



BRINGING BUSINESS TO RETAIL PODCAST
EPISODE TRANSCRIPTION



Salena: Hey, there and welcome to this week's episode of the bringing business to retail podcast. I think one of the most asked questions that I get is PR, worth the money should I invest what do I need to do when it comes to PR and whenever we bring someone on the show to talk about PR, it instantly becomes one of the most downloaded episodes. So, today I've brought on Christina Nicolson now if you watch TV and you're in America you may know her because she's a former TV reporter and anchor and she has worked in markets everywhere from New York City to Miami. Nowadays, she's still telling stories but instead of doing it for newscasts she's helping businesses grow with her excellent strategies and I've been looking at her website and I love that she uses video. We talk so much about video and how it can actually propel your business forward. So welcome to the show Christina.

Christina: Well thank you so much for having me.

Salena: Was it a glamorous life being a TV reporter?

Christina: No, it not really like I'm on TV I mean you have your fun days you know like I've interviewed David Beckham and LeBron James and all that, but I've also started a hurricane for twelve hours straight. So, you have your good days in your bad days.

Salena: Did you send in that hurricane in heels.

Christina: No, actually we are allowed to wear tennis shoes and rain boots on hurricane days but hurricane Bennett's like you know a crime scene because lots of local news outlets like to do crime stories. So, it's not as glamorous as one would think.

Salena: I think it's like being an a host could because they host us anymore but like being a steward on a plane, it seems like the most glamorous life but I travel a lot now and I just think those poor people like all they do is clean toilets and hand out food I don't know where the climber like the climber is.

Christina: No, it's true. I tell people it's almost kind of like watching HGTV like they make renovating a house looks like so much fun and it's so easy but behind the scenes it's like really a hard work and it's fun at all you're only seeing the highlights.

Salena: It's expensive and it's very stressful.

Christina: Right that's like my little side passion is like renovating houses so I one hundred know that it is not as easy as they make it out to be.

Salena: That's so cool, I want to buy a fixer-upper like that's one of my things on my bucket list. So, I'm very cool.fun fact.

Salena: I was actually gonna say I reckon all those TV shows have boosted the housing economy for people who have the worst houses ever because they all think that they can do it trust me guys, it's really difficult.

Salena: Okay, but we're not here to talk about my little fun hobbies in renovating, we're not necessarily talk about hurricanes what we are here to talk about is PR. Now, I know that as an independent business you have a very limited marketing budget. So, working with a PR company just from my experience generally ends up somewhere in the you know three five ten, twenty thousand dollar budget and it can be very hard to see a return on investment because you don't always get the sales that are associated with it just because you've been featured in a magazine doesn't mean everybody's gonna go and buy your product. So, is it worth it.

Christina: A hundred percent it is worth it but you have to either know what you're doing or hire somebody who knows what they're doing and there's so much more that goes beyond getting the publicity like, so many people you use the example of getting coverage in a magazine so many people will get the average in the magazine and they'll say that's it we got the coverage but the ROI actually comes with what you do with that coverage. So, there's a lot of steps and we can go through them all but the best news is and maybe it's why this is a popular subject with your audience, is that PR is free, you can have literally zero dollars to budget and you can get coverage big and small. I have seen it happened I have mentored super small business owners solopreneurs people who aren't making a dime in their business and they've gotten coverage front of millions. So, this is something that anybody can do you just really need to know how to do it.

Salena: Okay, I feel like that's a unicorn story like I think a lot of people are saying but I get bombarded every single day and you do if you ever if you ever subscribe to horror or here in Australia we have sauce bottle where the journals put their call-outs inevitably the ones that are going to give you media coverage are the ones that also want you to give them a lot of money or a lot of products. So, I think that's probably why we feel very disengaged with the whole process is it has become very much a money-making exercise for people on the other side of the fence. So, give us some examples reignite our faith that PR is worth it, give us some of the examples of those small businesses and I don't usually like to use the word small. So, those independent businesses that don't have a big marketing budget that have been on national TV but also have managed to leverage it. so, maybe if you could give us an example of how they got on there but what did they do delivery that exposure that actually got them the sales.

Christina: Okay, so, I love to give you a few examples, first I want to address the pay-to-play situation you're talking about and unfortunately we're seeing that more for a couple of reasons, one people are not advertising like they used to because we are not paying attention to ads we block them we ignore them. So, people are trying to put the ads in the content so that's where you see people wanting product or wanting money. The other reason is because there's a lot of shady people who are getting on hero and I'm not familiar with source bottle but it sounds very summary I know when is hero and hero anybody can post anything and you'll have bloggers who

just want free products posting in there. You'll have people who are trying to make money maybe they contribute to an online outlet and they're taking advantage of their position as a contributor and they're charging people for inclusion in an article, not only is that against the law because it's an advertisement and that has to be disclosed but it's unethical and a lot of people are calling themselves journalists, when they're not journalists and they're not following any of the rules and regulations that journalists should follow. So, like the whole media industry it's changed so much and so many people aren't privy to how the media traditional media should work because all of these outlets they just want to pump out a bunch of content and they need all of these people to do it and all these people unfortunately are taking advantage.

So, that's the bad news, that's why you should just avoid if anybody's asking you for product or they're asking you for money say no and move on totally avoid it because there are actually legitimate journalists and legitimate media outlets who are looking for people just like you, they're looking for experts to help them tell their story. So, let me give you a few examples from start to finish on how this can work for you. So, I have a client in my media mentoring program and she is a dietitian she's based in San Diego and her goal was to reach more local moms who had kids because she works a lot with kids and eating and health. So, it was around August September and it was back-to-school time. So, we used that timeliness to create a back-to-school pitch and her pitch was how to pack a lunch box for a picky eater. So, she pitches this to the TV station she tells them we're gonna bring a whole bunch of food with pretty containers we're gonna set up everything we're talking about maybe three, four or five tips on how to do this. So, your child comes home with a full belly and an empty lunch box she pitched that on a Monday and she was live on the morning TV show on Wednesday morning.

So, not even two full days later. So, after that she took that coverage and she shared it on her social media she shared it on her website she tagged the outlet she tagged the anchor, if she was using different brands in her segment she tagged them say hey, look you didn't ask for this but I got this segment and here you are on TV because of that publicity that she earned and basically the PR; that she did on her PR. She was getting brand deals from products they said oh cool you're a dietitian but I see on your website you also have a blog and you do these TV segments. So, can I sponsor a post and then maybe it'll get picked up by the TV. So, she started making money from brands public relations agencies were calling her and they were saying hey if you book a segment we'll pay you to host it so then she became somewhat like of a local Booker in a local publicist because she started getting the connections and then she started contributing to other outlets a little bit more she was already getting coverage in places like scary mommy but after this after she started promoting what she was doing on TV they looked at her as like an authority figure or an influencer and that's when she started getting more opportunities to contribute to more outlets. So, it's not just about earning the publicity but it's showing everybody that you earned publicity repeatedly because then it has a snowball effect and that's where you're really gonna see your ROI.

Salena: I think the most important part from the leverage, I think the most important thing that you just said then was you have to have a pitch you have to have an angle you have to have something that is newsworthy and I think a lot of product based businesses retailers and product

manufacturers really struggle to understand usually because they haven't actually sat down and thought about why they're different. But they're like but I just sell other people's stuff like I'm just a fashion store how am I different to everybody else I just sell kids toys, how am I different to everybody else.

So, when you're working with somebody who is in that situation and I have to say the other thing there was timeliness like she was very lucky, even though I think that that's the kind of story that would have got picked up at any time of the year the timing was just absolutely perfect because journalist TV shows magazines they need content right and they it's very difficult to fill fifty pages of a magazine especially when advertising is going you know going down the tubes. So, they need to fight, if you're giving them stories an actual story that they can run they are so excited to actually pick that up and pick their life so much easier. So, how do you work out your angle like how do you go well I'm just a fashion store. I just sew beauty products, I don't know why I'm different.

Christina: I know, I'll give you a couple of examples with some clients who have products so, I've worked with so one person had a baby product and if you have a product you really are always gonna have two angles to pitch, one is going to be your product and the other is going to be your expertise, like you're an expert in creating that product whatever industry that product is in. So, I had a man who created a baby product. So, we got him on the Rachael Ray Show because of the product it was a segment called the human lab where moms would test out different baby products. So, we sent them a baby product we pitched them they actually never got back to us and told us they were gonna use it we found out by somebody telling him hey your products on Rachael Ray right now. interesting story. So, his product was on Rachael Ray because a mom was testing it as part of the segment it was kind of like a review and then the other angle that we used was the man who created it he was a stay-at-home dad. Who created a baby product, so again we used the timeliness angle to get him coverage around Father's Day. So, we got him in Business Insider and Entrepreneur Magazine telling his dad primeur story.

So, by default his product was mentioned because we're talking about him as a product creator. So, that's one example another example is a woman who actually lives in Australia and she has a product she it's very cool business, she calls herself the queen of snow globes and she makes custom snow globes. So, like very high-end she'll put like a brought in a snow globe for dogs around her very cool. So, we worked together I taught her how to pitch herself and she ended up getting coverage on the project which I guess is a very big entertainment show there in Australia right. So, she got coverage on the project and it was because she created a snow globe for I don't know if it was the producers or the cast but she was hired to create a snow globe for Lala land on the movie with Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling. So, she created that snow globe and we pitched that like a local woman because she's local to Australia, even though this is you know about Hollywood you know makes international waves creating this snow globe for you know like Australian goes Hollywood whatever it was.

So, she got coverage for that, so again I think with products the mistake that people make is they just want to tell people about them and their product and what it does and why it's amazing. Nobody's gonna give you coverage for that that's way too promotional. So, you have to find

something specific and timely that's gonna make people care about, it for the example with the dietician we did that back-to-school a couple months later, we did healthy tailgates a couple months later we did not even a couple months later the next month it was Thanksgiving. The next month it's Christmas like there's always going to be a timely angle that you want to attach your product or your expertise to and if there's ever a month where you're like gosh my product, I just can't think of anything well then use your expertise to get coverage because you can always go back and forth between your products and your expertise.

Salena: Yes and I think even as even if you're not an actual product created but you're a store that in itself usually have opened a business because of a reason right no one just goes I'm just gonna open a business today it's way too hard. So, there's always a reason behind why you open to this store and I always believed that that reason I have been when I had my stores, I was in the paper I was featured on the news all those kinds of things because we were one of the first stores ever to have a full range of one hundred sustained baby products. Now, this was ten years ago. So, it was a it was a new thing back then and we also sold reusable nappies and so whenever there was an environmental segment for the TV I would get called up for a comment because you know everybody's got a baby everybody uses nappies it's the one thing that we could always use and so even and it was one of those things where you end up becoming like the nappy lady which is great but not so much but it wasn't deep, it meant that people would search like lady about nappies and all these segments would come up. So, having that one thing even if it's just one thing and we just sold other people's products I didn't create any products whatever the reason is for you creating your store you can trade on that right.

Christina: Exactly and that's where your expertise really comes into play and you mentioned earlier you know like people will say oh, I got coverage here but nothing happens like even though you're known as the nappy lady, you're still getting coverage in a lot of places. So, if people don't need what you're selling right then and there maybe they're not having a baby for another two or three years when they need you or your product, they're gonna know exactly where to turn to because they've seen you enough places. I think the mistake that people make is and you mentioned it earlier, they try to track their ROI, PR and publicity is not about a direct ROI, it's about visibility people can't do business with you if they don't know about you PR, gets you known after known you need to become liked and trusted and then I mean it all goes together like publicity and visibility is step one and then step two is sales. I've had clients where I've gotten them all the publicity in the world but their service and their product were terrible.

So, it never made to sales.

Salena: Can I just say and I was sorry, I'm so glad when you said this Australian lady, I was thinking oh my god please don't be the lady that I just bought some stuff on who's gone a little bit global and I won't mention the product but there is a product that every lady needs and this lady created something to help women and I tried to buy something from her oh my god it was the biggest pal lava and she has received a lot of publicity and here's the other part that you just said about services when you see somebody with a lot global publicity been on TV being in papers been on blogs everywhere, you expect a certain level of service you expect that your product is going to arrive nicely it's gonna be on time the customer service people are going to be

great because in your head they're a global brand and this is the what the exposure is done is for the customer. The social proof that has come with that makes your brand, so much bigger than maybe it's just you packing stuff out of your garage and so having to buy it it's now been six weeks and I still don't have the product ordered.

I've received the wrong product twice it makes in ten days to reply to an email and even worse, is I tried to buy this same product from an American company who sold something very similar and I ordered it on the 30th of December it is now the first of February here and it has only just been dispatched after sending seven emails to them. So, it's like clearly, these people are in demand it's the same niche it's the same similar very similar products. So, clearly there's a lot of demand going out but there really is no excuse for that terrible service so, like you said actually and then I got the automated review and I was like actually I can't talk about the product because I haven't actually received it yet you know the service has been so bad six weeks later I still don't have the product that I ordered nobody replies to my emails. I think I'm just gonna go and try and buy somewhere else. So, as a customer my expectation was so high because of all this exposure that everything I feel like I've been let down so badly it's not _ I'm a retail, I know sometimes you get the wrong product but the way the whole things have been handled from both of those companies and they're completely independent companies has just left such a sour taste in my mouth that when you said the Australian company, I said I hope that's not them. So, like you said if you're going to go after the exposure if that's a plan in your business Berry in your marketing plan you have to be to following through day.

Christina: Exactly and I always tell people like you have to be ready to go like even when you pitch when I worked in TV, I would come in for a meeting at nine o'clock I had a story to get ready and turn by five o'clock or six o'clock that night. So, people would send me an email I'd be like okay great we're gonna go do this oh no we're not ready come back in two weeks like no honey in two weeks I have been on to fourteen stories by then like we're doing this story now like if you want it, we're coming now and people just aren't prepared.

The media works quick, so you have to be prepared and then when that hits you have to be prepared for people to click to your website if this is online coverage for people to call you if you're local and you left a phone number for people to stop by your store whatever, it is you have to be ready I mean you probably wouldn't stop and spend thousands of dollars on an advertisement and let that ad come out and you not be ready just because this is free coverage that you're earning that doesn't mean you should treat it this way because like you said when you see people in the media over and over again you have this perception that they're an authority in their industry they are credible. This is in demand this is like legit a popular thing and that perception makes you want it and it has you putting faith in them. So, when they let you down and then you get a thing like that where you're supposed to leave a review positive there's going to be a retention problem.

Salena: Yes.

Christina: So, it's probably those kinds of people who run those kinds of businesses who will say PR doesn't work for us like no it worked you just didn't deliver on your.

Salena: Yep, I think that is one hundred percent true, they being ready is so important because I have to say the amount of times, I can probably say three or four times I literally had somebody saying, can we come to your store to film a segment, we'll be there in an hour.

Christina: Exactly.

Salena: I'll just clear a little space for you.

And that's great because a lot of people say no and they turn it down and I'm like you don't know how stupid you are, for doing this like these opportunities they don't happen a lot so when they happen like you got a jump on that.

Salena: And I guess the other thing with that is you know it's okay if your hair's not perfect always keep some lipstick if you need to, in the storeroom but the other thing with that is the simple thing is if you say yes you then become the well I know that if I need a comment I can just call her and she's good like I can just get something from her straight away, whereas if you say if you say no you're out you're off the list.

Christina: Exactly, it's your job. I mean I tell people as a publicist it's my job to help the journalists do their job it's not my job to promote you because nobody cares about promoting you, it's not the media's job to give you a free commercial, it's my job to help the journalists do their job and if I can do that by using you as a source for them then I'm gonna do that and that's how you're gonna get your publicity. So, the more you can just help them and be available the more they're going to keep coming back to you for more coverage. I know when I do TV segments here, I write the script and I send it to the producer. I write the web version of the script and I send it to the website editor I make it, so they don't have to lift a finger and that's why I go back every month for a segment.

Salena: Yep, I think that's definitely even if you go to those websites like horror and sauce bottle is, when you do your submission and this is something that I've learned if you pretty much write the story. So, all they have to do is copy and paste you don't just write hi, I'm Salena and I'm a retail strategist and I help businesses make money, there's work for them there they have to go to your website they have to look at what you do whereas if you actually write the story for them. I've had times where it's just literally been copied and pasted and the only reason I even know is because I've got a Google Alert set up for my name it like

Christina: Exactly and you do it perfectly that how you should do it, I mean I split stuff out and people have come back to me and they're like I would be a perfect fit for this give me a call and I'm like no I'm not gonna give you a call I asked you the question copy and paste like I don't have time for that. So, handle it not perfectly.

Salena: All right. So, if you can give us a couple of tips like maybe your top three tips for getting into the media without having to pay, apart from first one number one if you're going to write something write the whole story for them.

Christina: Right and a lot of people do that like I've pitched clients and they'll say this is great can you write it for us and I'm like sure, I mean if that means I'm gonna get coverage, I'll write it for you and then I'll include link backs in there and everything.

Salena: And I'm just having like sound bites like quotable sentences is another thing that I like sometimes, I find that it's literally just one sentence has been copied and pasted. So, I think what I have found from submitting a lot of those is really thinking about your format and maybe telling the story and actually saying maybe the question might be something like how do you think retail is going to trend in 2019 and then just putting one sentence, so that they could pull that out. So, that's number one write the story

Christina: Get them everything they need, get them everything they need on a silver platter that would be super helpful and just be mindful using things like hair oh and source bottle remember everybody has access to those anybody can post anything, I recently wrote an article for muck rack and I talked about hero and how you know sometimes people will post things and then you'll respond and then they'll come back to you and say would you like to buy an advertisement and it's like no, that's not what this is for like there's lots of people being sneaky. So, when you see that just move on don't spend money because one, these people are probably not doing what they should be doing if they're asking for money and two within advertisement people just don't pay attention like they do when you on the media. So, just pay attention to those things also pay attention to what's happening in your industry because of a very easy way to get coverage is to piggyback off of what's already happening. I remember a few years ago when I was at NBC and one of the stars from Glee overdosed, they were you know localizing the story on heroin like making a comeback or something and we talked to an addiction specialist or a doctor and I'm not sure if he contacted us or if we did a Google search and we found him or what the situation was but because it was timely and because that was news that was breaking and happening in his industry, things were already being covered we were already doing the story but we needed a source.

So, he made himself available so just pay attention to what's happening in your industry and make yourself available. I'm getting ready to do a segment on local TV here with a roundup of products and they're all going to be baby products and we're using the timeliness of Megan Merkel and Prince Harry having a baby. So, it's like here are some gifts perfect for a royal baby shower and I'm just gonna share five baby gifts. So, it's really just something as easy as that like how can we make this product relative to the time and then it's what you use to pitch.

Salena: That is so good like I could actually see you pitching that to like HuffPost you know five foot as a retailer because that's your job is to create rearrange in here five gifts and you can even be the go-to five gifts for. So, five gifts for the wedding five gifts for Brad Pitt and Cameron Diaz's engagement party or whatever is going like you can kind of just pick up a magazine and go with anything.

Christina: Exactly and Christmas I mean for products Christmas is huge because there is a gift guide for every kind of person or thing or pet like everything under the Sun.

Salena: Do you think that you should _ I mean here in Australia I know we combined media lists where you get the details of journalists in different fields, do you think that's worthwhile I had it's given that we've said that the journalists call out sites can be sketchy sometimes not to say to avoid them whatsoever but how do you actually get on the radar how do you find the right people to send your pitch to.

Christina: Well, there's a few ways I mean obviously I have software where I build media lists for people if they're in one of my programs but there's this like amazing piece of software called Google and you can find so much on it. No but honestly Twitter is big for journalists Twitter's like a breaking news platform all journalists are on Twitter pretty much. So, you can just follow somebody start a conversation start retweeting them commenting whatever also go to the outlets website and check out the contact page, a lot of times there's contact information there and if it's not specific to everybody who works that outlet there's gonna be a phone number or an email address for the main person. So, I would say reach out to that person and say hey I know you take guests on me at 11 a.m. show who's the best person to get in contact about pitching a guest or

Salena: I just did something there about the newspaper and I just remembered I get my little being a bonnet when businesses get railroaded by big companies and I ended up pitching by just going to the story about this big company units or something which was railroading small business and the actual writer the journalist had a link in their name and it literally opened up an email to them. Once, I click their name that's like school and I just wrote my email straight to them.

Christina: And a lot of them do that, so another suggestion is when you see articles like that go to the article the name is always hyperlinked either to an email their Twitter or a page that has their bio with their email in it. So, that's why it's important to stay on top of industry news on whether it's happening locally or nationally wherever your audience is.

Salena: I think at the end of the day you have to be prepared to put the time in right, it's you may be lucky and maybe somebody calls you out of the blue and says I really love your comment on such-and-such but if you really want this coverage you have to sit down and put a plan together would I be right in saying that.

Christina: Yes, you would be ready.

Salena: You have to say I'm gonna put some time and some effort in. now, I am told that you perhaps have a resource a cheat sheet that could help people do that.

Christina: Yes, I have a three-day video class, it's a media class that will teach you how to pitch and on day one I am giving you an exact pitch word-for-word that led to coverage. So, you can kind of take it and turn it into your own day two is earning the publicity and then day three is turning that publicity into profit. So, it's very well-rounded from start to finish all three-video class with lots of extra resources in there. So, they can get that <https://www.mediamavenandmore.com/publicity/>.

Salena: Thank you I think that that is gonna be a very downloaded resource because but here's the thing guys, if you're going to download it actually take the action don't just download it and hope that people are going to contact you because like Christina's just said you could have put the work in and then you also have to have the follow-up and I know that on your website which is <https://www.mediamavenandmore.com> you have a bunch of other resources you've got videos you've got case studies. I was looking at a little bit I went down like the wormhole just be full of podcasts quickly thank goodness. The alarm went off because I have to get on have this conversation but I was just strolling around the website watching the videos and there is so much great stuff on there so thank you so much for actually having that and putting it out there for people to see and thank you so much for sharing your expertise.

Christina: Well, thank you so much I appreciate you having me here.

Salena: Okay, so, if you want some help with media and PR in general and not only just getting it but also moving it from get it from the pitch right through to how to leverage it, head over to <https://www.mediamavenandmore.com/publicity/>. Thanks Christina.

Christina: Thank you so much Salena.