems like the greatest thing ever, right? But, as my guest for today points out, that might be a great boost for sales. But sales are not guaranteed with a media appearance and you'll likely need to do some groundwork before you get ready for a big media blitz. As a peer coach and publicist, Lily and Sue is in the storytelling and relationship building business. She said that those two things are vital for snaking spots in articles, shows and podcasts. Media producers need to trust us and we need to be able to tell stories that connect with their audience. She believes that every entrepreneur has a compelling story that deserves to be heard by audiences all over the world. Lily empowers entrepreneurs to learn how to gain the confidence to make public relations work for them so they can achieve their goals. She believes that business owners can gain the confidence to push past limiting beliefs and mindset blocks and achieve successful PR campaigns. Here's my conversation with Lillian. Well, welcome Lillian. How are you today Doing? Well, thanks, Janice. Thanks for having me. Oh, I'm just happy that you're here. So tell us a little about yourself. What's your story? How did you arrive at this place?

Lillian Sue: 1:20

Sure, I am a PR coach and publicist. I empower creative entrepreneurs, authors, small business owners to push past limiting beliefs like fear, anxiety and imposter syndrome, to learn how to gain the confidence to harness the power of PR to reach their goals. So I do this through one-on-one coaching sessions. I have a coaching program and also my campaign services to really guide entrepreneurs, to give them perspective and clarity on how to build and launch successful PR campaigns, the importance of things like media kits, media pitches, and really gain the confidence to go out there and share their stories and build really powerful, positive relationships with media all over the world. And I started this. Actually there's a bit of a twofold thing because originally I had been running my business as a copywriter and social media strategist and I had a lot of entrepreneurs asking me whether or not PR was something that I could do, because they needed news releases written and that sort of thing. And I thought, well, I'm tired of telling these fantastic people no. So I had to look into it. I said you know, how can I get information on what public relations is? How can I expand that for my business? Let's see if there's somebody that would take me on. I can kind of get my feet wet, cut my teeth with it, see if I like it. So I started at that time subcontracting for some public relations agencies and really cutting my teeth and learning how to do PR for sports and fitness, fashion and beauty, food and beverage, really really fell in love with doing it for

indie film and television and I spun that off into doing that for my own business. And the second part of it came from the fact that a lot of creative solo performers authors and things like that were coming to me and saying I would love to work with you on a campaign but I can't afford it. So I thought well, you know, I've been doing this for a while now. I have a lot of experience. I had a lot of knowledge in practical education. There has to be a way that I can still work with these fantastic people and yet impart some of that knowledge onto them, because I've noticed that so many of them were coming to the agencies I had worked with. They were coming to me with a lot of fear, a lot of anxiety and a lot of unrealistic expectations about what PR could actually bring to them. So I repositioned my business and, after working with a business coach and working with a mindset coach myself, I decided to offer PR coaching as an alternative for entrepreneurs that really want that education, they want that empowerment, they want to keep consistency going for their projects and their businesses, they want to keep it sustainable and also have more knowledge under their belts so that in the future, if they did want to work with a PR firm, they could advocate better for themselves and for their needs. Because I had heard from a lot of other entrepreneurs that they had made mistakes working with previous PR agencies when they didn't feel confident to advocate for themselves, they didn't talk about what it was that they wanted or needed and, as a result, ended up with results that weren't helpful at all. So it's really my mission to empower entrepreneurs with that knowledge, that education, those resources and to help them build a stronger mindset to really get out there and harness the power of PR and be confident advocating for themselves and what they need when it comes to marketing, advertising and PR.

Janice Hostager: 5:49

Wow, there's a lot of good things to unpack there. So you talk about maybe unrealistic expectations people have about PR. So let's start there. What misconceptions do people have about public relations and what it can do for their business?

Lillian Sue: 6:05

There's a couple, and I think a lot of this comes from just news, media and popular entertainment and everything. There is this belief that you either need to be a celebrity and have an audience in the millions or you need to have a budget of hundreds of thousands of dollars to really make it work for you. And because of that there are a lot of people that believe, first of all, that PR is not for them, that it can't work for them, and that you know they don't have the budget to invest and they don't have the audience foundation to make it worthwhile. That's one of the popular myths that they really believe. The other part of it, in seeing so many celebrities and well-known figures on mainstream media, is the expectation that mainstream media is the top of the mountain, that that is the only way you can measure PR success and that it's a goal. It should be your only goal in doing public relations and even without experience, you can get there

right away. So in all my years of fielding discovery calls, answering questions, helping entrepreneurs build their campaigns through coaching, and when I'm hands on and working on a campaign, a lot of that has been about dispelling those myths, in that you know there are no guarantees in this business, but what makes it different from other aspects of marketing is that you are building relationships with platforms that have more trust, more credibility and a solid reputation in a particular industry, in a particular sector, and you are building those relationships in order to leverage them, to use them as conduits to get in front of your ideal audiences, in order to build trust and credibility with them. That, if you appear on these platforms, these audiences will learn to trust you. They'll learn, they'll want to buy from you because these other platforms they trust have endorsed you and you know the nature of all. That does indicate that. You know it is extremely powerful because you're not creating the content yourself. It's not just you and your next door neighbor sharing. You know your business. You have these third party, credible sources that are coming in supporting you, endorsing you and everything, but because of that there are no guarantees. It's not like advertising, where you spend X amount of dollars and then you may or may not see a return for that X amount of dollars, but it tells you this is how many people we've put your ad in front of. PR doesn't work that way and for a lot of folks there are there's a lot of fear surrounding that in terms of where's my money going, where's my energy going, where's my time going, and they want guarantees which PR can't give them. And there is that belief, because so many well-known figures and celebrities appear on mainstream media all the time, that that is the best way to gain success. That is the best way to get in front of the most eyeballs, to build trust with people, and one of the things I have to tell them about mainstream media is number one if you have no experience, you have no knowledge of this arena at all. You've never done an interview. What you're banking on is for a piece of content or something about your business to go viral in order to attract that attention. Not only does it rarely happen, the danger of having that happen when you have no experience is having to go up there on stage, sit on the couch and have them ask you a question that either you can't answer or that you won't answer, and the damage that it can do to your reputation. It can be irreversible for a lot of years. What's much more advantageous to build your way up to that opportunity by getting comfortable and cutting your teeth from appearing on different podcasts, from doing local events, from doing live Q&As on social media and just really learning how to get comfortable to share your story and your projects and why they matter. The other part of it that I do tell a lot of entrepreneurs is that mainstream media does have the benefit of having large audiences, but there is nothing that indicates that audience is your audience. Right, because that audience is paying attention to that talk show for a wide variety of reasons and they may not be looking for your story, they may not be looking for what it is that you're talking about, they may not be interested in your brand. So you trying to appear on that platform means that you are essentially diverting your attention

from where your audiences are actually spending their time to where you think they're spending their time, and that's the kind of thing that can turn very quickly into a lack of results and energy drain, a time drain and, yes, a drain on a budget as well.

Janice Hostager: 12:04

Oh yeah, I mean there's so many things you just said there that I love. First of all, relationships. When I was in actually when I was still in grad school I got a job in PR. That was kind of one of my first jobs and it was for a department store and we had a lot of relationships with people in various publications. So I would get phone calls all the time for people that wanted to do an interview with a buyer or you know, an in-store display team or something like that. So it really came down to I had this long list of people that I could contact and reach out to and we kind of worked together in that way. You know, if they needed something from me, I could help them out, and if we needed something from them, they could help us out. So that relationship part was so important. And I'm wondering how, with a small business owner and I kind of, you know, I think you can kind of develop relationships even as a business owner but how do you recommend that somebody, let's say they're on their own and they're in a, you know, a smaller community, how do you recommend that they start with getting to know those members of the media and develop those relationships?

Lillian Sue: 13:24

Well, there's two ways you could look at developing that relationship. Number one is really utilizing social media to find out where these members of the media are spending their time. What are they talking about? What are some of the areas of focus they have in terms of topics that maybe they are writing on? Maybe they're producing a video series on what have you, and how can you engage with that content? How can you start following them? How can you start commenting on that content? How can you start generating conversations surrounding this common ground that you won't have? There is a lot of fear for a lot of smaller entrepreneurs that when you get out there to do PR, you're essentially sharing your story with a bunch of strangers, and what I say to them is they're no longer a stranger if how you look at it is a little different, and by that I mean change your perspective. Instead of reaching out to strangers, look at it as extending your community, and how you do that is looking at what are they interested in? What is the common ground that you can sort of build a relationship on before you reach out to them with story ideas? The other, the flip side of it is when you are reaching out to them with story ideas to build that relationship. Not only are you paying attention to the topics they cover, but you should be thinking to yourself okay, how does my business fit into that, how does my story fit into that? What do I want to tell them, what do I want to share with them? Based on the last couple of articles I've read, based on the last few podcast episodes I've listened to, where is the gap that my story can fill? That I think that they would be interested in hearing and that their audiences would be interested in

hearing. It's kind of a tandem of thinking about okay, what do I have to tell them and who do I want to get in front of? So it's kind of those two central questions that you really need to answer in order to figure out who do you even want to build relationships with. And as you're building those relationships, you need to figure out what do I want to tell them, what do I want to share with them. And as you start to answer those questions, you start to sort of build frameworks as well, because the media personalities, the writers, the podcasters they will start asking you things like well, do you have a high resolution photo of yourself? Can I have your bio? Can I have a summary of what your current project is, or can I have a summary of what your business does? And within that, then you start to sort of build these frameworks of oh, I need all of this information. I should probably build a media kit so that I can keep all of this information in the central location. That way, when someone asks me for it, I don't have to go scrambling for all these individual assets. They're just all in one place.

Janice Hostager: 16:37

Or on your website.

Lillian Sue: 16:38

Exactly Ready to go.

Janice Hostager: 16:40

Mm-hmm, and I think you know to the thing about a relationship. It's two-way street. So not only could you use the media to promote something that you maybe have going on in your business, but things come up and they may need to reach out to you as a business owner to get your feedback. It could be economic, it could be you know something specific related to the business that you have, but it is a relationship. It does go both ways. I often get clients that want to send out a press release saying we just opened a new office or something like that, where it doesn't have a lot of news value in my opinion. To it it may for some I mean it may like in a local paper, if for sure they have some news value, but in a broader market I would say it wouldn't necessarily carry that kind of weight. What do you have to say about what people should be putting out there in terms of press releases and what they should be kind of holding back on?

Lillian Sue: 17:46

I think the primary goal of a press release has changed over the years, primarily because it's really used now as a vehicle to make announcements and because of that, what's been happening is a lot of news media. as I've certainly seen in the last 10 years, there has been a lot of shrinking for newsrooms, a lot of layoffs, a lot of buyouts, a lot of journalists are working with much fewer resources, certainly fewer people, fewer boots on the ground, and what's been happening is a lot of press releases tend to get bypassed because, as you say, they're not newsworthy. For you to say you're opening a

new office, it's not newsworthy, it's not newsworthy, it's not newsworthy. So what's been happening is that the media is not going to be going to be in and of itself. The best response you might receive would be okay, they're just going to post it on their website so people that go to their website can see it, but it's not necessarily a vehicle that would give you further media opportunities. Things like a company newsletter they're good to put on a company blog so that people are aware of what's going on with the company. If, however, you were to do something different with it we're opening a new office and we're also running a charity event for our grand opening, where we'll be supporting whatever organization it is then it's newsworthy to them because you are not just opening a new office, but you're taking that opportunity to really build community connections. You're making a positive impact on the community. Those are things that they will find newsworthy. I think the expectation needs to change on the fact that just because you put out a press release does not mean you're going to get further media opportunities out of that. If what you're looking for is further media opportunities, I would suggest more. So the media alert, so things like for events. Because those are time sensitive, you want media attention. Maybe you're selling tickets, whatever it is things like that. They're more likely to bite on because they're timely, they affect the local community, they're for a good cause. Maybe you're doing it for a specific reason. Those are the things that will get you additional media attention where they're not just going to post the release and then walk away.

Janice Hostager: 20:36

Right, that's a really good tip, I think. Well, I should ask you this what expectations do people? You talked about people having maybe false expectations about what being in the media will do. In my mind, it really is about the awareness stage and that's kind of it. Typically, unless it's a really in-depth interview in something like the New York Times where people can really dig into your background, it's really just going to be a few seconds or a short article or something like that to alert people that you're there and if they want to find out more about you, then they can do their own research, basically, and learn a little more. But is that similar to the expectations that you think that people have, or do you see other expectations that businesses have with?

Lillian Sue: 21:30

PR. I find that, with expectations they have on PR, a lot of it also has to do with how can it drive my direct results that I want, and in a lot of cases, those direct results are sales, and the thing about public relations in comparison to advertising is that it is a long lead strategy. So what you're doing is you're not banking on getting one sale off one interview. What you're doing is developing a campaign that will hopefully continually get you out there to raise awareness, to raise the visibility of your brand, to raise the visibility of your reputation, so that the more people know you and the more penetration you have in the media whether it's in news, whether it's in industry trade publications,

whatever it is that you decide to appear in the more they will learn to trust you, because what people don't realize is that in today's day and age, audiences need to see something upwards of 20 times before they will remember it and be actually take action on it right. So it really is a longer lead strategy where you are building those relationships, leveraging those relationships to take advantage of these opportunities to appear in front of your audience and then take that content and continue to share that content from your interviews, from your events videos, whatever it is to reinforce the fact that you're getting out there, that you're becoming more well-known and that people are trusting you more, and in that way it may lead to sales. But there is no direct, you know correlation between I did this one interview and I got 10 or 12 sales off of it. Right, in that way it can be very, very hard to measure, but it's really about market penetration. It's about an accumulation of these opportunities when you are getting in front of the right audiences and, at the same time, are you promoting these opportunities properly right? I've seen a lot of entrepreneurs who still seem to think that posting the link is the way to go, and my advice to them is if people don't have zero context on what that article is about, what that interview is about, or even zero context on who you are, they have no incentive to click on the link, to read the entire article, to listen to or watch the entire interview. So you have to give them a little something to fight on and that, and that's why I'm a huge proponent of sharing quotes from interviews, sharing video clips from live events, turning podcast interviews into short audio clips that people can really learn something from, and then you give them the whole link and say you know, if you want to continue learning more. Here's the rest of the interview. So it's really about, I think, reconfiguring how you look at marketing in general and recognizing that PR is very much a long lead strategy and it is one that is powerful and can pay off. But you need that accumulation of media opportunities and then you need that consistency in a way that's sustainable for you to promote it, to continue to get new opportunities and to continue to get out there to share your story.

Janice Hostager: 25:40

Hmm, great advice. So if you're a small business owner, what tips would you have while you are a bit smart small business owner? But what tips would you have for a small business owner that's just looking to get out there and start doing their own PR? How would they start out? Are there anything that you would say? These are foundational and this is where you should start, or do suggest just jumping in or going to a horror or what? What is it that you would recommend for for small business owners?

Lillian Sue: 26:12

I would say take the three-step approach and the first step is sitting down and actually writing down what your line of thinking is for it. And I don't just mean brainstorming specific goals, like I want to appear on X amount of podcasts to reach this audience over a six month period Not just specific goals, but actually brainstorming what your

mindset is around getting out there and sharing your story. Do you have any limiting beliefs? Does it make you anxious? Are you afraid? Why? Where are those feelings coming from? What's triggering them and how can you push past them? I work with my clients a lot on developing healthy coping mechanisms for things like that. Mindset mantras are big, reminding them that their story is worthy, reminding them that their journey is worthy. All of these things really play into that mindset piece. Because if you don't have a strong mindset when things get tough in the middle of a campaign like, let's say, it takes a while for you to get media responses you can end up self-sabotaging by stopping completely. And that's what you don't want, because that interrupts any momentum that you have. So mindset is priority number one. Priority number two is figuring out your goals, all the specific goals based on a timeframe and how you want to reach them, and also the benchmarks you wanna hit. Like, if you wanna appear on five podcasts over a two month period, how many are you looking to pitch then With? the understanding that there's going to be a number of them that may say no based on schedule. So that's the other part of it. And with your goals, you also have to figure out what am I telling people, what's my story? Because a lot of people know their entrepreneurship journey but they haven't written it down. When you write it down, it becomes tangible. It becomes tangible and you can pull different pieces of that story out to share in interviews, like an interviewer might ask tell me about the first time you stumbled with a client. Right, you have that story ready and available. And then, lastly, the third part of it is who do I? Now that I have my mindset, I know what my goals are and I know what I want to tell people. Who do I actually want to get in front of? And where are these people spending their time? Love that. So all of this brainstorming not only helps to set them up for success in managing their own PR, but it really makes it a lot easier if they were to enlist a publicist or a PR agency on I want to do a campaign. It's a lot easier to have that structure for both parties to work off of and understand that these are what the goals are. These are how you're going to measure the results and this is how we're going to move forward, so it really helps out on both levels, whether you are managing your own public relation strategy or you're enlisting a publicist or PR agency.

Janice Hostager: 29:48

Do you recommend that people kind of work with somebody that maybe knows the lay of the land a little better than they made themselves?

Lillian Sue: 29:56

It depends on what their goals are and also what their own level of experience is. Because if you are just starting out, reaching out to your own community is actually probably one of the best ways to find that initial group of podcasts, blogs, industry newsletters, what have you that you can actually explore more opportunities with. Once you sort of get past like okay, this is the amount that my community has been able to

recommend, then it's advantageous to sort of invest in building a relationship with a publicist or a PR agency that might be able to expand your reach farther. But I definitely do recommend entrepreneurs reach out to their communities, their fellow business owners, networking associations, whatever it is that they're a part of, because it's a safe bet that a lot of their fellow entrepreneurs will know the podcasts out there. They'll know some of the local media personalities that may be interested online magazines, that kind of thing. And it's these opportunities that entrepreneurs who don't have experience can cut their teeth on to get comfortable with, before continuing to move up to, let's say, more national media, international media. And that's really where I would recommend them start, because it's your opportunity to work out all the kinks, to get comfortable, to help you push past things like your anxiety and your nerves, to really build those strong relationships. And on top of that, now that you have that foundation, when you do have other projects to promote you have events to promote, maybe you have a different direction in your business that you're promoting you can always go back to that initial group of podcasts, bloggers, industry newsletters or whatever and continue to leverage those relationships to share new things with them. I mean for myself, I have media contacts that I have been friends with for years. We talk on a regular basis, we have fun and maybe a few times a year I have a particular client that's in their area of expertise and I say you know they have a new project out. Would you like to review it? Or you know they're looking for interviews. Are you available to schedule one? And that makes it a lot easier to get repeat media coverage. Or even if that particular media personality or writer says no, because they know you, they are much more likely to recommend you touch base with someone else. So that's how you can grow your network as well.

Janice Hostager: 33:03

Great tips, great tips. This has been super, super interesting. Lillian, how can people learn more about you?

Lillian Sue: 33:11

They can always follow me on Instagram at Lillian Sue. Copyright or PR, all one word. I'm there five days a week talking everything PR, sharing actionable tips and everything. I'm always open to getting questions from entrepreneurs, and they can also check out my website at inretrospectwritingservices.com and send me an email.

Janice Hostager: 33:36

Thanks so much for being here today. Lillian appreciate it. Thanks for having me, Janice. So are you ready to get your headshot and bio together and develop a list of local contacts that you can reach out to when you have a newsworthy event? Lillian's put together a free workbook to get you started. I'll put the link to that in the show notes at myweeklymarketing.com, forward slash 28. Be sure to subscribe so you don't miss out

on the great guests and how-tos that I've got coming up. I've got some great topics on the horizon. Thanks so much for joining me today. I appreciate you. Bye for now.