

Rachel's Vineyard Blooms

Leslie Graves is the newsletter editor for Rachel's Vineyard, a therapeutic support group for post aborted women (rachelvineyard.org). Leslie attended Steve O'Keefe's "Introduction to Internet Publicity" Chat Series last spring (sessions will be resuming this fall), and she began applying the techniques from Steve's book, *Complete Guide to Internet Publicity* to her work for Rachel's Vineyard.

When Rachel's Vineyard recently published a new book co-written by founder Theresa Burke called *Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion*, Leslie knew exactly how to promote it online. She put together a chat tour for Burke, and is using the tour as a basis for e-mail news releases to get attention for the book.

Leslie was in New Orleans in July to speak at a leadership training retreat for the nonprofit foundation. She invited Steve O'Keefe to join her for dinner, where they talked about the online marketing campaign for Rachel's Vineyard and *Forbidden Grief*, among other things. Here is a summary of that conversation.

The Newsletter

Your book has been my bible for online promotion. I follow it very closely. I started with the newsletter. The organization had several thousand contact names, and they weren't really doing anything with them. So, rather than do an opt-in, I did an opt-out. I contacted everyone to let them know we would be producing a newsletter and if they didn't want to receive it, they should let me know.

Only three or four people opted-out. And we've had no complaints from anyone on the list. I follow your guidelines for content and style explicitly. We keep it simple, clean, no HTML, and send it once a month. The response I've gotten from the newsletter is probably the most gratifying part of the work. People are very appreciative and kind in their replies.

The Linkage Campaign

I was soliciting links for the site,

but after I got your book I changed my linkletter and I've gotten much better results. Now I introduce myself up front, and I include my phone number at the end of the letter. That always surprises people — putting your phone number in a link request. It lets them know it's not spam.

You would be amazed at the response it gets. You ask someone for a link, and you kind of expect no response, but many of these webmasters respond personally and immediately. They just aren't used to getting e-mail requests for links, and many of them are very receptive to it — even though we don't offer reciprocal links.

When I saw the tip in your excellent newsletter, *The Beautiful Plan*, about how to tell how many people link to your site, I immediately checked our address. We had 40 inbound links at that time. It's a lot of fun to watch that number increase every month. We are up to 228 inbound links to our site now. Thanks to the linkage work, Rachel's Vineyard is now on the first page of search results for "post-abortion counseling" at Google — and that's without any special search engine optimization work.

The Chat Tour

When Theresa's book came out, I tried to put together a chat tour for her following the instructions in your book. It was really very difficult. Most of the chat facilities are no longer supported, or just don't work, or don't have a schedule or moderator or any structure. It was very disappointing.

However, I did manage to find three venues that will be hosting her chats. And these are all supported chat venues, with moderators and schedules and advance promotion. I think you're right that the real value in doing these tours is the promotion and not the attendance. We are getting many weeks' worth of publicity on all the sites.

The Follow-Up

It's good that your book places so much emphasis on preparing reports and tracking your work, although I need to get better at this. I've made a lot of contacts, but I don't have them very well organized, and sometimes I forget why I have this person's name or e-mail address.

I can already see the value of building relationships with these sites. First, you ask for a link, then later you ask them to post news about a tour, or an excerpt from a book. This is just a great way to promote something — especially if there is no real access to the mass media because it's a story no one wants to talk about. Plenty of people do want and need this information, and they are looking for it online.

Time To Book Fall Campaigns

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All the services of the New Book Launch Campaign, plus a week-long author chat tour or online seminar. Lead Time: 10 weeks.

Web Site Promotion

Includes directory registration, writing meta tags, linkage campaign, e-mail news releases, discussion group postings, and site-of-the-day submissions. Lead Time: six weeks.

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