



BECOMING A LOCAL EXPERT

In last issue's part 1 of increasing class numbers, international presenter Lincoln Bryden revealed his strategies for improving your professional status. This time it's all about becoming a local "fitness celebrity".

By becoming known as the expert in your local area, more people will know about you, your business and your classes. This is even more important if you mainly teach classes within leisure centres and gyms. People like to associate themselves with the "expert". Word-of-mouth advertising is the best form of advertising there is, as it is free and people are more likely to listen to other people's recommendations than you telling the world how great you are.

When I started teaching classes in Cheltenham in 1989 it was fairly easy for me to stand out from the rest of the other instructors. Basically I was the only Afro- Caribbean instructor in a predominantly white, middle-class town, and Mr Motivator was a regular on TV. So I put two and two together and became "Cheltenham's Mr Motivator". Although not the most flattering title in the world, it got me loads of free local advertising, which created local

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intrigue, which in turn meant more people trying out my classes, and the word quickly spread.

I appreciate that times have changed (hopefully), and you may not have a similar advantage to me, so here are some more suggestions that you can employ to become your area’s local celebrity.

Become known in the local media

Local news editors are always looking for content, and you are the person to supply it to them. You have to be persistent but even if you get one article or press release featured every two months then that is free publicity for you. Here are three strategies that were really successful for me:

1. Run competitions in the local media. I suggested the local press host a competition with the winner getting eight weeks of personal training from me. The winner had to write a diary of their experience, including how much weight and inches they lost. The result? She dropped two dress sizes and I gained six new personal training clients and 43 new people for my classes.
2. I also invited someone from the local press to come along to my weekly Ceroc Modern Jive Class for free for six weeks and report their experiences. This was amazing as the reporter was well known so to have her endorse my classes resulted in loads of new members.
3. Offer to do a weekly/monthly column for another local publication. I offered to write a monthly article for one health and fitness supplement, which was great. For another I wrote a weekly “Ask Linx” column, answering health and fitness questions. These were really productive in keeping my name in the public domain.

Write a newsletter

Position yourself with two or three other local experts – such as a chiropractor or nutritionist – to make a newsletter. Write an article each that will provide content but also promote their individual services, so each person is promoting the newsletter to their target market. This way you are establishing yourself with

well-known “experts” in your local area and by doing so you automatically are viewed as an expert by your class participants, and are being promoted by the other contributors to your newsletter.

Create a website that “works”

What you need to know is that the days of spending £1,000s on a brochure-type site are dead. In fact if you use a site such as <http://scriptlance.com> you can get someone to design a professional looking WordPress blog website for around £100.

To show you the power of a website, I got my slot on the Big Breakfast TV show in 1999 as their streetdance fitness expert from one of their researchers finding my website. What effect do you think that had on my local classes?

Here are some tips to create a site that works:

- **Make it information-based** and not just a static online brochure. You should try to offer as much useful content via articles, videos and mp3 videos so that if people find you on Google they will see that you know what you are talking about, and are concerned about helping people achieve their goals.
- **Show your personality.** People want to know who their instructor will be and whether you will be the right “fit” for them. On a WordPress blog this is really easy as you can regularly upload pictures and videos from your classes, and instead of a boring “About me” section, why not video yourself talking about who you are, why you are in the industry and how you can help people?
- **Sell the sizzle not the sauce.** You may not like to hear this but many people are not interested in how many letters you have after your name. They want to know how you can help their specific problems, so show this regularly throughout your site.
- **Have loads of testimonials.** Social proof is one of the most powerful drivers to get people to try your services, so have letters, videos or audios of satisfied customers that have tried your classes on your site.

These are just some of the strategies that I used to increase my local “celebrity” status and so get more people into my classes. Choose the ones that you are comfortable applying, and take action to make it work for you.

Read part three next issue: P – Promoting yourself for mass exposure. *fp*

