

Business Builder 29: “You Never Know” May 4, 2011

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What would you pay to gain exposure to 4 million interested people? Does ZERO sound good? Last month I was profiled in Woman’s Day magazine in a feature article about what to do after a job loss. It did not cost me a cent.

I write this not to brag, but because it reinforces one of my favorite mottos: ***“You never know...”***

In this case, ***“You never know”*** applies to a service called “HelpAReporterOut.com” (HARO). It’s a free e-mail bulletin board that works two ways: 1) reporters broadcast their information needs, and 2) people respond. You obviously should have knowledge or experience on that subject, but the diversity of reporters’ inquiries continually amazes me. They run the gamut from health to travel to business.

How did I learn about HARO? One of the keynote speakers at the 2010 conference of the Association of Independent Information Professionals was Peter Shankman, who founded HARO. Since HARO is free, I figured, “What the heck, I’ll register. ***You never know...***” Three times a day, I started receiving e-mails listing reporter queries. One caught my eye, wishing to interview women who had survived a job loss and gone on to do something new. Since I started RINK Consulting eight years ago when the company I was working for was acquired, I e-mailed back, was interviewed, and voila! **National exposure to over 4 million readers.**

Have I gotten any new clients from this? No, but I really pursued it for the PR value. (Actually, I did it as a lark, not expecting anything.) Considering I paid nothing, I can’t complain. For me, one of the greatest joys of running my own research business is that I can be flexible, even adventurous, without worrying about getting approval from anyone else.

So what does ***“You never know...”*** mean for you and your business?

- It means exploring ideas, leads, opportunities you may not have considered before.
- ***It means keeping your eyes and your mind open.***

Granted, my experience with HARO and Woman’s Day was no-risk. In general, though, before rushing into something new, you should evaluate its pro’s and con’s. Calculate what, if anything, you have to lose. It could be money, but just as important, it could be time and effort.

Is it a step in the right – or wrong -- direction?

Here are 8 questions to ask yourself if a new opportunity looks intriguing:

1. What’s my out-of-pocket cost?
2. How much time and effort will it take to explore and/or implement?

3. What's the estimated ROI? What's the payback period?
4. Does this fit with my business proposition and positioning?
5. In terms of my business priorities, where does this rank?
6. Will this open new doors (clients, markets, channels, partnerships) for me?
7. Can I leverage this venture in some way?
8. Will I learn new skills or gain valuable new knowledge?

Then, if it makes sense, go for it! ***Because you never know...***

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