

EFFECTIVE PUBLICITY based on Creating Competent Communicators, Brock Center for Agricultural Communication, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

DEVELOP PROPER CONTACTS

- (1) Determine what type of publicity you seek.
Do you want a full-blown story about the issue or the event? Do you want a small blurb? Do you want an item listed in a calendar of events? Do you want post publicity (a story, photo, footage of what took place)? OR , do you want all or a combination of those things?
- (2) Make a list of the appropriate types of media to get the type of publicity you seek (*i.e.*, newspaper, bulletin board, email, radio, television)
Remember, depending upon what type of publicity you seek, some type of media are more effective than others. Think about what types of media be best for a full-blown story, for a calendar-like time, etc.
ALSO, consider whether in addition to seeking free publicity you need to buy advertising.
- (3) Make a list of the outlets you want to use for each type of publicity and media.
For example, if one of the media types is newspaper, list which specific newspapers then list the type of publicity you seek from that newspaper (*i.e.*, a story, a small story announcing the event, a calendar item, a paid advertisement, coverage of the event)
When making the list, consider which outlets the people you want to reach actually read/listen to/watch and whether that outlet would publish/air the details you want publicized at the optimum time and with the frequency you desire.
- (4) Augment the media outlet list with:
 - who to contact at each outlet with their phone number, email address, fax number, etc. Web pages for most media outlets list contact information.
 - deadlines for submitting your press/news release so that it will be printed/posted/aired at the optimum time
- (5) Determine whether the type of publicity you seek merits making *in-person* contact.
Media outlets are bombarded with press/news releases, calendar items, etc. If all you seek is a calendar item or a small announcement brief, then you need only submit your news/press release.
But if you believe what you're planning is worth a story before the event, coverage during and/or a story afterwards, then you should talk in person with an editor, reporter, program director or public service director. Be sure you find out when the person you want to talk with is on deadline - that is the period of the day when their time is wholly occupied with producing the newspaper, radio show or TV newscast - so that you do NOT show up during that time. You might also find out by phone when the best time is to stop by.
If you cannot meet them in person, make sure you contact them via telephone, letter or email.
It might save you time and money to call and find out if an editor or producer is even interested in the story.
Make sure you bring the media outlet person the sort of information that will be needed to get started on a story. Be sure to furnish a brief description of your organization and reliable contact information, including the first and last name of the persons to contact.

TIPS ON WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

Simplicity takes top priority when writing a release. If a long, convoluted release arrives on an editor's or news director's desk, chances are they will throw it away.

Be sure your release includes

- **Who:** The sponsor or organization behind the event. Use the complete name of the organization, not a shortened one.

- **What:** Tell what makes this event newsworthy. Go beyond a simple explanation of the event and describe its most interesting aspects.
- **Where:** Give the addresses, city and maybe even directions to the affair.
- **When:** Omit the year, but list the time, date and weekday.
- **Why:** Explain the underlying cause for the event. A compelling reason will catch the attention of an editor or news director.
- **How:** If there is a unique process generating the event, mention it.

More news/press release hints:

- Place the name and contact number towards the top of a release. Make sure that person is available to answer these calls, or include the name and number of another available contact person who will be able to talk about the subject when the first person is unavailable. The contacts should be able to answer questions or clarify information if a media contact calls.
- Type your press releases. Don't write them out in longhand because they are difficult to read and invite errors.
- Don't type the release in all capital letters and don't capitalize words within the release for emphasis. These things will only confuse the editor.
- Submit the release in 8 1/2 by 11-inch letterhead, using double or triple spacing.
- Keep the report as brief as possible. Start with the most important information and follow with information in descending order of importance.
- Try to limit the release to one page. Only use a second page if it is absolutely necessary.
- Traditionally a two-page reprint is the maximum and is rarely printed in full.
- Leave open space at the top of the paper, and sufficient margins on the sides for the editor to write remarks or add additional information.
- When referring to times, write 9am or 10:30pm. Don't write 9:00, or 9 o'clock. Also, don't capitalize A.M. or P.M.
- For dates, write July 4, and not July 4th. It is not necessary to include the current year.
- Make sure your release(s) arrive(s) by the deadline.

TYPES OF PRESS/NEWS RELEASES

SUMMARY (calendar-item-like itemized information)

Use this approach when all you are seeking is a listing in a calendar or a small announcement brief. See attached example. You may want to include a letter, preferably on what serves as the letterhead for your group, urging the media outlet to cover your event, if you also seek coverage.

NARRATIVE

This approach mimics a news-style story. The advantage to this approach, sometimes, is that small newspapers often will print the release the way it was submitted (minus any editorializing remarks). See attached example.