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Business & Economics

Feeding the Media Beast: An Easy Recipe for Great Publicity
Mark Mathis
Purdue University Press
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Witty and ironic, entertaining and simple to read, this
book is a smart, useful text on how to effectively generate publicity and avoid the common pitfalls of working with the modern information culture. The author, who has worked as a media consultant, television reporter, news anchor, columnist, radio talk show host, and media trainer to *Fortune 500* companies, has distilled his experience into twelve rules for generating media interest in any project or story. Writing in an accessible, common-sense style, Mathis highlights a simple truth, and then elaborates with often hilarious examples from his personal experiences to show how to succeed in "feeding the beast," that is, generating good publicity in a consistent, controlled manner.

The book's preface introduces the nature of the beast; subsequent chapters divide the rules into categories, like "Seducers" (things that attract journalists of all media: difference, emotion, simplicity) and "Hazards" (troubleshooters that help one avoid bad publicity, or minimize its damage). At first glance this may seem to simplify the process of media seduction to an almost absurd level, and yet, it doesn't take much meditation on these twelve rules to appreciate the truth and utility of this approach.

Consider the effectiveness of a single, well-placed quote, a skill that Mathis expounds upon in some detail:
"Golf is like life in a lot of ways—all the biggest wounds are self-inflicted." (Bill Clinton)

Mathis shows numerous ways in which quotes of this type—self-contained, simple, and yet conveying a huge amount of information—can be created, controlled, and used to advantage. In doing so he illuminates the complexity of simplicity and simplifies the process of conveying complexity to an audience.

It isn't much of a stretch to say that this book is about more than communicating effectively with the media: it tells how to communicate effectively whenever there's a need to

sell an idea. The ideas apply to any public presentation, like trying to generate good publicity, interviewing for a job, or creating interest in a business plan. The basic principles of communication expounded here are of value in almost any situation where conveying information is important.

In setting out to write a book on working with the media, Mathis has written something immensely more universal. This book should be on the reading list of anyone whose job involves communicating effectively, or anyone interested in improving communication skills.

Peter Terry