

Media: It's Worth Your Time

by Jonathan Shikes, Author/Freelance Journalist

It's been a long day. You've ordered ingredients and supplies, talked to your lawyer, paid your graphic designer, fixed a plumbing problem, filled out another mound of paperwork, glanced at the latest CDC guidelines, talked to your lawyer again, and checked and rechecked your financials. The last thing you want to do now is put on a smile and actually market your brewery to the media, to the public and on social media. But it's an important step and one that can very easily help separate you from the competition.

Easily? Yep. The truth is that most small breweries don't do a very good job of sharing information about themselves, their beers, their ethos or their story. It's a shame because this is one of the fun parts -- for many, it's why you decided to get into the business in the first place. Making inroads with the local media or media influencers can put you on a lot of radar screens.

Here are a few steps you can take.

- Identify the people or publications that are writing, blogging or broadcasting about beer in your community. A simple Google news search can do the trick. But you can also ask friends or colleagues at other breweries.
- Reach out to your Guild. They usually keep lists of media contacts and emails and would probably be willing to share. Then you can compile your own list.
- You probably already have some content prepared about the brewery and your beers. Put it into press-release form (Google a typical press release). It doesn't have to be long. In fact, short ones work just fine as journalists are busy, too. Don't forget to include the who, what, why, where and when. (You'd be surprised how often those details are omitted).
- Put the information on social media. Tag or invite a few key news people.
- Be ready when they call or email you back. In other words, don't send out a press release and then take off for vacation!
- Keep doing this for beer releases and other interesting news. It only takes a few sentences of backstory on a beer or brewery to make it stand out. And once a journalist knows you, they will keep coming back to you for information on future stories.

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- Be honest. Be open. Most journalists aren't looking for free beer (although they'd probably take one). They are looking to tell a cool story, to tell it well and to tell it first.



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Jonathan Shikes has spent more than 25 years as a journalist, covering almost every beat there is. Most recently, he was the managing editor of Westword, Denver's storied alt-weekly newspaper. While he was there, he began covering Colorado's dynamic craft-beer industry in 2007 and continues to do so today. He is the author of Denver Beer: A History of Mile High Brewing.