

The Power of the Press Kit - Part 2
with Jill Jordan and Gail Martin

Jill: Welcome. This is Jill Jordan with Smart Women's Coaching and today we have part two of the Power of Your Press Kit with our contributing expert, Gail Martin of Dreamspinner Communications. Welcome Gail.

Gail: Hey Jill. Great to be back.

Jill: Well we're loving this. I know the last time we were together you went through so much and there's a wonderful handout that goes along with these conversations we're having again today. And we kind of went through five basic tips, if you will. What is a press kit, what goes into this press kit, how to use it, the strategy and benefits. And today we want to spend the time diving into this a little bit more.

So we welcome you and all of your expert advice and helping others deliver a most phenomenal press kit. So let's just start right now and what goes into the press kit? Can you kind of walk us through step-by-step?

Gail: Sure. The biggest thing with the press kit is to keep in mind that it's really got two functions. The traditional function is wrapped up in the name, a press kit or a media kit, something that gives reporters and editors background information, a way to fact check, ideas of new stories they could write about you, all the kind of information they might need if they were working on a story on deadline after hours and they can't get a hold of you to make sure they get the correct information.

But the other really exciting use of a press kit is direct to consumer. So your press kit is also a way the potential customers, partners, vendors, suppliers, joint venture partners can all check you out, learn more about you. And so you've got two reasons there, two very powerful reasons to have a great online press kit. So last time we talked about several key things that should be in there – company history, executive bios, frequently asked questions or FAQ sheet, fact sheets, backgrounders, you can list reviews, awards, testimonials, all kinds of good stuff. But we didn't have time to go into them.

So what I'd like to do is talk a little more about not only how to do those pieces so that they come to life but how you can maximize the power of the internet with audio clips, video clips, 360 photo virtual tours and hot links so that people can really, really see, hear and feel you instead of just reading dry copy and that's the power of the internet.

Jill: I think what I hear you saying is how do you make a press kit not boring. What makes it interesting and current? These are wonderful, wonderful ideas that you're throwing out there. So walk us through Gail.

Gail: Sure. Well a history of your company doesn't have to be dry and boring. You want to approach your customer history with a what's in it for me attitude coming from the potential customer or partner's perspective. So what do they care about in your company's history as opposed to every award and every new product and every new building that you've ever had? The key here is you want to keep short and focused. Focus on your photos and your first. In fact timelines and milestones can be great. I've even seen companies that have a timeline with photos and then if you mouse over the photos you get comment boxes that pop up and even links to deeper information, which makes it fun. It's kind of a treasure hunt.

The big thing with your history is you're showing credibility, you're showing expertise, you're showing a tradition of leadership and innovation and you want to link the past to the present. So make sure that everything that's in there is really relevant to who your company is today because so many companies, even small companies and solopreneurs have evolved since they began. It doesn't matter who you were when you started out if you're no longer doing any of those things. Don't junk up the page. Stick with the history that tells us who you are and why you have credibility and the expertise for us to deal with you and leave everything else out of it. But think about how you can include a photo slideshow if it's appropriate, maybe a video blog of say a grand opening, ribbon cutting, short pieces that make it interactive and fun.

I saw on AT&T's press page for the iPhone, now here's a hundred year old company rolling out the iPhone. Their press page for it knows their audience. If you are buying an iPhone you're wired, you're really into digital media. So they've got You Tube clips up there of people waiting in line for their iPhone. My favorite was this business man who paid somebody \$15 dollars an hour to wait in line for him for his iPhone and then brought the guy pizza at lunch. And they had it on You Tube video.

Jill: That's great. Well I think you're right on there with making it relevant to today. Sometimes it's difficult for us to let go what was really happening and neat and cool back then. And this other piece that I think I've seen where people may fail in their press kit is it's all about them and it's not about the receiver. I think that's really key where people forget who's this for. Is it for you or is it for them?

Gail: Well and that really comes into plan when you get to the bios. Now if you're a solopreneur, an entrepreneur or president of the company yours may be the only bio out there. If you're a larger company you may want to have your senior executive and your client facing managers, the people that your clients, your prospects, your key vendors or suppliers are actually going to meet and interact with. It's always nice to know a little about somebody before you go into a meeting with them or to even just see a picture so that you recognize them in the lobby and you don't have to stand there looking lost.

So bios can be a very nice introduction but the key thing here is they're not resumes. We don't want to know about your Boy Scout awards or your Girl Scout Merit badges. We don't need to know every club you were in college. We don't need to know what awards you won back in 1986 for your terrific work. Keep it short and relevant. And really, again, focus on what do you bring to the table here and now with what you're doing now and who you are now that makes you the perfect connection for the people who are checking you out on the website? So your history only matters in so far as it supports the credibility of what you're selling now.

Jill: Got it. Now what would you recommend for those individuals that are solopreneurs or maybe there's just one or two, how do you get a little more meat with respect to bios if you are just operating solo?

Gail: Well most solopreneurs I've met have a wealth of relevant background. Maybe they've come from a corporate setting where they were a senior manager or senior executive. Maybe they have help to manage a number of different small companies before going out on their own. so I think that you really look at where you've been and I think so many of us discount our own background because well if it's ours it must not be very special and oh gee there are people who can list like 10 Fortune 15 companies on their resume. Your background is uniquely you that contributes to your perspective and your story and that's going to mean that you bring assets and resources to the table that other people can't even if they've been glitzier places.

You see the world through your eyes and that's what people are hiring you for. So you want to focus on all the things that make you perfectly qualified to solve the problems of the people who are looking at your website. And by the way Jill, I mentioned having photos up there but having real short audio clips or video clips maybe of recent speeches or of being handed an award, having been on TV or an audio clip of a recent radio interview that's great in terms of letting people feel like they're getting to know you. The key thing here is to kind of keep them You Tube size. So I would say under two minutes.

Jill: Under two minutes, that's really important. Yeah. Don't want to lose them.

Gail: No, no because they're really not looking to tune in for like a half hour sitcom.

Jill: Well I know Gail if anyone does go to your site at Dreamspinner Communications you have these examples that you are sharing with us and it's just an exciting site to visit. And you have so much content and you want to be flipping the pages and seeing what else is there and I think just going to your site is a great example of how these things work.

Gail: Well thank you. And as we've talked about I also write fantasy adventure fiction when I don't have my marketing hat on and I write the Chronicles of the Necromancer Fantasy Series and if you go to my book website, which is ChroniclesOfTheNecromancer.com. I have my You Tube video out there on the home page. It's in my signature block on my e-mails but it's also on my media page as well as links to recent radio interviews that I've done. So it's all right there. If somebody wondered, "Hey I wonder if she'd be a good guest on my podcast or my radio show." They don't have to wonder what I'd be like, they can click and listen to me on somebody else's show and decide for themselves or just listen and get to know me better.

Jill: Absolutely. And I can't think of a better example than what you've got presented there to talk about, what we're going through right now today.

Gail: Well one of the great things that I found with my website is that the media really, with both sites, is the media really does go to the press kit and so do prospective clients and partners. And that's how they check you out. So it really does work.

Jill: Both sides of the coin there.

Gail: Absolutely. Now one of the other pieces that can really come into play are fact sheets and backgrounders. Fact sheets are truly bulleted information. So if you think about the bare bones essentials of your company – when was it founded? 1986. How many employees? 10. Headquarters location – Detroit, Michigan. That kind of format and information and the whole purpose with a fact sheet is so that if a reporter's doing an article and wants to double check one of those little facts, the kind that people hate when they get them wrong it's right there in front of them.

So think about the kind of details that you want people to get right about your company. Maybe it's the name of your product, maybe it's the number of office locations and put it in that very easy to read format. Now a backgrounder is great for doing exactly that, sharing a little deeper background in no more than two pages and not the densest type and smallest font you can get.

Where I see backgrounders working really well are for events. So for example, if you do an annual event, if you have an annual fundraiser all of that is great for backgrounder. And this is where you get to share in a very concise way how did they event start? How many times has it been held? How many people have participated? And it's in brief paragraph form but it, again, let's a reporter get all of that great information either to flush out a story or to get ideas for a new story and that's what this is all about is building relationships so that people come in closer.

Jill: Well this is really helpful that you're sharing this because often times we throw so much in there. We've done this and this and that and when you think of a reporter or someone going to your site. Information is coming at them at such speed they want something they can go through quickly. Bullet format is great. I know myself if I've got to read and read and read and read it'll go in that pile to be read later. And it might not get picked up again. So I think in both the fact sheet and the backgrounders keep it really simple and you might want to test it out with someone else and have them read it because they get it. Because sometimes we're so close to it aren't we?

Gail: Absolutely. And another great piece here is a frequently asked questions page and this is where you actually think about the things that people ask you over and over again. And those are hot questions. So write the question down and then write the answer. Now you want to keep the answer real short. I would say three to five reasonable sized sentences. Don't write a dissertation. But give a question/answer, question/answer, question/answer. Not only is that going to spare you a lot of nuisance phone calls and a lot of wasted time answering the same thing over and over again but it may spark a reporter to take an article in a whole different direction. It may bring something great to mind in the mind of somebody who's checking you out to do business with you or to partner with you. So an FAQ sheet can also be really valuable.

Jill: That's a great point. How many times does it happen to those people who haven't worked with a PR agency or a specialist where they want to get a certain message across and the reporter has something completely different in mind and they're taking you down a path you don't want to be and if this was presented to them they could target and highlight exactly the messages that you want to get out there.

Gail: Well not only that but having been a freelance writer myself I know sometimes you go to interview somebody and you have a specific need in mind for the article and they're trying to take it a different way and that could be interesting but that's not what my editor sent me to get in the article. So if you don't play ball with the reporter you're likely to get dropped all together.

Jill: Oh you got it. Okay, so we've got the backgrounder, the fact sheets, the frequently asked questions, what else do you want to share with us?

Gail: Well one thing I want to bring up here Jill is you can have different press kits for different parts of your business or for different events. So for example, all the different press kits for each of my books. I've seen companies very successfully do press kits for different events that they hold or press kits for different product launches. So you can put a customized press kit together and the great thing is once you've written the first one then you can kind of copy from yourself and just tweak and revise the format or the pieces. You're not starting from scratch.

So don't just think you've got one press kit and it has to do everything. You can do separate press kits for separate pieces.

Jill: That's great. Get the first one down. You've got the model and then you can insert 'B' in place of 'A' and that's a great way to make it easier on you.

Gail: I am all for reusing your own material at every possible opportunity and not reinventing the wheel. Now there are some other great things you can put in a press kit. If you have won a lot of awards or if your product has gotten a lot of favorable reviews you can include that. You can include testimonials. You can include text or audio clips from major speeches. You want to show your major corporate initiatives – your programs, your products. If your company, for example, has just committed to be 30 percent more environmentally friendly by 2012 you probably want to have a sheet on that in your press kit because that's newsworthy.

Philanthropy and community involvement. If your company is a big supporter, say, of your local Habitat for Humanity and every year you give all your employees a day off to go help build a Habitat house, having a page in there with pictures and how many houses to date have your people helped on and how many hours and how many people? That's terrific. Think multimedia. The next time you go out to help on one of those Habitat houses send somebody with a digital camcorder. Get some video blog footage. Get some digital pictures that you can upload. All of this makes you real to people who are reading about this and it lifts you off the page from just being...you could be a fictional character for all they know. But when they start seeing the pictures and the video and hearing the audio you become a real person. And that [inaudible] is we do business with real people.

Jill: Oh that's so key and your point that you started out today is be interesting. And thinking of adding these testimonials, how powerful they are coming from someone else's voice, I'm seeing a lot of audio testimonials. Video testimonials, why not? We have that capability today. As you were speaking about environmental concerns what's bigger than going green today to tap on that bandwagon and position yourself so these are wonderful ideas.

Gail: Well and I think the biggest thing is to always bring it back to why does my potential customer care about this? Why does the reporter who is writing to my potential customer care about this? Why would somebody that I would want to collaborate with or who might be a referral partner or that might be a good vendor or resource for me care about this? Ultimately when we check someone out online or when we sit down for a first meeting with them we want to know do we click? Do we have a common viewpoint? Are we coming at the world in roughly the same direction? Can we make a personal connection? And to the extent that you can reassure those fears in the total strangers who encounter you through your website press kit they move from being strangers to acquaintances to colleagues to clients and associates.

Jill: And even more important in today's world as we are working virtually in establishing these solid relationships. So there's a tendency for people to think well if it's virtual it can't be close enough and this is a perfect example of how you can build powerful relationships.

Gail: Well it is and it really works because I work with many people including you that I haven't had the pleasure yet of meeting face-to-face. But I still feel that I know them very well because of the personal relationships that it's possible to foster through using multimedia, through the website, through the phone. There's so many ways we can get to know people without having to sit down in person and that's where the world is right now from a business perspective. So your press kit helps all of those important people including the media get to know you.

Jill: Well I think that leads right into this other area that I know you wanted to touch on, the online versus traditional press kit.

Gail: Well a lot of times people are used to thinking of press kits in the traditional pocket folder method. This is something that you give out at a press conference. Well I've got news for you, more and more press conferences are becoming webinars. So you can't hand them out because nobody's in the room. But there are times when you do have, for example, when you do media in person, so if you're doing a ribbon cutting or you have a grand opening of a physical location and the local media is going to turn out. Then you can print off your press kit materials in a PDF format, put it on nice stationery. You can still put it into a pocket folder and hand it to them.

If you are making contact with traditional printed publications sending them a nice pocket folder version of your press kit with a nice cover letter still works to make an initial introduction. Now I would say that if you're using your online press kit you don't want to include it as an attachment because reporters won't open attachments unless they've asked for them. You want to send it as a link. So it's perfectly legit using your online press kit in an introduction to say, "I'd like to invite you to look at my press kit." And then embed the link. Just don't put it as an attachment.

Jill: Oh is that important today.

Gail: That's huge because you probably won't even make it through the spam filter.

Jill: Right, right.

Gail: Now the other thing with traditional press kits is you have to print them. You have to store the pieces, which is not cheap. You have to pay for the postage, which gets more expensive every year. And if you have a bunch of printed pieces in your storage closet they're going out of date.

The online press kit is not only available immediately 24/7 but if you change your phone number, if you move your office, if you add a new product no big deal. You go out and change it and it's changed. You haven't lost all that money that's sitting in your storage closet. And with the online kit it's much easier to include the multimedia pieces. Now you can still tuck a CD or a DVD in a traditional press kit. And there are people that you may still need to do that for. But you save so much in time and money with an online press kit that I would really encourage people to make the online press kit first and then create traditional press kits on an ad-hoc basis from what you've already put on the web.

Jill: And as we're speaking about going green a little bit earlier, this just makes all the world of sense and if there is that need to have the physical hard copy just extract from the online press kit.

Gail: Well one of the great things about an online press kit is there are so many ways you can send people to it. You can use it as a link in your signature block for your e-mail. You can have it on your press page, on your website. You can have a link to it on your blog. You can have a link to it in your newsletter. You can send an e-mail to a reporter that says, "Check out my press kit." And have the link right there without all the bulk and having to worry about whether it made it through the mail room.

You can also announce updates to your press kit and if they're truly interesting updates that in itself is a newsworthy announcement. So your press kit becomes a piece of news which drives people to your site. How great is that?

Jill: It's fabulous. And as I'm listening to you walk through these steps you've put it together in such an easy format to do that makes sense, that has the flexibility and longevity. If anyone is out there in any kind of business if they don't get this thing down first they will be struggling and struggling to get known in the community or for their targeted audience. This really cuts through so much of the effort that we see often times people go through. Whether they are a start-up company, someone new or they've been in business forever this is a perfect way to revitalize a company that's maybe been around for a while.

Gail: Well not only revitalize but you may find that people really don't know you and your company as well as you thought they did and they discover a whole new level to what you do. It's awful when you've been in business for several years and people go, "I never knew you did that." You just want to sink through the floor. But this is a great way. In fact, you can even include it in your newsletter and say, "Hey take a quiz. How long have we been working together? If you thought you knew me find the answers in my press kit and submit the answers and I'll do a drawing or something." And give people a fun reason to read your press kit, encourage people to pass it on. And make it really easy by passing on a link.

Jill: Gail I just get so excited every time I talk to you because you make this so easy for people to work with and I know that they can go to your site at Dreamspinner Communications, that's plural, Communications, dot com (www.DreamspinnerCommunications.com) to tap into your services to get to know you a little bit better. You have a website that is so content rich and are always so generous with what you offer individuals to help them do a better job in whatever they're doing.

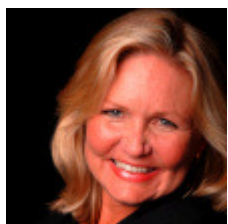
One last thing you want to share with our listeners today?

Gail: Sure. Make it as easy as possible for people to find your press kit. Don't put it behind a password. But think about all the things that you can add it to – your stationery, your website, your social media pages, your LinkedIn profile, your Squidoo lens, your e-mail signature, all the places that make it really easy for someone to say, "Oh I'll check this out." And now they're getting to know you.

Jill: Gail thank you again. It's always a pleasure to have you. And I just have to say the process in which you take people through is just so organized, well thought out, step-by-step and cuts through a lot of confusion out there. When you say make it easy you do that and we all can take advantage of making a lot of money by making it easy. So thanks again Gail.

Gail: Thank you. Take care. Bye-bye.

Jill: Bye-bye. Thank you everyone and tune in once again to Smart Women's Coaching as we interview our contributing experts and tap into their areas of expertise. Go and make it a perfect day. Bye-bye.



Katana Abbott is the founder of Smart Women's Coaching and Midlife Millionaires, LLC. She is currently writing, **Secrets from a Midlife Millionaire – Create Your Perfect Life**. After a 20-year career, she left her \$100 million investment management and financial planning practice to follow her dream of helping women find their passion, be financially aware and prepared, have access to the right resources and

meet some of the top business-building experts in the country. Visit www.MidlifeMillionaires.com FREE Midlife Millionaire Success Pack today.

