



Effective Media Relations Workshop

Overall Goals:

1. Establishing and maintaining solid relationships with local media sources.
2. Help them get their job while getting the coverage you want!

I. Welcome and Overview

- a. Session Overview
- b. Self Introductions

II. Why Media is Important for Service Organizations

- a. Name Recognition
- b. Recruitment
- c. Sustainability
- d. Political Survival

III. What Makes News?

- a. If it bleeds, it leads
- b. Man bites dog - the unexpected
- c. What a reporter is thinking
- d. Develop a newshook
- e. How to deal with "good news" obstacles

IV. How Can Service Be Newsworthy?

- a. Local angle, relates to the community
- b. Service days, swearing-ins, graduations
- c. Feature stories, human interests, emotional appeal
- d. Grant announcement
- e. Celebrity or political spokesperson
- f. Piggybacking to national news or trends

V. Types of Media

- a. Television
 1. networks, affiliates and independents
 2. cable/government access/PBS
- b. Internet
- c. Print
 1. national, regional dailies, weeklies, college
 2. news services
 3. magazines, trade publications, church bulletins

VI. How to Get Coverage

- a. building relationships with reporters
- b. press list-resources
- c. writing press releases
- d. making the pitch, the best time to call
- e. press conferences and information kits
- f. letters to the editor/op eds
- g. media sponsorships

Effective Media Relations

Workshop Copy

A/B. Stories first to be covered are usually provocative, controversial, deadly, destructive, unexpected, widespread, live-breaking, political, unique. The news cycle has changed over the last few years-months-days! News stories are shorter, less in-depth, immediate (CNN, FOX, CNBC), Continuous (24-hours, 7-days a week), Global and more competitive.

C. When developing your story and before calling the media to pitch your idea(s)...here are a few things to keep in mind: What are reporters asking themselves? How does this story effect people, who is affected, what's the local impact? Is there an interesting element, insight, person, or facts that people don't really know? Is the story (the news) unique? It must be something interesting - something with a local angle that has a possibility of affecting a lot of people. Reporters or assignment editors will also ask themselves if this is something we've already or recently covered? Will it be interesting or fun to write about - does it move me?

D. Develop a news hook

- o Find something timely
- o Tie your story to an existing new story or trend
- o Highlight who and how many people are affected
- o Look for an aspect of your story that makes it unique
- o Listen for personal stories, and antidotes
- o Reach for the drama - but be sure not to oversell. Use the hook in the lead in your press release - don't bury it in the third paragraph!

E. Dealing with a Good News Obstacle

- o Look for the hard edge for your soft story
- o Pitch your story to the right reporter - do your homework first. For suburban newspapers, for example, sections in the newspaper include: Society, Business, Schools, Arts, Commentary, and Sports. Become familiar with your paper and have a general idea of which section your story fits.
- o Watch for reporters who care about your issue - don't ware out your welcome
- o Find a celebrity spokesperson
- o Give reporters as long a lead time - as possible!
- o Consider targeted or alternative media/placement
- o Prepare a list of people they could call in advance

IV. How Can Service Be Newsworthy?

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A. Local Angle

- o Piggyback your story with a local/national media story e.g. President Bush signs bill for faith-based organizations. etc. Look for large national events and localize it- Ohioanize!
- o Plan your stories according to the calendar. New Year's Eve (Service Group builds home to help ring in the new year) local volunteer group prepares tax returns
- o Feature Stories - touchy, feely
- o Explain what differences are going to be made as a result of your event
- o Involve children and seniors when possible (ex. being tutored/mentored)

How to make YOU and your STORY STANDOUT!!!

Develop "transformational" type stories that show lots of diversity. Focus on how service and volunteerism brings people of all backgrounds - together!

- o Have the facts at your disposal
- o Call when reporters have time to talk - ask them if your calling at a bad time
- o Offer names/numbers of other people who could speak in support of your project
- o In general, don't use acronyms or service jargon (NCCC, OCSC, SOC, AC)

V. Types of Media

- a. Television (remember to talk in "soundbites")
 1. networks, affiliates and independents
 2. cable/government access/PBS
- b. Radio - news shows, talk radio
- c. Internet - keep your web site up-to-date, it's a great on line advocacy - 24 hrs. a day!
- o provide "down-loadable" press kit
- o pitch story to "on-line" reporters
- o post PSA web banners
- o add reciprocal links for added publicity
- d. Print - select sources (to be interviewed) who are deep in the subject matter and have good stories to tell, spokesperson with the appropriate local affiliation, and set-up a good photo opportunity.
 1. national, regional dailies, weeklies, college
 2. news services
 3. magazines, trade publications, church bulletins

Note: Neighborhood, college weeklies and specialty publications:

- o will print the photo you supply, if it good quality/composition, are highly localized. Photographs can be black and white or color. Clarity, particularly of faces of faces, and contrast are important.
- o specialized angle, provide at least two sources with local connection
- o provide a story that is not "time bound"
- o pre-written articles (more than a press release) is always welcome
- ** Try American Journalism Review - www.ajr.org - for an up-to-date media listing!

VI. How to Get Coverage - TIPS

- a. *building relationships with reporters*
 - o maintain regular form of communication with various reporters, including the editor
 - o read their stories and see where their interests lie
 - o follow-up with occasional phone calls to give them a brief update on your program,

story ideas. Remember...that reporters are always looking for stories; they need you almost as much as you need them. Tell them what you are trying to

accomplish.

- o reporters like to know that they're exclusive-being the only reporter to get the story.
- o add to your data base (send your quarterly newsletter)
- o invite a reporter to lunch to pitch a story - they love to eat!
- o always, be responsive - return calls as soon as possible.
- o scan the NY Times headlines on line and drop a related e-mail to your favorite reporter

b. *press list-resources*

- o important to keep up-to-date with phone numbers, faxes, and e-mail changes
- o develop a media list and include the following: assistant editor, reporter, news director/editor, editorial program editor, community editor, public service director.

c. *writing press releases*

- o always double space - type
- o for multiple papers/areas, specify which paper is most important for your news to appear in - competition for space is fierce!
- o stress any local ties in the information you submit. For example: *Upper Arlington resident wins award.*
- o don't fax and run...be available to answer questions. If you're not going to be available, leave them a number and time when they may reach you (even if it's at home!)
- o be brief and to the point - but be complete. Read your release several times to make sure you've included all the who, what, where, when and why facts. Make sure names and telephone numbers are correct.
- o keep to one page - if at all possible!
- o above all else - SPELL CHECK the SPELL CHECK!
- o it is suggested to submit press release two to three weeks prior to event

d. *making the pitch, the best time to call*

- o timing is everything, but no particular time is better than another.
Don't be afraid to ask if your calling at a good time - if not, offer to call back.
- o make sure you or another spokesperson is reachable after pitch is made
- o understand deadline differences between print/electronic - do your homework

e. *press conferences and information press kits*

- o press conferences are held to announce significant news to the media, such as the launching of a new program, an anniversary event, or an innovation partnership. They frequently include VIPs and other speakers. Press Conferences require careful planning and attention to detail, and can be quite time-consuming.
- o for maximum coverage, plan event in the morning. This will allow reporters time to do follow-up work after the event ends. Keep the event to no more than 30 minutes.
- o select a convenient, well lit area (with plenty of electrical outlets)
- o conduct a question and answer session after event
- o plan a minute-by-minute logistics sheet that includes speaking order, arrival and departure times of special guests, and last minute items

Press Kits contain...

- o Press releases
- o Fact sheets
- o Program brochures/annual reports
- o Agenda (for an event or press conference)
- o Biographical sketches of speakers
- o Photographs of speakers
- o Newsletter
- o Any other important program information
- o Your business card

f. letters to the editor/op eds

- o Letters to the editor are usually written in response to an article or editorial published earlier in the newspaper
- o Call the newspaper and ask how long your letter should be (they're all different)
- o Op Eds - are an effective way of expressing your opinion in the newspaper. These are opinion pieces that appear opposite the editorial page.

g. media sponsorships

- o it never hurts to ask - and partnerships can save you a lot of headaches - including dollars.
- o good points/bad points...if a local network signs on to support your efforts/project, your 99% guaranteed media coverage. However, you can be fairly certain that no other local station will cover your event.
- o be sure to indicate what's in it for them...how can they benefit by supporting efforts
- o ALWAYS - send a Thank You and include their name/logo on all event printed materials - deliver on all promises
- o Follow-up - timely follow-up (calls/e-mail responses) are essential. Remember, they're doing you a favor (or at least that's how they'll look at it).