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Channel Surfing: Building Your Brand On Biz Networks **by Emerging Manager Monthly Staff**

The demand from cable business networks for experts in the investment profession capable of speaking on a broad variety of topics provides a medium that emerging managers can use to their advantage, according to industry experts. "There is this constant, insatiable appetite for new faces and new perspectives," said **Bill Blase**, president of **W.T. Blase & Associates**, a corporate and marketing positioning firm.

That appetite provides an opportunity for managers to both enhance their brand recognition and also grow their credibility in both the industry and among prospective and current clients.

"Having a presence on television will definitely add a certain level of credibility. When people see you on CNBC, FOX or Bloomberg, they recognize you as an expert in your field," said Jennifer Connelly, president and founder of JC Public Relations.

Larry Smith, founder and cio of global macro firm Third Wave Global Investors, who typically looks to do TV interviews around once a month, said the process is also beneficial from an internal standpoint.

"It helps me think things through. It's a productive effort to articulate strategy," Smith said. For firms looking to gain face time on any of the networks, media relations firms can provide access to a group of sources and contacts that can make the process easier to navigate. But firms looking to do it themselves shouldn't be wary of reaching out to producers and bookers.

"People would be surprised. They just need to get the courage up to ask," said Doug MacKay, president and cio of Broadleaf Partners, who has made several appearances on CNBC.

Connelly said the simplest way to contact a network is to call the main number, state who you are, what you are looking to do and ask to be transferred to a producer or guest booker on the show that you are interested in appearing on.

Connelly said it is also extremely important to know the type of news and content that is being sought by the show you are contacting.

"Don't call and say: 'I want to be on *Closing Bell*' with Maria Bartiromo and have no idea what expertise you'll need," she said, adding that the ability to pitch a targeted, timely and newsworthy idea for a specific segment will greatly enhance a guests' chances of being interviewed on TV.

"Do your homework. Watch the show. Make sure you are familiar with the anchors' specific style and how they generally run their respective programs" For managers that do opt to work with a media relations firm, the media training process can help iron out many kinks that come with inexperience in the medium.

"For those who are unfamiliar or are uncomfortable with the media, especially in live television shots, it is very much a unique animal. There are plenty of resources out there for training," said Michael Barron, ceo of Knott Capital Management, who worked with New York-based Media Training Worldwide.

Blase said he encourages each of his clients to be media trained before seeking interviews. This not only ensures they understand the “rules of the road,” but also gives clients the opportunity to work on their message before going toe-to-toe with reporters. “All the time that you are going through this, you are actually going through a process of message definition, fine tuning, evaluating what works and what doesn’t work. I see it as a critical first step,” he said.

Robert Birnbaum, founder and president of Third Wave Global, said managers not prepared for a TV interview will be surprised by the pace.

“The pace of it is very, very fast. It takes preparation and experience,” he said. Third Wave Global works with W.T. Blasé & Associates.

Sophie Sophaon, account executive at public relations firm Walek & Associates, said she makes sure to remind managers to speak clearly and slowly.

“There is usually a pre-interview to the actual TV interview, so the manager understands exactly what will be discussed. We remind speakers to be mindful of hand gestures, facial expressions and attire. Some colors are better on television,” she said, adding that dark suits with muted ties and a blue or white shirt are preferable.

“People think that when they are on television that they aren’t allowed to pause... Always remember, a slight pause can look thoughtful and will help you slow down and stay focused on your message. Many people end up speaking too quickly on TV anyway, which makes them sound nervous,” Connelly said, adding that it is important to avoid jargon on television that confuses viewers or requires the anchor to explain or clarify a statement.

Birnbaum believes succinctness is key. “You have to get to your main point right away. You can’t count on the interviewer to get you there,” he said.

Connelly said it is critical to simplify explanations to 30 seconds or less.

“A good exercise for interviewees, as they practice, is to pretend that they are paying the TV station \$10,000 a minute for advertising and that every second counts,” she said.

While start-up Fox Business News has struggled out of the gate—recent Nielson ratings show an average viewership of 6,300, compared to CNBC, which boasts an average viewership at any given time of 283,000—the network still has airtime to fill. However, deciding what networks and what shows to reach out to is an important part of the process.

Blase said it is important for managers to take into consideration the audience they are trying to reach, as different channels reach different demographics.

“If I’m an institutional investment firm and I’m really trying to reach foundations and endowments, CNBC is going to have more limited appeal to me than say Bloomberg,” he said.

Once a manager has decided how to target the networks, offering interesting talking points is the next step.

“I do two things. I include them on the economic updates and I let them know what we are doing,” MacKay said. “[The networks] are literally looking for 2, 3 minutes. Often they want someone to comment on what they are talking about that day,” he said.

Smith said the ability to speak on broader issues often leads to more opportunities.

“A good interviewer focuses on broader issues where the dialogue can be far more interesting than simply commenting on a stock’s earnings or a specific release of economic data,” he said.

"It's important to focus on strategy and the rationale behind it rather than commenting on the trade of the day. For example, an interesting question in the current environment is, 'what is the Fed doing to alleviate short term credit tensions, and whether they're moving fast enough.'"

Sophaon said being different can help. "When you have topics that you can talk about, it doesn't always have to be negative. Television loves contrarians...because basically it is entertainment more or less," she said.

Once a manager has made their way into a network's expert list, it is important to choose appearances carefully.

"What you want is to avoid becoming identified as a talking head and a pundit. If you do, then your information, your commentary, your insight, will tend to have less value...you don't want to be the guy out there talking about just anything and everything. You want to be judicious and pick your spots," **Blase** said.

"I think you need to have a plan, I think you need to be able to say no," said Barron. "You are going to be offered the opportunity to comment on a lot of things that may fall outside your specialty. You need to be smart about it and take a pass. I think producers and writers are going to respect that."

Managers also shouldn't expect a sudden increase in interest from prospective clients—though the medium is a tool toward garnering interest and potentially closing a deal. "If people are looking for it to be a boom for business, it is just not going to do it. If someone already talked to you, it might push you over the edge," MacKay said.

"On more than one occasion I have had producers phone me after our clients had appeared on their show to say they had been contacted by a viewer who wanted more information or asked how to get in touch with our clients," Connelly said.

Birnbaum said it is helpful for Third Wave's clients to see and hear from the firm in multiple ways. Not only do they hear what we have to say in a letter or a presentation, but they also get to hear what we have to say in a debate format," he said. "Our clients notice it. We get positive feedback whenever they see Larry on television or see us in an article."

Blase said television appearances can be extremely effective in helping to build credibility and create equity in a firm's brand. "It's the implicit endorsement of the so-called third party...producers, bookers and others...think of you as a de facto expert, so certainly it enhances your reputation," **Blase** said.

Ultimately, if an emerging manager is comfortable in front of the camera and has prepared for the interview, television appearances can't hurt.

"I view that as kind of a long-term and free way to get exposure," MacKay said. "I think there are two ways that emerging managers could choose to view this. I think that one of them is any time that a small firm can leverage global resources like that to get their message across to clients and prospects, I think that's advantageous," Barron said.

"The other side is from a branding and name recognition; it's also a fantastic business building tool. Everyone knows the Fidelitys, the Putnams and the rest of the larger firms in our industry. Some of the smaller firms, this is a way that you can build that recognition and credibility."

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