

How to Work With the Media

11 Tips for Successful Media Relations

Good press can do a lot for your organization. It can increase legitimacy, attract donations and volunteers, and spread your name

Here are some great tips to remember when you seek press and begin to establish relationships.

Be quick.

Reporters have a short attention span and they do not like to read very much. Be fast and specific. Tell them who you are, what you are doing, and how to contact you.

Be yourself.

The best way to talk to a reporter about your program is to tell them your story the same way you would go about telling your friends and family. Always think of a journalist as a friend or someone that you just met at a party or social function. Stay polite but casual.

Be prepared.

Try creating your own messaging. Write it down on a piece of paper: What is your program? Why were we created? Who is involved and how does it work? If you create that messaging matrix, it will help you tell your story better.

Keep in touch.

Public Relations is a frequency medium. Give the journalist as much “new” news that you can. Keep your communications positive, friendly, and “only when necessary” (i.e., “new” news) and it’s more likely that they’ll stay interested in you and your projects.

Make sure your event is visual.

TV producers love visual events that captivate an audience. Make sure things are high energy and colorful. In addition, a reporter loves nothing more than stories with kids. Be something they WANT to cover.

A picture is worth a thousand words.

If you can’t get a full news story, try getting a photo with caption. Call your local newspaper and ask for the photo desk. They might not run a big story, but a great color photograph of your event is great press.

Get on the calendar.

Many local radio stations and papers do daily or weekly community news listings of what is going on in the area. Find out how much advance notice they need prior to an event and e-mail them a media alert that provides the 5Ws (i.e., who, what, where, when, and why).

Reach out to old people.

You may read the local newspaper every day that a majority of young people do not. Be conscious of the fact that your demographic will be old people in media like this.

Get on the blogs.

Go to Google Blog Search or Technorati and search for blogs with like-minded social activism. Find people that might be interested in covering you.

Cooperate.

When you're working with a for-profit company, try to utilize their PR services as much as possible. If they do not want to participate or they are too busy, ask them if they know anybody at the local newspaper or if they've ever had any past coverage—maybe they can share some media contact information.

Don't give up.

It might be frustrating at the outset, but again, PR is a frequency medium. If you keep sending “new” news, whether through fax, phone, or e-mail, you will make something happen. Keep at it; it's not an easy thing to do, but good luck!

Adapted from Do Something

