

Effectively Dealing With The Media

The Opportunities

Crisis, controversy and conflict still drive the media's agenda but success stories are making the headlines more often. The story though has to be of some prominence with a specific hook or angle that appeals to the broad public. It has to stand out from the rest. Journalists are not interested in product promotion and are inclined to find compelling stories.

Human-interest stories and current issues rate significantly higher than event stories and recaps as a form of publishable sports news and information. Games scores, standings and stats are for die-hard fans and go on the back pages. Human-interest stories sell and are front-page material. And remember a picture is worth a thousand words.

Media Strategies

The news or media release continues to be the mainstay of media relations and is still one of the most effective ways to convey information. The media release can serve as the story itself or create greater media interest for an enhanced story. As it is being written for a journalist, it should be written as a journalist in the form and style to which they are accustomed:

Five Elements

- Who, what, when, where and why.

Form

- Focus on one subject.
- Inverted pyramid that ranks the information in order of importance.
- Provides the reader/editor with all the facts, essential highlights and significance of the story in as little as one sentence.
- The lead outweighs the rest of the story and prompts the reader to continue reading.

Rules of Style

- Use letterhead.
- "For Immediate Release", the date and a headline should appear at the top.
- Limit the release to one page, two at most. Additional information can be attached in a background page.
- Nice, clean type on one side of the page, double or triple spaced.
- Use action words or sentences but it shouldn't be too wordy or contain obscure language or jargon.
- Use quotes whenever possible.
- Put - 30 - at the end of the release to indicate there is no further information.
- Always put a contact name and how they can be reached.

Resource: Contact Barry Moroz for a complete listing of media contacts throughout the province.

Media Conference

Only hold a media conference when it warrants – 1) when you can offer something in person that you cannot provide in a media release 2) if it will enhance your message and promote greater understanding and awareness and 3) if it is worth a return on your investment.

Websites: In this day and age reporters increasingly depend on websites for research as a primary resource of information. Your website should be media friendly or have a self-contained on-line media room complete with a search function and up to date information including a primary contact.

Media Relations

If a reporter calls, return the call immediately – or as soon as reasonably possible - even if you don't know what they want. If you wait a day or two to return a phone call, you might miss the opportunity.

Think beyond self-promotion. The media is not your public relations agency. Think in terms of how you can provide value for an editor or reporter in terms of a compelling story.

Make it easy for them. Whatever you can do to make the research on a story easier will be gratefully received.

Don't call just to see if they got your media release. If you sent it, they got it.

As not all stories are appropriate for every media outlet, tailor the story you are pitching to the media outlet you are contacting. Talk to the appropriate reporter.

Once you have established a relationship, stay in touch with reasonable frequency. When you do contact them have something valuable to offer: a new story idea or something truly newsworthy. Call at a convenient time – not during deadlines when they are at their busiest.

Accept rejection. If they are not interested, they are not interested. Move on to another idea or angle at another time.

No gimmicks. No gifts. It's not ethically acceptable and embarrassing and insulting to a reporter.

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