

PCNY Luncheon
Women's and parenting magazines
November 6, 2003

FAMILY CIRCLE

Gini Kopecky Wallace, Senior Editor

Hello. OK, five minutes, I have basically five points I thought I'd cover, tell you a little about *Family Circle* in general. I looked at some of the ways in which things that came to us through public relations have worked for us, and I looked at some of the common denominators in that. What we don't do, what we might use on a secondary level and of course some of our special interests and some do's and don'ts. I'll try to be quick.

We're 16 issues a year, our circulation is around 5 million, and we reach over 20 million readers so it's a good place to be. The median age of our reader is 48 though we are skewing somewhat younger.

We are not career-oriented. We don't do a lot on jobs and careers so products with that kind of focus aren't really right for us. We really speak to women in the family arena, as mothers, yes, but really anything having to do with family issues that impact on family, anything that helps her make wiser decisions, financial decisions, shopping decisions, just things she should know to help her protect and promote the health and wellbeing of her family. That's really our focus.

Readers turn to us for our recipes, that's probably one of the biggest things they take from *Family Circle*, crafts, gardening, decorating, beauty, fitness, fashion, health and nutrition -- health just rates of the charts. Readers know they can trust us, they really do trust us and we take that trust very seriously. For that reason you really have to have a genuine product or if you're coming to us with information it really has to stand up under intense scrutiny for us to mention it in our magazine because we do take that trust that our readers have in the magazine so very seriously.

Maybe I should start with what has worked for us that has come to us from public relations. When I looked at that, I found that ultimately the common denominators at least in the articles department-- We do very little product placement, but when we do it might be in a section called "Circle This" which runs in every issue, and every once in a while we'll mention a book or a product there just because it's unusual. We think our readers would enjoy it, it may have socially redeeming value attached to it, maybe it's a special book that's been published to raise money for breast cancer research, we might mention something like that. We also have a section called "The Good Life" and that's a relatively new section and it's sort of a higher-end section, we would mention perhaps the very best olive oil in that section or parmesan cheese but the real thing. Is it worth it, is it worth spending for, or a fine, fine wine at a good price. We do have some product placement in our beauty coverage, but again, in our general editorial features we really don't so that.

But when it does work editorially is when someone comes to us with something that has a very strong human interest angle to it. I looked at a few pieces that came to us that way, not necessarily intentionally. In one case I received a packet that I think may have been an annual report for an organization called Save the Mothers that pairs doctors in developed countries with doctors in undeveloped countries to try to reduce maternal mortality, and it just really caught my interest. So what we would look for and did look for there is someone who could become the main driving force in a feature were we to do that, and in this case we were fortunate: one of the doctors involved with this program was a woman OB/GYN in California who is married, who is a mother and who travels down to Nicaragua and El Salvador on a regular basis doing this work for free. And that was perfect for us because that is someone our readers could relate to and the organization was cooperative in allowing us to assign a writer to accompany her on her next travels.

The other things we look for in these situations is the person or the story we decide to do has not received a lot of publicity before, it isn't well known, it hasn't appeared on TV magazine shows, it hasn't been covered in our competitors' magazines, and also we get an exclusive. And I'm sure I'm not alone in that, I'm sure all magazines would want that. So if you have something like that, hospitals sometimes will have just performed or perfected a surgical technique that is saving lives and if someone comes to that and we can find a human interest angle we may pursue that as a large story.

Another possible way to do that is that we have writers that we trust and sometimes the better way to get a story to us is if you have a relationship with a writer, I'm thinking of one in particular that we did, where the hospital was in contact with this writer who we have used and she came to us. It was about a new procedure, about an infant whose life had been saved through this procedure and the fight that the mother had staged before it ever got to the point where the surgery could take place, it was a fabulous story. They knew her, they contacted her, she contacted us, it all checked out, it was a great story and it became a major feature in the magazine.

So stories that come to us that way, whether they have to do with medicine, with an organization with a particular cause that you're trying to promote, we're especially interested in those things.

We usually don't do TV tie-ins or movie tie-ins, but there're always exceptions to the rule. Again, if we can find a story that we think our readers will be inspired by or moved by and it is connected in some way, we did a tie-in to the release of the 3-D IMAX space station movie because someone came to us pitching the female astronauts exclusively. And we liked that idea because many of them were married and have kids and they fit our reader profiles and our readers would be interested, "Man, what is it like being up there?"

Secondarily, we don't endorse commercial financial products, but I cover a lot of our finance and consumer coverage, if you are representing someone who is a financial expert, if that person is also a writer we might be interested in possibly contacting them to write something. We also keep a lot of material on hand and if someone is a truly

qualified expert, I will then, as will other editors in other areas, pass that information on to writers to get in touch with your organization or the person who you're trying to get publicity for as a qualified expert to speak in a certain area and we will quote that person and credit the association or the organization that way.

Those are the main points, some do's and don'ts: DO be aware of our lead time, everyone's covered that. We're editing January now also, we're tentatively planned out to spring. It you want to pitch us something that might be geared toward summer, you should be doing it now. It's never too soon to be pitching for next Christmas, never really, the sooner the better.

Don't fax us without calling first, we get so many faxes unless we know a fax is coming and unless we know to look for it no editor will even know it's there. It will just disappear into the ether.

If you do call, this is one of my private little pet peeves, please don't call on a cell phone. I've gotten so many calls on cell phones and then a number gets blanked out because there's a glitch in the connection. And if you do call, common thing, please repeat your name and phone number at the beginning and at the end of your message please?

Do consider working through a journalist if you have a relationship with one, because the fact of the matter is that I think every editor trusts a journalist more than they might necessarily trust something that comes in from a public relations firm or a publicist because we trust our journalists to have a better sense of what a real story is.

And one thing I will say, please be straight with us. I have had occasions, a few too many, unfortunately, where someone pitched a story and I was interested and it went 2, 3, 4, 5 steps down the line only to discover that the story wasn't really what it was made out to be.

And don't be too quick to promise something you can't deliver, whether it's a source for an interview or access of any kind. We understand that it comes from a positive motivation but there, too, if things are put in the works and it turns out you can't deliver what you thought you could it just makes for complication. Everything's based on trust and relationships, so if we all work with that in mind I think it'll be a win-win situation.

Thanks.