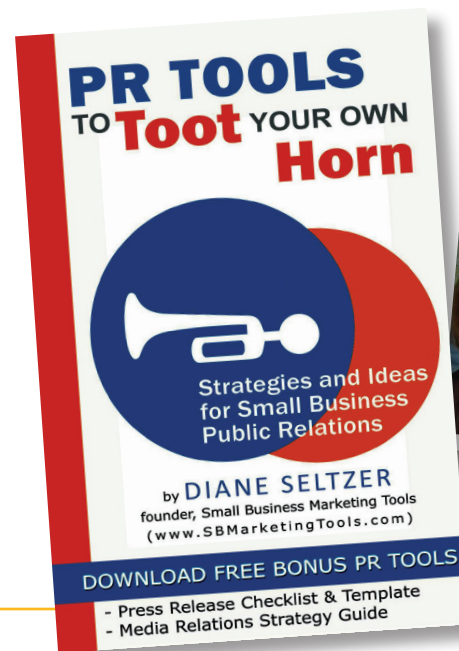


# SIMPLE, EASY PR FOR MA AND PA



Seltzer's book drew accolades for its marketing advice geared toward small businesses.

*A pro in the field authors a book of low-cost marketing strategies geared to small businesses*

By Rich Armstrong / Managing Editor

**T**he adage “write what you know” is known to anyone who has ever taken pen to paper (or finger to keypad). Diane Seltzer, marketing director for retractable shade manufacturer SureShade, knows marketing, and a new business book she has published is written specifically to offer firsthand wisdom to mom-and-pop shops on how they can most efficiently promote their business.

“PR Tools to Toot Your Own Horn: Strategies and Ideas for Low-Cost Small Business Public Relations” was recently named a Top 5 winner in the marketing category of the Small Business Book Awards. “What’s my small biz marketing philosophy? You can market yourself without spending a lot of money,” Seltzer says. “When it comes to PR, no one can talk about your business better than you.”

Her boss, Dana Russikoff, co-founder of Philadelphia-based SureShade, says Seltzer is behind every marketing success the fast-growing company has had, including two awards from the Marine Marketers of America. The privately held company was launched at the 2007 International BoatBuilders’ Exhibition & Conference.

This year’s Miami boat show marks their five-year commercial launch anniversary and the company’s product is expected to be showcased on over 30 boat models — up from 23 just a few months ago at the Fort Lauderdale show.

“Everything you see about SureShade — from our website, our blog, our newsletters to our clients and dealers — is Diane,” Russikoff says. “She’s one of the most incredible marketing folks I’ve ever come across in the industry.”

## A boater before SureShade

Seltzer, 42 and married, with two young children, was a boater before she joined the industry — an experience she says has been invaluable to her career at SureShade. She and her husband, Brian, own a Sea Ray 410 Sundancer, appropriately named Seltzer

Water, and boat on Chesapeake Bay. “It’s like a mini-vacation every weekend,” she says. They keep the boat at a local marina and try to schedule a few overnight trips each season.

The lifestyle is a perfect complement to her career in the marine industry, she says. “It’s exciting to be a part of a start-up, especially in an industry you’re personally connected to,” she says.

Most small business owners are in their line of business because it’s of interest to them, she says, so why don’t some in the marine industry do a better job of self-promotion? “From what I hear, they don’t have enough time or they just don’t know where to start,” Seltzer says. “They may be a jack-of-all-trades, but it can be overwhelming. Where do you focus your time and your energy? This book helps lay out the strategies to setting goals and objectives.”



Seltzer signed on as marketing director for retractable shade manufacturer SureShade, which has won two awards from the Marine Marketers of America.

Seltzer’s resume includes positions in marketing, including a stint at GE, and at several advertising agencies. “I spent a number of years marketing modular buildings. To have a natural enthusiasm for marketing boats, I think, helps,” she says. “I picked up a lot of marketing knowledge along the way, and now I’ve taken what I’ve learned and brought it to a small business.”

## Social media: beyond Facebook

Social media is an area in which industry players don’t market themselves much beyond Facebook. There’s Pinterest, Google+, Twitter and search engine optimization — an Internet marketing strategy designed to ensure that a company is near the top of

any Google search done through the use of keywords strategically embedded on a company’s website.

“You just don’t see a lot of the dealers, vendors and suppliers taking advantage of what’s available. They don’t understand all the extra benefits,” Seltzer says. “Some dealers need to work on their unique positioning — maybe what their service department can bring.”

Priority No. 1 for any business should be its website, she says. “If you don’t have a place to point someone, you may as well not be in business,” she says. “If people are going to spend that kind of money on a boat, they’re going to go out of their way to learn everything they can.”

As a complement to an attractive, informative website, a company blog is a great way to create a less formal, more personal extension of the site, she says — a place to share anecdotes and even opinions that may help build customer loyalty.

Seltzer says she wrote her book as a guide of sorts for the entrepreneur, owner-operated small business, “solopreneur” or simply a manager with limited staff and resources. They know their business and market best, so they are the best spokesmen or advocates that they can hire, she says.

The book is broken into chapters with straightforward strategies and titles, such as “How to Build a PR Strategy,” “Press Release Writing Style and Format,” “Strategies and Tactics for Social Media Sites” and “Building and Managing a Website Media Press Room.” Each section includes thorough examples of how to execute simple, yet effective PR strategies.

Links to recommended tools and templates for creating online sites,

website resources and books on specific topics can be found in a directory at the end of Seltzer’s book. It also includes a link to a free downloadable package of PR tools Seltzer developed to guide a small business owner through some key areas of public relations, such as a press release template and media outreach guide. A glossary is meant to help cut through some of the PR jargon.

Her book has its roots in a site she created and manages, Small Business Marketing Tools ([www.sb-marketingtools.com](http://www.sb-marketingtools.com)). As side projects, she also runs a boating lifestyle blog, Boater Life Online ([www.boaterlifeonline.com](http://www.boaterlifeonline.com)), and Marine Marketing Tools ([www.MarineMarketingTools.com](http://www.MarineMarketingTools.com)), a collaborative site for sharing marine marketing best practices. ■