

# THE ASPPA Journal

ASPPA's Quarterly Journal for Actuaries, Consultants, Administrators and Other Retirement Plan Professionals

## Grow Your Retirement Business: Establish Yourself as an Expert

by Paul Karasik

If you intend to grow your retirement business, establish yourself as an expert in specific retirement issues as well as in the topic of ever-changing retirement as a whole. Public relations and media exposure is one of the most effective ways to position yourself as a problem solver and advisor in the retirement marketplace.

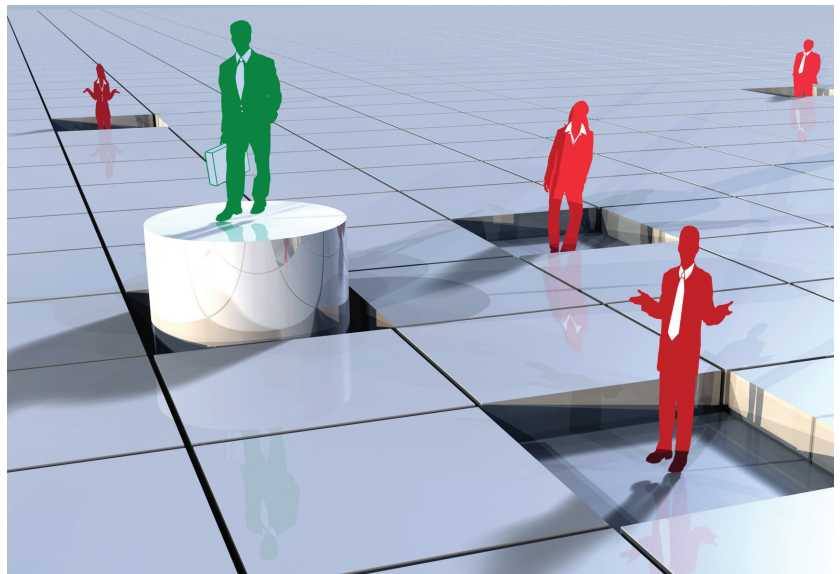
**H**ere are some steps you can take to gain public recognition as a retirement expert. Adapt these ideas to your target market and your business model. Your media exposure should be focused on issues relevant to the retirement market.

### Write a Column or Article(s)

Contact your local newspapers and publications and identify the people who review article ideas. Most publications are continually seeking articles that are relevant to their readership. You have the best chance of getting exposure in the media if your idea has a "hook" to a current event or trend and has a great title. In many cases, you can get to know an editor or contact person and brainstorm article ideas.

You can position an article for the potential plan sponsors, participants or plan advisers who might need your services. For example, if you pitch an article to your local business publication, you can address pending legislation or changes in the regulations. Your local Chamber of Commerce might have a publication that would give you the perfect media exposure to your target market.

Articles and columns are particularly valuable because you can make reprints that you can give out at seminars, mail to clients and prospects and/or submit to other media outlets when you are seeking additional opportunities. You can also



post the article on your Web site. Having an article in print solidifies your reputation and demonstrates your expertise in a very tangible way.

Be sure to make it clear when you agree to write an article that the publication needs to allow you to provide your contact information, ideally including telephone, e-mail and Web site. If possible, you should also try to obtain reprint permission.

### Get Quoted or Interviewed in the Media

The best way to accomplish this task is to send out story ideas on current financial issues to media reporters. If they decide to do an article based on your idea, there is a good chance that they will call you for a quote or

an interview. Therefore, keep your eyes open for good story ideas in the financial press, financial Web sites, professional financial associations and consumer financial magazines. Send out story ideas that connect to current events and trends as you come up with them. You can contact both the print and the broadcast media with your ideas.

Media referral programs are another extremely valuable resource. These programs are typically sponsored by a variety of professional financial associations. When you sign up for a program, you will be asked to state the topics on which you are an expert. Then, when the media contacts the group for information on particular topics, the group will refer the reporter to you.

The retirement plan landscape is in constant flux and it is a top concern for most working people. It is frequently in the news and, if you begin to make yourself available for media on related topics, it is very likely you will be contacted by media sources.

### Issue Newsworthy Press Releases to the Media

Suppose your firm is involved in noteworthy charity work or recently received an award or was recognized in some way. Send out a quick press release on the event, and one of your local media outlets just might want to interview you or write about it.

If you are speaking or conducting a seminar, it is especially important to issue a press release to the local media. If your seminar is free, you will most likely get a free listing in the upcoming local events section, not to mention additional attendees. If the event may qualify for continuing education credits for specific groups, be sure to mention that fact also.

### Get Your Own Talk Show

While this suggestion may sound implausible to you, it really isn't. Cable television channels in many areas of the country offer ordinary people the extraordinary opportunity to do a television show. Although the viewing audience is usually small, that doesn't matter, because you can leverage the opportunity. You can easily obtain a recording of the show and use it to create your own media kit, post on your Web site and/or pursue other publicity opportunities.

Likewise, contact your local radio stations and explore opportunities to host a radio show. If you can find a sponsor or even sponsor it yourself, your chances to secure a show will increase. Radio shows have helped many people establish themselves as experts, attract desirable clients and promote upcoming seminars.

### Take Advantage of the Internet

There is a whole world of media exposure available on the Internet. Get familiar with industry Web sites and learn about their distribution channels. One simple but effective method is to e-mail comments and story ideas to financial Web sites.

### Secure Speaking Engagements

Getting in front of groups of people will literally and figuratively position you as the expert. Whether you are conducting your own seminars or speaking at other organizations' meetings, you will automatically be seen as an authority on the subject at hand. Speaking to groups that comprise your target market is particularly effective. Rather than trying to sell them, play the role of the expert providing solutions to their financial problems or concerns. Remember: It's all about pain relief and problem solving.

Begin with easy speaking engagements that allow you to develop your presentations and delivery without a lot of pressure. Local Rotary Clubs and other organizations comprised of small business owners or non-profits are always looking for lunch speakers with timely topics.


As an advisor or consultant, you probably have numerous clients who are small business owners who belong to associations and organizations that would be perfect venues for you to speak. Use them as a resource and you will simultaneously position yourself as an expert and generate new business opportunities.

### Write and Publish Your Own Book

Writing a book is a daunting challenge, but it can be done. You can write it yourself, look for a co-author or get help from a professor of the appropriate subject at your local college. If you want someone to write a book for you, type "ghost writers" into any Internet search engine and you will come up with hundreds of very competitively-priced services. You can do the same type of search for self-publishing services.

Writing and producing a book takes time and money, but the result will be an incredibly powerful tool for establishing yourself as an expert. In our achievement-driven culture, having a book under your belt is one of the most effective ways of establishing your credibility.

### Conclusion

Public relations and media exposure create credibility in the marketplace—powerful reinforcement of your expertise. When you get exposure in print, be sure to use high quality reprints to generate more media exposure. Media exposure will provide you with one of the most effective selling techniques: the third party endorsement. Take advantage of it. 



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*For Managers, published by Simon and Schuster, Seminar Selling: The Ultimate Resource Guide for Marketing Financial Services, published by McGraw-Hill, and How to Market to High-Net-Worth Households. His most recent book is 22 Keys to Sales Success: How to Make It Big in Financial Services, published by Bloomberg Press. He is regularly featured in the leading financial industry publications including: On Wall Street, Investment Adviser, CFP Today, Registered Rep, National Underwriter, and Bank Investment Marketing. Paul is the founder of the American Seminar Leaders Association and a popular presenter at national meetings and conferences. (paul@paulkarasik.com; www.paulkarasik.com)*