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Timeliness key to gift guide placements

David Ward 23 Jul 2007

It may be the middle of summer, but many journalists and PR professionals already have Christmas on their minds, thanks to the increasing number of gift guides being produced every year.

Once strictly a lifestyle and enthusiast magazine phenomenon, gift guides are growing - if not in size, then certainly in importance, especially to PR pros and their clients. "In many ways, gift guides can be the easiest way to get into a hard-to-get-into publication like a *Redbook*," notes Tuesday Uhland, SVP at Access Communications.

There's another reason for the surge in gift guides: "Readers absolutely love them," says Tiffany Sommers, assistant editor at women's lifestyle/shopping magazine *All You*. "Readers don't want to run around to 20 different stores trying to come up with gift ideas - so we do that homework for them."

Despite the increased media focus on consumer-centric "news you can use," only a handful of outlets have gone the extra step and hired a full-time gift guide editor.

"Media outlets aren't adding more resources when putting these together, so, in many cases, the reporters don't really have a lot of time," explains Uhland. "So in many situations, whoever can get them all the information they need - including great art, price point, and where you can buy it - in a timely fashion has the advantage."

The only exception to this trend seems to be daily newspapers, which have cut back on these sections in recent years. "Because the whole economic model of newspapers is being challenged, they're doing a bit less," explains Michael Olguin, Formula PR president. "They still do editorial on the hottest things for the year, but it won't be a guide."

As far as tips for getting your clients into gift guides, GolinHarris media relations VP Gerri Kelly suggests reaching out to editors early to find their guidelines for submitting products and to see if there are any trends that will impact the selection process.

"It may be that this year's theme may be on a 'green' Christmas, which will include green gifts, as well as how to decorate your house in a green way," Kelly says. "And anyone who doesn't fit that trend is not going to be in it."

Rachel Goldberg, account executive at Milwaukee-based Laughlin/Constable, also recommends looking outside the traditional holiday season for gift guide placements. "We're seeing more gift guides for Father's Day and also for back-to-school," she says.

PITCHING... Gift guides

Gift guides are being put together earlier, and the process at many long-lead outlets may be

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closed by August

Don't bother with events like "Christmas in July" to promote your clients' products, as most reporters simply don't have the time to attend anymore

Most gift guide editors aren't always looking for the newest products, but it certainly helps. So anything you submit for gift guide consideration should have been either released or updated sometime in the past year

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