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Adding Broadcast Media to Your Playbook

First, a confession. Like a lot of executives, it's not unusual for me to work my way through four or five newspapers and magazines a day. It's what I do. It's where I live. And I've gotten very good at it. But inevitably, my daughter, who is a news junkie, will call and say: "Hey Dad, did you see this story?" More often than not, my answer is "no." Sara gets her news from the Internet, much of it in broadcast form, via news alerts, RSS feeds, podcasts, and hyperlinks that take her to breaking news or features long before they hit print. There's a message here and it's "broadcast" – and, if you haven't done so yet, put it in your playbook.

When you talk about the value of broadcast coverage today, it's a fundamentally different conversation than it was even five years ago. It's not just about TV and radio, though both are still important. It's also about podcasts, webcasts and video pods. The Internet has leveled the playing field, redefining the whole notion of broadcast coverage and digital media. And that's great news for money managers who want to build equity in their brands. It's one more arrow in your quiver. It's opportunity.

Need convincing? An institutional money manager might rightly wonder who he's going to reach through a broadcast interview and whether it will result in meaningful inflows. What you don't want to lose sight of, though, is the fact that the guy on the pension board and the president of the firefighters' union are real people. They watch TV. They tune in to drive-time radio. They listen to podcasts while working out at the gym or downing a sandwich at lunch. *It's another way of building your brand and promoting your products and processes.* Think of it as positive reinforcement.

One huge enhancement in broadcast coverage today is greatly extended shelf life. Traditionally, print publications were – and in my opinion still are – considered the Holy Grail of coverage because articles can be reprinted and mailed to clients and prospects or posted to a company's web site. Today, though, you can also send an e-mail blast to your clients and prospects, alerting them that you're going to be appearing in a webcast on, say, TheStreet.com. At their leisure, they can then visit the site and click on the interview. You can also post it on your own web site and promote it accordingly.

Just last month, one of my clients, Summit Mutual Funds, was honored by Lipper with the award for "Best Fixed Income Fund Family" in the small size category. Talk about bragging rights! In addition to launching a media relations campaign focusing on the prestigious award with a number of top-tier print publications, we were able to secure a 4 ½ minute interview with TheStreet.com's television host, Gregg Greenberg. The

interview gave Summit's Gary Rodmaker a unique opportunity not only to talk about his outlook for high yield, but to talk about the firm's three bond funds and what makes them different from their competition. Check it out; it's still posted. (Go to <http://videoplayer.thestreet.com/>, click on the "Mutual Fund/ETF Report" tab and then scroll down and click on "Don't Blow Off High Yield Bonds." 3/22/2007)

It can be tough to score coverage. That's why it's often critical to hire a media relations firm that has the right kinds of contacts, knows the producers, and is on a first-name basis with the on-air talent. It's also important that you think through your "story."

You've heard me say it before: "What substantive insight of practical value do you want to share so that you can establish an affinity relationship with your viewers or listeners?" It's going to take a lot more than beating your chest and telling everyone how wonderful you are.

Media training, of course, helps. So do the right visuals: graphics, charts, illustrations. You need to have good delivery techniques. Learn to be succinct and put your most important thoughts into sound bites that resonate with people.

Remember, too, that in a live broadcast, you can't take it back. Beware of SEC constraints in terms of what you can and cannot talk about. Do this right and you'll build equity in your brand, increase visibility for your products and help harness the push-pull of the marketplace so that people know who you are and want to do business with you.

Our firm has clients who routinely fly to New York City from Zurich, London and the West Coast to meet in-person with broadcast reporters for TV interviews that typically last three minutes, 40 seconds. It's TV's gold standard. At one point, the managing partner of a fund company we represented complained about all the TV he was doing – that is, until his own portfolio managers reported they saw inflows after nearly every appearance. Not a bad investment for three minutes, 40 seconds. That's a problem we'd all like to have.

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