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**Sarah Silver**

# **A Media Relations Handbook for Non-Governmental Organizations**

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produced in this English edition  
by the Media Diversity Institute (MDI),  
with the support of the European Community

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Although we do not identify the material by footnotes, two of the guidebooks furnished most of the material used. They are: *Strategic Media: Designing a Public Interest Campaign* (copyright: Communications Consortium Media Center 1991 ) and *Media Advocacy* (copyright: The Benton Foundation 1991).

For more information about the series, including purchase requests, please contact The Benton Foundation, 1710 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 857-7829.

The United States Information Agency's *A Media Guidebook for Women: Finding Your Public Voice* (1995), was also a useful resource. Contact the U.S. Embassy in your country for its availability.

We thank the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) for permission to reprint the organization's Code of Ethics as attachment 1.

# A Media Relation Handbook for Non-Governmental Organizations Contents

8

IJF & MDI

## Foreword

1.

### Introduction

2.

### Getting started

- a) Press list
- b) Address list
- c) Tracking the news
- d) Filing systems
- e) Graphic presentation
- f) Resources

3.

### Understanding the media

- a) How issues move through the media
- b) Understanding deadlines
- c) Be a good source
- d) Hard news versus soft news

4.

### Tools for communicating with the press

- a) Press calls
- b) Press releases
- c) Press conferences
- d) Media briefings
- e) Staged events

- \_\_\_\_\_ f) Radio talk shows
- \_\_\_\_\_ g) Letters to the editor
- \_\_\_\_\_ h) Winning editorial support
- \_\_\_\_\_ i) Opinion editorials
- \_\_\_\_\_ j) Interviews
- \_\_\_\_\_ k) Media production and distribution

5.

---

**Planing a strategic media campaign**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Organizational commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) Identify the campaign’s policy and media objectives
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) Audience
- \_\_\_\_\_ d) Media targets
- \_\_\_\_\_ e) Message development
- \_\_\_\_\_ f) Identifying spokespeople
- \_\_\_\_\_ g) Tools
- \_\_\_\_\_ h) Tactics: Developing a strategic plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ i) Timeline

6.

---

**A commentary on media relations**

7.

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**Appendices**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Getting started
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) The organization in general
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) Press calls
- \_\_\_\_\_ d) Press conferences
- \_\_\_\_\_ e) Press kits
- \_\_\_\_\_ f) Media briefings
- \_\_\_\_\_ g) On-air interviews
- \_\_\_\_\_ h) Print interviews
- \_\_\_\_\_ i) Code of professional standards

# **A Media Relations Handbook for Non-Governmental Organizations**

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IJF & MDI **Foreword**



# Foreword

**W**e are truly living in an information age, with newspapers, television, radio and the internet offering opportunities to learn about the issues of the day and to connect with fellow citizens, both in our own communities and around the world. Media's role in educating the population has never been more important in helping us to fully understand the many sectors that make up society, including government and non governmental organizations alike.

It is the media's responsibility to provide us with the facts that permit the public to make responsible decisions. But, equally important, it is the responsibility of governmental agencies and NGOs to keep the media properly informed. These are new responsibilities for both, and ones that do not necessarily come naturally.

To help with the process, The Independent Journalism Foundation produced this handbook on media relations for NGOs. IJF and others have used it extensively in training in Eastern and Central Europe and around the world and have found its practical approach applicable not only to NGOs but to others who need to communicate. MDI, which has been long committed to assisting NGO-media relations, particularly organizations which represent minorities, has found it useful for its programs and believes it will be useful for people in regions where MDI works.

IJF and MDI have collaborated to bring this new edition of "A Media Relations Handbook for Non-Governmental Organizations" to you. We hope that it will be a valuable and practical tool to help your NGO increase and improve your work with the media and, in turn, help the media to pass on word of your efforts to an every widening audience.

Nancy Ward  
Vice-President  
Independent Journalism Foundation

Milica Pesic  
Director  
Media Diversity Institute

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# 1. Introduction

# Introduction

## Why non-governmental organizations and non-profit institutions should know about media relations

**A**n informed, educated and active public is central to the democratic public policy decision making process. In the United States, as in every other country, citizens do not have the time to research every issue that concerns them. Instead, citizens rely on other resources — particularly the mass media — for information that enables them to develop opinions and make informed decisions about candidates for office, public policies, government actions and social trends.

The information transmitted through the mass media comes from many sources: academic experts, government officials, businessmen, financial observers, participants in a given event, and — most important to this course of study — volunteer non-profit civic groups, often called non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These public policy advocates, whether they specialize in environmental problems, government corruption, children's health problems, or drug abuse, have two things the mass media needs: accurate information and a point of view.

Armed with accurate information, non-governmental organizations can counter misinformation, educate the public, establish the political agenda, and generate public support for the issues. Your information and perspectives are useless, however, if you do not or can not communicate them to the public. In order to gain access to the most significant information pipeline — mass media — NGOs must understand the needs of the mass media gatekeepers, learn the skills and techniques needed to effectively present information to the media, and develop strategies to mobilize their media advocacy resources.

Strategic communications for non-profits can be roughly divided into three areas.

The first area is *media advocacy*. Media advocacy is the strategic use of mass media as a resource for advancing a social or public policy initiative. It uses a set of techniques drawn from public relations, advertising, investigative journalism, and grassroots lobbying. Through media advocacy, non-profits can frame public policy issues and actively enter the public debate.

The second area is *networking* — working with members of your own organization as well as with other organizations with similar goals. Networking can broaden the membership base of your organization and inform a larger number of people about what you are trying to do. It promotes the formation of coalitions and provides channels for shared work and planning. Phone and internet networks offer the non-profit world the means to collaborate in shaping messages, to share information resources and to connect advocates to the mass media.

The third area is *creating and distributing your own media*, such as newsletters or television programs. These techniques will help you bypass the mass media when they are unreceptive to your message or are uncooperative. Creative media production can complement access to mass media and make up for the limitations of news coverage. As your own media producer — of documentaries, advertising spots, newsletters, or TV and radio forums — you can tell your own story and explain your issues in media they control.

This training manual focuses primarily on media advocacy and media production and distribution. Some of what it covers will seem elementary. You will find, however, as you implement what you learn, these fundamental building blocks are essential to organizing and planning an effective media program.



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## 2. Getting started

## Getting started

**I**f you are setting up a communications department or office for your non-profit, you should, ideally, have on hand certain resources including a telephone with a direct line, a typewriter or computer, a fax machine, copy machine, a telephone card file, file cabinets, a television, a radio, a video recorder, and blank video and audio tapes.

Without this equipment you cannot function. If funds are limited, you should try to obtain the first six items immediately and as soon as funds become available, obtain the remaining items.

### 2. a) Press list creation and maintenance

Media advocates must know who they are talking to. The first order of business for any new press secretary or media relations manager is to develop press lists. Press lists are catalogues of the names of reporters, editors, and radio and television producers who may be interested in your organization and its issues.

The names on your list are culled from phone calls, media directories, personal relationships, your observation of newspaper by-lines and other resources. Media centers (such as the Center for Independent Journalism) in your country can be particularly useful in compiling these lists. You will want to have in the office any current media directories that may be useful resources to you.

Make sure your press lists contain the reporters name, name of the media outlet, office address, *direct* office phone, general office phone and fax numbers and if obtainable, home phone, fax numbers and e-mail address.

When creating a press list, you will spend a lot of time on the phone with media outlets you have decided matter to your to your media efforts. These phone calls are your opportunity to collect information about the “gatekeepers” in that media organization. The following questions can help you gather the information you need (always get the name, title, and direct telephone number for each person):

- ★ Who decides what news will be covered?
- ★ Who decides in that person’s absence?
- ★ Is there a reporter who specializes in your organization’s issues?
- ★ What time of day/week/month are decisions made about which stories to pursue?
- ★ How far in advance of an event does this outlet like to be notified?
- ★ What time are deadlines at this media outlet?

You will also want to develop a system for maintaining and updating your press lists. Press lists can be easily maintained on personal computer databases. It is well worth the extra money to have your software programmed so that various people in the

office can access and print out lists at the stroke of a computer key. Update your list at least twice a year.

Another important way to maintain press lists is to add reporters whose by-lines appear on stories on your issues. Learn to read the newspapers differently than you do now: press secretaries scan the newspapers for by-lines as well as content. If an article on your issue appears, note the name of the reporter and add his or her name to your press list.

(It can be helpful to keep notes on each reporter (or the reporters you work with most), which may include his or her special interests, published books, and so on — information that helps gauge the reporter's interest in and awareness of a variety of issues).

## 2. b) Address list: your card file

- \* **Daily TV news** Reporters who cover your subject  
News assignment editors  
Commentators/analysts
  
- \* **TV programs** Segment producers  
Correspondents  
Executive producer  
Guest booker
  
- \* **Daily radio news** Reporters who cover your subject  
Assignment editors  
Commentator/analysts
  
- \* **Radio programs** Host  
Producer
  
- \* **Newspapers** Managing editor  
National editor  
City editor  
Editorial page writers  
Reporters who cover your subject  
Columnists
  
- \* **Magazines** Managing editors  
Editors responsible for your issue areas

You want to devise categories for your lists so that they are manageable and easily accessible. You would not want reporters interested in ethnic minorities to be on the same list as reporters interested in environmental issues.



Also create one list of key reporters who cover your issue. That list of five to ten reporters at the most important news outlets should be easily accessible and regularly updated.

## **2. c) Tracking the news that matters to you**

Read, read, read, read, and watch, watch, watch. It is important to read a vast array of newspapers and magazines, to watch the major television outlets, and listen to popular radio news programs in order to keep track of the amount and tone of news coverage about the issues your organization is promoting. Your organization should subscribe to the major local and national daily newspapers and magazines.

As you read the newspapers, clip out the articles that mention your organization or issues; note on the clipping the name of the newspaper, the date of publication, and the page on which the article appeared. Reproduce the original for use in any future promotional materials. After making copies, put the original article in a file folder organized by issue or chronologically to keep it neat and safe.

To properly reproduce the article, cut out the article and the newspaper's name from the front page. Place the cut-out name of the paper at the top of a standard size of plain white paper. Beneath the paper's name, place the cut-out article. If the article does not fit on the page, you may need to cut it and arrange it until it does. Remember to keep it as close to the original format as possible, making sure that each paragraph follows the one that directly preceded it.

If the article needs to be continued on a second sheet of paper make sure you write the name of the paper, date of publication, and page on which the article appeared at the top of this page as well.

When you are sure that you like how the article looks on white paper, you are ready to paste it up. How the paste-up looks is very important, so take your time. First, wash your hands to clean off any newsprint that will leave fingerprints or smudges on the paper.

Using double-sided tape, or a very small amount of rubber cement, paste up the article as you have arranged it. The double-sided tape will not show on the copy. If you use too much glue, your copy will be unreadable. File the copies in the folder containing all your information about that issue or event.

When you know that someone from your organization is going to appear on television or radio, make sure you arrange to record the interview. Label the tape cartridges clearly and keep them in one place.

## **2. d) Filing systems**

It is essential that media advocates be organized. Not only must you keep track of journalists, their phone numbers, fax numbers, addresses, and interests, you must keep track of the work you are doing and planning.

Each time you begin a new project, put all related paperwork — memos, notes, draft media plans, related news articles, reading material, etc— into one file folder.

Label the folder clearly. You want your filing system to be clear, concise, and efficient. Your folders should be filed alphabetically. Your folder labels should be precise. Do not label the file for a new report on childhood leukaemia as “childhood leukaemia”; chances are that you have (or will have) other reports on the same topic. Label that folder by the title of the report, for example, “Leukaemia: the silent killer report”.

## 2. e) Graphic presentation

**Letterhead.** The return addresses on your envelope, your logo, and the masthead on press releases all send nonverbal signals to the media about your organization and your issues. Your materials should have a planned look, without being too slick or expensive looking.

Approach a graphic designer to help you devise an attractive and effective letterhead. If you have a limited budget, approach a graphic designer about working for you free, or ask the art department of a local college to help. Ask your designer to develop 3-5 versions before selecting a final version.

Your letterhead must include your logo, the organization’s full official name, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address and website where applicable, and postal address. If your organization has a short motto or slogan, you might want to consider incorporating that into the letterhead as well.

**Press release stationery.** For press releases develop separate stationery that contains the letterhead and clearly informs reporters that they are receiving a press release. At the top of the paper should be copy such as *Press Release, News from (name and group), News Release, or News.*

**Plaques/banners.** Consider developing a plaque with your organization’s name and logo, strong colours can be attached to the front of podiums during press conferences or television meetings. You may also want to create a name/logo banner that can be placed behind a speaker at a press conference so that it will appear in every picture.

**Business cards.** You need business cards with your name, title, address, direct office line, fax number, email address, website and home phone number.

**Organizational press kit/media guide.** You should have available at all times a standard set of materials that can be sent to reporters regardless of the story they are writing. This press kit includes important information about your organization: your organization’s mission statement, a list of spokespeople and their areas of expertise, positive press clips, editorials, and opinion pieces. Include copies of recent reports, surveys, or press releases issued by your organization. Make sure your name, title and direct telephone line are included.

This press kit need not be expensive, and can be easily created on a desktop publishing computer.

Appendix A lists items that will help you develop and build an effective media organization.

## **2. f) Know your resources**

Before you can understand the connection between your media advocacy program and other aspects of your organization or coalition, you must know what communication resources exist, how they are currently used, and who controls them. Indeed, an inventory of how communications are currently handled is the first step towards improving efficiency and effectiveness.

Appendix B, prepared by the Benton Foundation, was designed to help non-profit leaders inventory their resources. Communications covers a wide range of activities. It encompasses mundane things such as meetings and telephone calls as well as more traditional public education activities such as press releases, videos, and press conferences. It also includes the ability to network through the use of phone conferencing and electronic mail.

Use the survey as a tool to help design a public relations program that may improve your current capabilities and provide flexibility for future growth. Review your survey results to discover if you have adequate resources to accomplish your goals. If you do not have the right resources, you will need to reconsider your goals and set new, more manageable ones. This inventory can help determine the types of communications assistance and support needed to expand your communications activities. It may indicate a gap in resources that needs immediate attention or future examination.

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## **3. Understanding the media**

# Understanding the media

## 3. a) How issues move through the media

Issues evolve and move through media in a regular pattern, although there may be wide variations in the amount of time the process takes. New ideas, discoveries, small events, or even news of your activities that first start in a one-to-one conversation or a press conference, speech, or news release are noticed by the media and passed on to the general public. This process can take several months or several years.

Issues such as health care, family and medical leave, energy efficiency, global warming, new forms of birth control, family planning advances, and family preservation can come to the public's notice in many ways.

- ★ New ideas and policies are often reported first in small in-house publications, or they can be presented in speeches and academic papers delivered to limited audiences.
- ★ Professional journals, limited-circulation books, newsletters, magazines and articles can also be launching pads for new developments or ideas.
- ★ Specialised reporters, particularly business writers, often subscribe to and monitor journals and other publications outlined above. Health reporters read the journals of medicine or science magazines, and business reporters read the business papers for new ideas.
- ★ As an issue is covered by reporters, columnists and editorial writers start to discuss the issue on the editorial pages. These are usually "think" pieces. Often what happens on the front page of the morning paper is combined with events of the day to form the television nightly news.

## 3. b) Understanding deadlines

Many people are intimidated by the idea of calling or writing a reporter they do not know personally, assuming that reporters will not be interested in stories from unknown people or organizations. In truth, however, reporters rely on a wide variety of sources for news, and usually appreciate being tipped off to real news stories.

You may very well find yourself on the phone with an impatient reporter, especially if you contact him or her near or at the deadline time, when he or she is trying to finish his or her story for the next edition. Before you dial, ask yourself if this reporter is likely to be on such a deadline. If you forget to ask yourself that question, ask the reporter as soon as he or she answers the phone.

- ★ The best way to start any phone conversation with a reporter is to say "Hello, this is (give your name) from Organization X. Do you have a couple of minutes to talk or you are on deadline?" If they say they have a moment, than make your best pitch. If, however, they say they busy or on the deadline, ask them when to call back and get off the phone politely and quickly.

Generally, it is the best to call reporters before noon or 1:00. Avoid, if at all possible, contacting reporters at 5:00 or 6:00 in the evening unless you are returning their urgent call or you have the answer to a question they asked you pertaining to that day's story.

### 3. c) Be a good source

There can be no success with the media without access. One sure way to access the media — and to control how your issue is portrayed — is to buy advertising. However, most NGOs do not have access to the massive amounts of money needed for paid advertising; they must rely on what is generally known as “free media” to get their issues into the public eye. While advocates relinquish control over how the issue is framed and reported, when the news media covers their issues they gain the added credibility of objective reporting to convey their message.

Third party reporting of issues is incalculably more credible and effective than paid advertising, which is viewed as advocacy by media consumers. You cannot equate objective reporting with paid advertising on radio, television, and in newspapers. The public knows the difference.

So how do you make the news? If you were to rush into the newsroom today waving the copy of an old report on the dangers of drinking too much, demanding coverage of the dangers of alcohol abuse, you would be laughed out of the newsroom. While it is true that alcohol abuse is dangerous, that broad message and the old report are no longer newsworthy.

Access to the media is limited to those stories that the editors deem significant, interesting, and new. Therefore the media advocate must continually search for the new ways to make his or her story seem new and interesting.

When you have a story that you think will interest a journalist, be prepared to tell that reporter three things: 1) what the story is; 2) why the story is significant; and 3) how it can be independently verified. (In other words, do not make the press rely exclusively on your word.) Moreover, be sure to respect journalists' professionalism. Just because they appear friendly or sympathetic, do not assume they are your allies. Their obligation is to objectivity and fairness.

While it is a good idea to present your case to the press forcefully, be sure that you respect the bounds of scientific authority. Some journalists complain that public policy advocates occasionally exaggerate or refuse to acknowledge legitimate concerns raised by others. It is far more valuable to be known as a trustworthy source than an aggressive advocate able to see only your own point of view. If you or your organization is the wrong resource for a journalist's line of questions, direct him or her to a more appropriate source. You will have saved the reporter invaluable time and he will not forget your help or your honesty.

In general, reporters look for stories that meet the following qualities — the more, the better:

- ★ *Timely information*: make sure your information is of current interest to the public.
- ★ *Local interest*: Be sure that the story you are telling matters to the newspaper, radio or television station's audience. Localise the story you are telling to increase its meaning and significance to the audience.

- ★ *Human interest*: Seek out the inherent emotional element in your story or the universal truth your story can tell to move your audience.
- ★ *Conflict*: Reporters are eager to cover stories where there is inherent conflict; where there are two different forces pitted against one another.
- ★ *Celebrity*: For better or worse, the public has a certain fascination in people and things that are famous. Never underestimate the compelling power of celebrities.
- ★ *Uniqueness*: Emphasize any quality in your story that marks it as unusual or out of the ordinary.
- ★ *Credibility*: Reporters are especially concerned about the credibility of the sources they rely on for story ideas. Make sure that your information is absolutely accurate and that independent sources will corroborate any questionable details.

If you understand that the media are looking for stories that fit exactly these qualities, it will be easier for you to package your messages so the press can serve its constituency and you will advance your media advocacy goals.

### 3. d) Hard news versus soft news

News stories can be divided into two types: hard news stories and soft news stories.

**Hard news** stories are what we generally think of as traditional news stories. Hard news stories can be factual reports, controversial exposes or the result of investigative reporting.

*In California recently, an anti-smoking group stimulated hard-news stories on the illegal sale of cigarettes to young people by conducting a test in which young teenagers went from store to store purchasing cigarettes despite the fact that such sales to children under 18 are illegal in the United States.*

Other examples of hard news stories:

Parliament is about to vote on a new law to ban a chemical that pollutes local rivers;

*Your organization releases a new report on the health impacts of that chemical.*

**Soft news** — lifestyle, feature, and human interest stories — may have less direct impact on public policy debates than hard news stories but can nonetheless affect public opinion on advocacy issues. A soft news story is a more subtle but often equally effective channel for communicating your advocacy message.

*A feature profile of a social worker at a local orphanage, for example, can draw indirect attention to the lack of government funding for such programs;*

*A human interest story on emergency room doctors, who are seeing more and more drunk driving accident victims, offers opportunities to send a message about the dangers of such activity.*

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## **4. Tools for communicating with the press**



# Tools for communicating with the press

Good press secretaries or media advocates must be familiar and comfortable with the vehicles — press releases, press calls, press conferences, opinion-editorials, etc. — used to communicate their message to the media. These tools ultimately will be the construction material for your media strategy.

Media advocates have a host of free or inexpensive tools at their disposal:

- ★ Press releases
- ★ Press conferences
- ★ Press calls/story suggestions
- ★ Media briefing
- ★ Media events (luncheons, a local fair you sponsor)
- ★ Radio, television, newspaper and magazine interviews
- ★ Radio talk shows
- ★ Appearances on radio and television talk shows
- ★ Development of your organization's own radio or television program
- ★ Meeting with editors
- ★ Placing opinion pieces in the local newspaper
- ★ Letters to the editor of the local newspaper
- ★ Press kits
- ★ Public service announcements
- ★ In-house publications, newsletters
- ★ Electronic communications
- ★ Banners
- ★ Websites

Advertising campaigns can be extremely expensive and are usually beyond the financial means of most non-governmental organizations. (In some countries, private citizens and corporations will underwrite advertising for not-for-profit organizations). This manual will not address the topic of advertisements.

## 4. a) Press calls

Individual calls by the non-governmental organization's press secretary or policy expert to a reporter are excellent ways of promoting a story to a reporter, responding quickly to breaking news, or generating a radio, television, or newspaper interview on your topic.

The telephone is the most direct way to reach reporters. Initiating and responding to press calls is one of a press secretary's most critical tasks, and there are several pre-

cautions to take to ensure that press calls enhance rather than jeopardize your relations with reporters.

Keep in mind:

- ★ Mid or late afternoon calls are less likely to be returned because of deadline pressure. Morning calls or even early evening calls, on the other hand, allow more leisurely conversations because these are quieter times for reporters.

- ★ Be organized before you initiate or take a press call. Have appropriate background materials, the names of spokespersons and press contacts and where they can be reached in front of you before you get on the phone.

- ★ Open the call with “Are you on a deadline?” If yes, ask for a good time to call back. Otherwise, assume that you have 60 to 90 seconds to “pitch” — explain and sell — your press event to the reporter, and get to the who, what, when and where quickly. If the reporter indicates that he is interested and has more time to talk, begin to fill in the gaps; and

- ★ Ask for the reporters fax number or e-mail address. Be prepared to send your release statement or information by fax or e-mail as a backup or reminder.

**Distributing a good story by phone.** In the media and public relations world, selling a story refers to the process of communicating a good story idea or angle to a reporter. You can initiate the process over the phone but always, always, always be prepared to send written materials to a reporter who is interested in your story suggestion.

Many people are intimidated by the idea of calling or writing a reporter without an introduction, since they believe that reporters will be uninterested in stories from unknown groups or people. In truth, however, reporters rely on a wide variety of sources for news, and reporters are usually grateful to those who tip them off to real stories.

When you have a story you think will interest reporters, be prepared to tell the journalist three things: 1) what the story is; 2) why the story is significant; and 3) how it can be independently verified. If a reporter is interested in your story idea, immediately send over, by fax or e-mail or hand-delivery, the written materials supporting your story idea. Make sure the package includes the names of key spokespeople and their telephone numbers.

**Responding to press calls.** When responding to press calls, train yourself and your staff to find out, in addition to the name of the reporter, the name of the news organization, their deadline, the purpose of the call, and their phone number. This cannot always be done, but by emphasizing the importance of press calls and of eliciting proper background information, you can avert a great deal of miscommunication and respond quickly and accurately to press calls (Appendix C).

When you receive a press call or are visited by a journalist try, in subtle ways, to steer the story being covered towards your organization’s work and ideas.

- ★ Be prepared. Have your materials, talking points, spokespeople’s names and phone numbers in front of you before you make or return a press call.

- ★ Help answer the question the journalist is pursuing, even if you’re not comfortable with the questions. After you have answered them, suggest another approach the journalist could consider covering (an approach closer to your ideal story). Even if you fail

to redirect it, help with the story. If you are a good source of information and assistance, the reporter will come back and you will get another chance.

- ★ Redirect the conversation to the three or four key points you want to stress.
- ★ Before picking up the phone, have in mind the one phrase you would like to see in print, either as a quote or in the journalist's own words.
- ★ Use the language you have already determined will help frame the story in the way you want.
- ★ Be prepared to suggest other sources to help the journalist cover the story: effective spokespeople who will help explain the issue well.
- ★ Rather than stretch your expertise, help the reporter find the right experts.
- ★ State your point of view as clearly and persuasively as you can. Be prepared.
- ★ Be able to acknowledge your opponent's strong points. If you provide the journalist with nothing more than rigid slogans, you will not gain her or his confidence as a good resource for future stories.

#### 4. b) Press releases: writing and distribution

Writing a good press release takes time, thought and planning. Except when you need to react quickly to breaking news, give yourself at least a day to organize your thoughts and research, write and rewrite your draft release, show it to your colleagues, then rewrite and revise it.

Remember, the press release is an accepted form of communication between the institution and the reporter. It is an opportunity to transmit facts and point-of-view. A straight recitation of facts and statistics does not tell a story. A good press release uses facts, statistics, and quotes to support a story to present and validate a point of view.

Most important, to be a source of news, the press release should contain information that is new to the reporter, his or her editor and audiences — and is not merely special pleading for your cause.

**What to include in a press release.** Your press release must answer the following questions: Who, What, Where, Why and When. In the United States, journalists and media advocates use the shorthand "Five W's" to remind themselves of the questions.

- ★ Who: The subject of the story. The subject — your organization, a coalition, a person, an event or activity — must be identified and described.
- ★ What: The "news" that the media must know about.
- ★ Where: If it is a press conference or event, where is it going to take place? Be specific about the location — you may want to include a map with directions.
- ★ When: When will it take place? The date, day of the week, and specific time must be clear.
- ★ Why: Why this story or event is significant. The reason for your press release should be compelling.

*The headline:* A press release headline should be short, catchy and compelling — it must be informative. The headline is your first, and sometimes only, opportunity to catch the attention of an overworked and unfocused reporter.

*The first paragraph:* The first (or lead) paragraph contains the most important facts you have to report and gives the facts significance. This paragraph is your chance to guide a reporter to the news story as you would like to see it reported. For example,

*An environmental organization releases a report on pollution problems with a city's drinking water. An ineffective first paragraph would read:*

Organization X today released a new report that focused on City Y's drinking water. The organization released its report at a press conference at City Hall. The speakers were the organization's executive director and the report's author. This is the first report of its kind for City Y.

*A somewhat more effective first paragraph would read:*

Organization X today released a report on pollution problems facing the drinking water supply for City Y. This report, the first of its kind, focuses on the quality of drinking water for the 200,000 residents of this city.

*A much more significant first paragraph would read:*

Drinking water supplies in the City Y are contaminated by untreated sewage and chemical waste from nearby manufacturing plants, exposing the areas 200,000 residents to extreme health risk, reports Organisation X in a new report released today. According to the report's authors, the city council must take immediate steps to implement drinking water decontamination programs and pollution control efforts to protect the health of city residents.

*The body of the press release:* The remainder of the press release presents additional information and quotes that support the story line outlined in the lead paragraph. The press release does not have to include every fact or statistic related to the issue at hand. Report the most important and salient facts in the release. When deciding which facts are most important, ask yourself the following questions:

- ★ Is this new information?
- ★ Does this information support and validate the policy position we advocate or the story we are telling?
- ★ Is this information interesting, and can it be presented in an interesting manner?

Develop quotes — by your organizational or issue spokesperson and/or by respected outside experts — that give meaning and significance to your facts and statistics. Returning to the press release on the drinking water contamination report: assume that your most important statistic is that 75% of drinking water samples were contaminated with a harmful bacteria known to cause dysentery.

Present that statistic — which every good reporter will include in his or her news story — along with a quote from a doctor to highlight the human health impact. For example, "it is unimaginable in this day and age that our families must face the

medieval sometimes fatal threat of dysentery, said doctor X, chief of paediatrics at (your local) Hospital. "With today's know-how, we could eradicate this disease. What is the city counsel waiting for?"

This quote, by respected medical expert, provides additional expert credibility to your statistic and to your proposed solution while achieving your main objective: to make a dry statistic meaningful to the average person.

Be careful to keep the press release focused on the chosen news track. If, for example you are focusing on the health risks of drinking water contamination, do not introduce concerns about impact of pollution on the environment.

*Format:* A press release must contain the following elements:

★ The release date. This is the day your organisation makes the information in the press release available to the general public. If you are distributing the release in advance of the actual release date, be sure that the release date reads: Embargoed Until Month, Day, Year. (example: Embargoed Until October 17, 2002)

★ A contact name with his or her direct phone number. This is the person reporters will contact if they are interested in more information on the release. Generally, the press secretary is listed as the contact.

★ Headline. See above

★ Organization identification. This is accomplished in two ways. First the press release should be printed on the organization's press release letterhead. Second at the end of the release, add a standard paragraph that describes the organization and its mission. For example: "The Drinking Water Council is a non-profit organization supported by membership donations and private gifts. The DWC works to establish and maintain abundant, clean and safe drinking water supplies throughout Slovak Republic."

**Distribution:** An effective press release is not only well written but delivered in a timely fashion to the appropriate news reporter. Fast and effective distribution of a press release depends on planning, technology, and follow up.

*Planning:* The planning side is to determine which news outlets — and which reporters at those outlets — are the right people to get the release. (See "Press Lists" on page 15). Develop this list once you have decided on the news story you are trying to generate.

*If the drinking water story is both a health story and a local government story, your press release distribution list should include the names of health and local government reporters, city desk editors, and the editorial writers who cover health and local government. (It is useful to inform all members of a particular news organisation that they are receiving the releases.)*

*If you decided to focus your report on environmental concerns associated with contaminated drinking water, your press list would include environment instead of health reporters.*

*Technology:* Use the speediest technology available to you to transmit the press release from your office to the reporter's desk. In some cities and countries the technology is lightning fast — e-mail or fax machine. In other locations, the technology is slower—hand delivery by car or bicycle.

Whatever delivery system you use, be sure you have the right tools and machines (a fax machine, internet access, a car, a delivery person) and the right information (the right fax number, addresses, etc.).

*Follow-up:* After the press release has been delivered, place a very short phone call to each reporter to confirm receipt of the release. This press call is a second opportunity to sell your story. Develop a one-sentence news message that is truthful and intriguing.

*Without being aggressive, tell reporters that you have delivered a release on your organization's new report and you think they will find it interesting because it tells the residents of a city that their drinking water is undrinkable.*

#### 4. c) Press conferences

Press conferences should be organized for two reasons and two reasons only: 1) the information you want to communicate is so complex that a dialogue is required to clarify it; and 2) you intentionally want to dramatize your news announcement (Appendix D).

For the amount of time and energy it takes to hold a press conference, you can make dozens of placement calls or organize several one-on-one meetings and briefing sessions. Too often, a group will rush to organize a press conference and find there are more representatives from their side in the room than reporters.

A press conference is appropriate when you have a real news item — a new report, for example — or must respond quickly to a fast breaking news story and are unable to reach all the media one-to-one. Call a news conference if you are releasing a major report, if a national news maker or celebrity involved with your issue comes to town, or if you are truly making a major announcement.

Always ask am I wasting a reporter's time? Could I just as easily do this by issuing a press release? If this is real possibility, than skip the press conference.

**Planning a press conference:** Depending on the complexity of your press event and the advance time you have to plan it, written notification of the press can take several forms. A press advisory listing the "who, what, where and when" of the upcoming event should be mailed, e-mailed or faxed to your key press lists about five to seven working days prior to the event. A complete press release, highlighting the "news" released at the press conference, should be prepared and released the day of the press conference.

*Contacting the media:* Two to three days prior to the press conference, you should plan to call all potential news outlets that might cover your event, explaining that you are following up on earlier written materials. You should offer to fax or e-mail the advance press advisory either as further back-up to the call or, if you cannot get through to the press outlet or reporter, as a final precaution.

National press agencies are an additional source for getting the word to the media about your news conference. Most wire services send out a list of the day's activities which the agencies send to their clients. Record the deadlines for the wire service announcement schedules. Mail, phone, e-mail, or fax the information to the local day-book at least 48 hours before your event.

*Format:* It is important to stage the press conference in a convenient location or site that relates to the topic of the press conference itself. For example, a press conference about housing shortages might be staged near a tumbledown housing project for visual effect.

If you are in the capital, the main government buildings may have a press room you can use. If there is a press club in your city, it may have rooms available for news conferences. A hotel room or a large conference room might also work. If you are holding the press conference inside, make sure there is enough space, sufficient electric outlets for cameras, a standing podium, and enough chairs for seating. Place the podium in front of a solid color, preferably blue curtains, and not in front of distracting paintings, murals, or mirrors. If you have an organizational banner, hang it behind the podium, where it will be included in every picture taken of the event.

Make arrangements for a press registration table outside the room where you hold the press conference, and have sign-in sheets on the table. The registration table should be ready to operate at least 30-45 minutes prior to the scheduled press conference.

*Visuals:* Try to have visuals available during the press conference. If you have a logo, start with a blow-up of it attached to the podium. Make sure you place it directly under the microphone. If you have charts or other visuals in the report, they can be enlarged at a local copy shop. Place these charts on a stand next to the speaker's podium. If you have a video clip or an ad campaign, make copies to distribute to the broadcast media. Remember, an assignment editor is more likely to make the decision to cover your event if there is a visual story to tell.

*Timing:* Generally, press conferences should be held between 10:00 and 11:00 am or 1:30 and 3:00 pm. If you schedule a press conference earlier than 9:00 a.m. or later than 3:00 p.m., you risk losing media outlets because of deadlines and start-up times. Try to limit the press conference to 30-45 minutes, one hour at most, or the reporters will start to leave.

*Speakers:* Limit the number of speakers to allow for follow-up questions from the press. As a rule, try to limit the number of speakers to two or three people and attempt to designate one or two spokespeople to take follow-up questions. If you have a large coalition, invite representatives to stand behind the podium, to bring and distribute written statements (and include them in the press kit), and to respond to appropriate questions.

Likewise, invite policy experts to answer specific questions during the question-and-answer period or to write a statement to be included in the press kit.

Opening statements should be crisp and short: the combined opening remarks should take no more than 15 minutes. A moderator should introduce the speakers and be prepared to coordinate the question period. This person could also deliver an opening statement.

Think carefully about the order in which your press conference speakers will appear. Have a complete text of their statements available to the press, but ask them to summarize the most important points rather than read the statement word for word.

**Press kits:** These are invaluable tools for establishing and multiplying the press conference's news and message. Press kits will be used by journalists covering the conference and those who cannot attend. The kits should include

- ★ Statements by press conference speakers on your letterhead with contact details
- ★ Press release
- ★ Description of the policy questions being addressed
- ★ Additional press contacts on the issues
- ★ Endorsements from experts and other organizations
- ★ Background piece on the organization sponsoring the press conference.

You may want to include other materials such as key charts, updates on legislative initiatives, supportive opinion pieces, or editorials, etc. (Appendix E).

**Follow up:** Have a sign-in sheet for reporters who attend your press conference. Check the list immediately to identify key reporters and media outlets who did not attend. If possible, hand deliver the press kit to them and follow up an hour or so later with a call to specific reporters or editors. Often, this type of follow-up can increase coverage of the news event or stimulate an additional story.

**Evaluation:** It is important to review what worked at each press conference and what did not work. Schedule an evaluation with key staff as soon as possible to discuss the organization of the event, the way in which press conference participants reacted to press questions, and the coverage or lack of it. These evaluation sessions are opportunities to look at ways in which contacts with the press can be made more effectively for the next press conference.

#### 4. d) Media briefings

Media briefing sessions can be the most effective method of reaching reporters with story ideas. Consider, as a part of your plan, holding regular press briefings at least once month. Appendix F includes the steps needed to conduct a successful briefing.

Media briefing sessions are a low-cost, low-tech way of introducing reporters to a new issue or new information on an old issue, to introduce reporters to an outside expert whose research or opinions support your organization's work, or to update reporters on activities affecting your issue. It is also an excellent way for your policy staff to meet reporters and get experience with the interview process. However, like any press event, media briefings require preparation by the spokespeople. An example:



*One national environmental organization decided to hold a series of press briefings focussed on the three most controversial environmental legislative initiatives the U.S. Congress was expected to confront. Rather than invite 8 to 10 reporters from competing newspapers to one briefing, the organization decided to hold individual briefings for each of the environmental reporters for the top five national newspapers. At each briefing, staff experts on the three legislative initiatives talked with the reporter about the issues. The result: each reporter left with good material, story ideas, personal introductions to the organization's top spokespeople, and a good idea of the organization's perspective on upcoming Congressional action on environmental measures.*

Several days ahead, reserve a conference room or large office that holds 8 to 10 people. Expect that several reporters will drop out at the last minute, depending on the demands of their schedules. Coordinate your written materials, talking points and main themes. Personally invite reporters by phone and follow up with written confirmation. Call the day before to again confirm attendance. When coordinating your spokespeople and experts, confirm their attendance and ask that they arrive at least 30 minutes beforehand to review the agenda.

During the briefing, facilitate the discussion so that your session becomes a conversation between your group and the reporters rather than an official presentation followed by questions. Also make sure that no single reporter or spokesperson dominates the discussion or goes of on a tangent.

#### **4. e) Creating news by staging events**

Many groups generate news by creating newsworthy events — most often called “media events”. The goal is to encourage coverage by the media in order to spread your media advocacy message. The perfect media event is short, simple, scheduled not too close to a deadline, and “visual”. Of course you must be careful not to appear as if you are just trying to get attention and publicity. The more you look like you are trying to get publicity for publicity's sake, the more reluctant most journalists will be to give it to you and the less credible your message will be.

Instead, you must make your media events constructive and progressive to provide media exposure for your aims and show how you are reaching them. Nonetheless, it often takes much creativity to entice journalists to cover what, to many, seems like an old uninteresting story. Here are some guidelines to help you ensure that your media events are a success:

- ★ Make sure your press invitations include the people who are most likely to cover your event in the news. Follow up by phone, if possible.
- ★ Make sure you give enough notification time
- ★ Try to organize an event that will foster good visual images for television or good pictures for print media
- ★ Any dramatic action you can include will increase your chances for coverage
- ★ The simpler and easier it will be to report your event, the better
- ★ Have a person ready and available to give interviews to reporters, to socialize with them, and to suggest special angles that could promote your message

★ Try to visualize how the press will perceive your event. Make up newspaper headlines that you feel would be accurate descriptions. Try to look at the event through the reporter's eyes. If you find that the event might not generate the desired result, reorganize the event.

#### 4. f) Radio talk shows

Radio talk shows can be one of the most flexible media resources for NGOs. They are relatively easy to access and offer a lot of time to present your views and communicate with a large audience.

To offer your story or spokesperson to a radio show:

- ★ Prepare written materials (like a press kit) that offers an “angle” on a story or issue. Make sure the printed material is short, with a capsule summary at the outset.
- ★ Suggest stories that are timely as well as important, and appropriate: if it is a local radio station, make sure the story you want to talk about has local angle.
- ★ When you call the radio producer, be prepared to make a very brief explanation of what you want to talk about or just indicate that you are sending materials on a specific subject.
- ★ Handle rejection of your story idea gracefully. You want to be able to contact the producer again with other story ideas. Remember, “no” once does not mean “no” always.
- ★ Offer guests who are knowledgeable, opinionated, have a conversational style, can turn their material into brief bits of information, and are fairly comfortable with the interview process.

#### 4. g) Letters to the editor

Intelligent, well-composed letters are welcomed by editorial staff, even if the letter writer disagrees with the opinions of the information previously published in the paper. A letter to the editor can accomplish several goals:

- ★ Raise an issue or fact not mentioned in the article
- ★ Correct a mistake or misinterpretation included in the article; and
- ★ Propose a point of view not included in the article

Letters usually respond to an article published in the newspaper or magazine. Make sure your letter is grammatically correct and raises valid issues. Do not use the letter to personally attack the reporter or editor of the paper: an important rule of thumb is “Never pick a fight with a person who buys ink by the barrel.”

If you send in a letter to the editor, include your name, address, and a phone number. A newspaper staff person should confirm that you indeed composed the letter. Never send an anonymous letter; reputable publications do not publish letters without signatures.

#### 4. h) Winning editorial support

Newspapers take editorial positions on important local and national policy issues, although many of the smaller papers restrict editorials to local issues or the impact of a national issue on their community. An important part of your organization's efforts to win support for your issue will be soliciting editorial support from the local media.

Organizations must take the initiative to develop good working relationships with those responsible for developing the policy positions in the various media, including editors, publishers, managing editors, editorial page writers, and reporters.

**Whom to contact:** The positions on issues that a small newspaper may take usually are decided by the publisher or managing editor. Editorial positions in larger newspapers generally are decided by a larger group.

**How to present material:** There are two ways of presenting your issues and points of view to the editorial staff of newspapers;

- ★ Mail material to key people. If you have a press kit, you can mail that with a cover letter asking for the paper's editorial support or asking for a meeting.
- ★ Meet with the people who set the paper's policy on various issues.

**Coordinating a meeting:** You should arrange for a meeting whenever an issue important to your organization is being debated. It is important to know whether the paper has already taken a position on your issue or has published stories or columns on this subject. (Once again, the research you have done at the beginning of the media planning process can help you here.)

*Call in advance:* When you are seeking a meeting, call the paper, describe your organization, and indicate that you want to arrange a meeting to discuss why it is important for the newspaper to take an editorial position on your issue. If the paper is large, call at least 10 days in advance to arrange the meeting. You might suggest a meeting with the publisher or editor, or an informal get-together over coffee, breakfast, or lunch.

*Who from the organization should participate:* If you are able to arrange a meeting, your organization's best expert on the issue and the executive director or other senior official should participate.

*At the meeting:* Present the participants with a statement of your organization's position on the issue, one or more fact sheets supporting your position, and the names of one or more spokespeople or experts who can be contacted for further information. Be prepared.

*Stress the local perspective:* You should be prepared to stress from the local perspective why a particular new policy, program, or law needs to be passed or struck down, and why the newspaper should take position on it. You may be asked questions about when the legislation is likely to be voted on, why it is or is not needed, why your organization supports or opposes the legislation.

*After the meeting:* If the paper runs a favorable article or editorial on pending legislation, immediately make copies and send it to the local or national legislators, mayors, city council members, regional officials and other experts and opinion leaders whose support you want to win.

If the paper decides not to take a position or to oppose your position, ask the newspaper to print your letter or an article outlining your position written by someone in your organization.

#### 4. i) Opinion— editorials

Readers of newspaper editorial pages are decision makers and opinion leaders. Newspapers in some countries welcome well-argued, well written essays on public issues that are submitted by NGOs and others. NGOs must learn how to write and place opinion-editorials (op-eds) in order to reach this influential audience. These articles are an extremely powerful and remarkably cost-effective means of getting your group's message out to an influential audience.

Opinion — editorials can accomplish many things:

- ★ Educate and influence policy makers as well as newspaper readers.
- ★ Offer an unparalleled opportunity to analyse and suggest innovative solutions to social problems.
- ★ Demonstrate growing public awareness and support for a given policy initiative.
- ★ Educate reporters, editors, editorial writers and columnists about an issue and your organization.

**Developing an op-ed strategy:** Op-eds can greatly increase an organization's visibility and effectiveness and should be a part of any non-profit group's media strategy.

Development of an op-ed strategy requires the same seven elements as the overall media strategy: set your goal, define the audience, identify appropriate media outlets; establish the timing of the campaign, identify your message, determine the scope of the campaign, and select the best author (spokesperson). (See section beginning on page 46)

**Preparing and distributing op-eds:** Keep in mind that writing an op-ed may be easier than you think. Frequently, advocacy organisations have a wealth of information that editors and reporters would be interested in. Position papers, newsletter articles or even speeches outlining your organization's position on a particular issue might be the basis for a strong article.

Keep your audience in mind when you draft your piece. The op-ed should be written to attract and keep interest of the newspaper reader. Remember that while interested in politics and public affairs, the average newspaper reader is probably not knowledgeable about the issue. You might begin by visualising the members of the audience. If you had the chance to speak with them one-to one, how would you present your argument?

Because your article should not exceed 750 words, it should be focused. Concentrate on just one issue. Working from an outline will help you stay on track.

Whenever possible, a column should begin with a one-, or two-sentence vignette illustrating how the issue affects an individual or group of individuals. This humanizes your topic and draws the reader into the piece. To further engage the reader, put the issue in the broadest possible context at the first opportunity.

Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. Avoid technical phrases or jargon such as medical or legal terms which may only confuse the reader.

Op-eds should provoke discussion. They can, and frequently do, have a particular point of view. However, such pieces should inform the reader and provide constructive solutions for the problems or issues they address. In making your case, avoid rhetoric and back up assertions with facts.

Where possible, include in your article facts about the money or costs involved. This enables you to strengthen your argument by reaching some people where it counts the most— in their wallet.

A good op-ed opportunity requires about 10 to 20 hours to write. In most cases, however, non-profits have already done much of this work in preparing newsletter articles, policy papers, speeches or testimony. Whether your text is old or new, count on the additional 10 or so hours to edit the material. Distribution and follow-up time vary with the number of outlets targeted and how much follow-up is desired.

**Op-ed format:** Op-ed length varies from 500 to 800 words, depending on the newspaper, but the average length is about 750 words, or three double spaced, typewritten pages. Authors should try to keep within this length, as most editors find it difficult to publish longer columns.

The article should include a suggested headline, by-line, and one-sentence identification of the author, describing his or her expertise. Also helpful for the editor is a short biographical paragraph about the author, including experience relevant to the topic of the column. For instance, if the author is writing a book about a subject, has won awards for his work, holds a government position, or has a title with a pertinent organization, it may influence the editor.

**Distributing the op-ed:** Be forewarned that the internal communications of media are among the worst imaginable. It is crucial that your materials reach the appropriate decision-maker at the newspaper or radio or television station. Send the piece to the editorial page editor or, if there is not one, to the publisher, managing editor and the reporter covering your subject. After a reasonable amount of time (about two weeks unless the issue is more urgent), feel free to call the newspaper to ask whether your article will be used.

**Additional uses for op-eds:** Whether or not you are successful in placing your article, there are a number of other forums for the story you have created, in both print and broadcast media.

*Editorials* represent the point of view of a newspaper or television or radio station, rather than that of an individual or organization. Editorials carry a lot of weight in

shaping public perceptions. Many non-profit groups are surprised to find that editorial writers, even those at large newspapers, often do not have adequate sources of information about many issues and are usually happy to have input from informed individuals or groups. Your op-ed, in the hands of an interested editor, could serve as the basis for the editors own column or a newspapers editorial.

*Letters to the editor*, which should be short and to the point (usually 250-500 words), can be a useful way of reinforcing your message in the media or getting exposure in a paper that will not print your article. If the paper does not run your article, shorten the piece, maintaining the same salient points, resubmit it as a letter. Sign your name and include both work and home phone numbers.

*Press releases*: summarizing an article may be sent to reporters and city desks at newspapers, assignment desks at television stations, and news managers at radio stations. Depending on the author and the material in the op-ed, there may be legitimate news value in the release. For example, the information may prove valuable if the author is a prominent personality or if the article includes new information. Even without hard news value, the release may provide an idea for a future series or future story.

*Public service announcements*: Radio editors, like their counterparts at newspapers, are hungry for informed commentary. But news coverage at radio stations is limited by the fact that most radio news departments consist of one person. An article distilled into a brief public service announcement has a good chance of being read over the air. These announcements are often put into a rotation cycle with other community announcements and are typically read once a day for several weeks.

*Talk shows or public affairs shows*: Some radio stations have their own public affairs or talk shows on which your topic can be aired. Producers of these shows are often starved for good material. Again, this is very effective way of assuring that your message reaches your targeted audiences.

Television stations also have talk or public affairs programs. Producers of such shows are frequently interested in having authors of articles on their programs but must usually be contacted by the author or sponsoring non-profit group.

#### **4. j) Interviews: what you need to know**

No matter what the medium (radio, television or print), and no matter who the interviewer, the key principle is that you must always remain in control of the interview situation.

Gather all the information you developed when planning your media strategy (see pages 46 and following) and review the important elements before putting yourself in an interview situation. Decide what you want to achieve through the interview. Decide who the audience is. Understand the kind of interviewing that is done by each media outlet. Remember that although you will prepare differently for a television interview than for a radio interview, the key is simply to be prepared.

Nervousness is common to everyone preparing for an interview. There are many techniques you can use to make yourself more comfortable and less anxious, but do not expect the anxiety to go away. The best way to overcome nervousness is to be thoroughly prepared. Also, practice restating your goals in colorful ways, or using interesting analogies, vivid language, unusual examples and illustrations, or uncomplicated data. You should consider a variety of ways to stress the most important points you want to make, eliminate any misperceptions about what are you trying to achieve, and clarify your vision for the future of the issue or the organization.

#### **Ground rules**

- ★ One has to be confident in dealing with the media. Do not be shy or hesitant.
- ★ Beware of traps laid by journalists. Some of them will try to make you lose your temper and lead you to contradict yourself. Do not be easily affected and stay calm.
- ★ The golden rule when being interviewed is “tell the truth.” Saying “no” or “I don’t know” is much better than saying a small lie.

**When the interview is scheduled:** There are several questions to ask when a reporter or a radio or television producer calls to schedule an interview.

- ★ What is the date and time of the interview?
- ★ Where will the interview be held? Make sure you have exact directions if you are not familiar with the location. Find out if you need a pass or security clearance.
- ★ What is the full name of the interviewer? If you do not know the interviewer, make sure to listen to a program or read articles by that reporter. It is important to get familiar with the format of the program and style of the reporter interviewing you.
- ★ What is expected of you? Why have you been chosen for the interview?
- ★ Will the interview be live or taped? When will the program be on the air?
- ★ Will you be interviewed alone or as a part of a panel? How many people will be there? If it is a panel discussion, who else is participating? What will the format be? How long will each person get to speak?
- ★ How long will interview be?
- ★ What exactly is the focus (topic) of the interview?
- ★ Give the exact spelling of your name and how you want your organization listed on radio or TV.

If you cannot get your questions answered, or you are uncomfortable with the answers you get, reconsider whether appearing on that program will serve your goals. If the host seem biased, the questions appear to be too confrontational, if the producers seem evasive or unwilling to answer your pre-show questions, or if you are uncomfortable with the “culture” of the show or if it is too high-powered or personal for your comfort, decide not to appear on the program. Not all exposure is good exposure.

**How to prepare:** The more you anticipate and think through your strategies for any media event, especially one in which you are likely to confront a hostile or sceptical host and/or adversary, the more likely you are to achieve your goals — and not be caught off guard (Appendix G and H).

*Before appearing on an interview program:*

★ Write an ideal interview. The interview may be scheduled for literally a few seconds, or you may have five minutes, or you may have longer. Limit yourself to the three most important points you want to make. These will become “islands of safety”, which you will return to again and again in the interview. Regardless of the length of time, do not try to get more than three main points across in any interview.

★ Rehearse with colleagues. If you can, get them to role play as host and opponent. But do not memorize answers or points — they will sound rehearsed and unnatural. Keep in mind the three main points you want to make. Use as few numbers as possible. People are easily bored with statistics. A person needs to be more enthusiastic and energetic for television than radio, so it might be very helpful to videotape and review your practice sessions. You will probably find that you have to get past your comfort point to show emotion when being interviewed for TV.

★ Do your homework. Try to anticipate the issues that will be discussed and ground yourself thoroughly in your best arguments.

★ Ask yourself, who is going to hear and see me? What do you want the audience to learn from the program? How do you want to change the audience’s attitude? What do you want the audience to do as a result of what they hear or see? Remember, changing behaviour is a major goal of advocacy communications.

*During the program:*

★ Broadcast appearances are not formal debates scored on the basis of arguing points won or lost; instead you must pursue two simultaneous objectives.

★ a) Be persuasive on the issue

★ b) Make certain that your audience feels that you are a person they like and trust

★ Do not be passive or overly polite. Interrupt if your opponent is dominating the discussion, but try to do so in a manner that suggests an easy, conversational disagreement rather than hectoring or lecturing.

★ Dress conservatively, comfortably and neatly.

★ Outline your points on a single piece of paper. Have it ready so you can glance at it during a break.

★ Be simple, clear, and direct. Do not use professional jargon or insiders shorthand.

★ If you did not hear the question, ask the interviewer to repeat it.

★ Use vivid language and colorful illustrations and be enthusiastic but, above all, be yourself.

★ Always tell the truth — and be sure what you assert as proven fact is indeed a fact. It is better to say nothing than to stretch the truth and be caught.

★ Be enthusiastic and energetic. Both TV and radio tend to “flatten” people make person less exiting and more “bland”— so be exited about what you are saying.

*Audio taping the interview:* Discuss this with the reporter interviewing you. Most likely, you will be able to make an audiotape, and it is not unusual for a person being interviewed to make this request. Then you will have an accurate record of the interview. Those people working with you who did not hear the broadcast will have an opportu-



nity to review the interview later. If at all possible, practice before a camera or with a tape recorder.

### **Types of interviews**

*Television interviews:* Always look directly at the interviewer. Never look at the camera or television monitors. Do not worry about camera. A professional is responsible for the camera — you do not have to be concerned about it. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer while you are thinking of an answer.

- ★ Wear solid colours, light but not white
- ★ Do not wear flashy or shiny fabric
- ★ Do not wear too much jewellery
- ★ Apply normal makeup and check in the mirror before you go on

*Satellite interviews:* Interviews for satellite TV will be different than those with a reporter in person. If you are being interviewed by a reporter in another studio, look directly at the camera. In this case, the camera is the person you are talking to. Even if the interviewer is in another country, you should imagine that he is the camera in front of you. This may be more uncomfortable for a first time interview — but do not let it stop you. Everything else will be the same — it is just that the person will not be sitting across from you. Imagine the camera in front of you is a friendly, smiling face.

*Radio interviews:* In many countries, radio is the best method to reach a mass audience. Public speeches are effective, but only if the speaker understands the level of education, economic and cultural outlooks and differences in local customs.

Radio “talk shows” are an increasingly popular tool for individuals to express their political and social opinions. Most radio stations get their information from news segments throughout the day. Many radio stations get their information from news syndicates, and larger stations have their own operations. How you approach the radio will depend on the structure of the station’s operations.

You may be able to call in your news directly. You may also have the opportunity to telephone a radio talk show and offer your views. Some smaller stations also do interviews in their own radio studios. Research the radio in your area to determine the best way to approach the station.

Because there is no visual image with radio interviews, your verbal expressions, clarity, enthusiasm and content are more important than on television.

*Requests for an immediate telephone interview:* Many times reporters, particularly print journalists working on deadline, will call you for a quote or response to an event or someone else’s comments. Often, these requests are an excellent opportunity for your organization to become part of a breaking news story. The call may catch you off guard but by taking a few minutes to organize yourself, you can respond effectively and intelligently.

Find out the reporter’s name, telephone number, and deadline and ask if you may call him or her back in a few minutes. Compose yourself. Think about your three positive points. Practise the “interview” out loud. Do any quick research you can do on

the reporter, the news organization, and the audience you will be addressing. Then, relax, and call the reporter right back.

**How to start the interview:** The interviewer starts by asking you a question. You should start by making your three points. In most cases, you will have a few minutes before interview actually begins to discuss them with the reporter. You should send background information to the interviewer ahead of the time.

**If the interviewer keeps moving away from the points you want to make,** be polite, but firmly bring the interview back to the subject you want to pursue by using the “bridges”, beginning your answers by saying, “ Well it seems the real issue is...”and then state your point. One of the following comments may give you such an opportunity.

- ★ Let me add...
- ★ I am often asked...
- ★ That may be true up to a point but...
- ★ That is not my area of expertise but I do know that...
- ★ It seems the most important issue is...

**If the reporter asks a question you do not want to answer,** try not to avoid answering it. The more open you are, the better. But if you feel you really cannot answer a question, say so or swim back to your “islands of safety” — the three main points you want to make.

**If the reporter asks negative questions,** do not repeat the negative. Your job is to make your three points. Do not get upset or defensive. Correct any misinformation quickly and then go on to state one of your positive points. Stay positive. If it is a harsh criticism, you can say, “ I am glad you asked me that. Many people might have that misconception, but the truth is”... and then go back to your “islands of safety”.

This is where your prior practice will really be valuable. Remember, you will have practised several negative and difficult questions, and you will have these answers ready. **STAY POSITIVE.**

Do not answer a negative question with a falsehood. You may try to avert it, but do not mislead your audience or the interviewer.

**Using technical terms and statistics:** Use as few numbers and statistics as possible. Instead, create word pictures. If you hear someone say “about the size of a soccer field”, it makes more of an impression than if someone said “4,300 square meters.”

When image has more impact? “35,000 children die needlessly every day” a statistic that many international development organizations use, or “100 jumbo jets crash with 350 children aboard every day”, which UNICEF uses to describe this “silent emergency”. The latter imagery is more vivid.

If you have to use technical terms, make sure you define them as simply as possible. Use words that are familiar to the audience you are addressing. Define any terms that are not in common usage. This will be especially important if you are speaking to people of different nationalities.

**If there is a long silence**, do not be afraid; you have no obligation to carry the dialogue forward. The interviewer is responsible for that. In a slightly confrontational interview, silence is often a method an interviewer may use to get a person to volunteer revealing information.

**If you are asked to add more than you want to say**, you will probably be able to meet the challenge if you know your subject well enough. But if you feel unsteady or ruffled, go back to your “islands of safety”. They are important enough to elaborate on and repeat, possibly with different stories or examples to illustrate the points.

**If you do not know the answer to a question**, be honest. Say, “I am sorry, I don’t have that information, but I’ll be happy to get back to you with it.” Then make sure you get the information to the reporter.

**The length of answers.** Your answers should be brief, approximately 20 seconds. In general, they should be shorter for radio and longer for print.

**The first few minutes in the studio.** A sound engineer will usually ask you for a voice level to make sure the microphone is set correctly. In answer to a request for a voice level, state your name, spell your last name, the name of your organization, your title if you have one, and the subject of the interview. This gives vital information, as well as the correct pronunciation of your name and organization.

*Always assume the microphone or recorder is on.* Always. Many well-known people have been embarrassed by comments made when they thought the microphone was turned off. Assume that anything you say to a reporter at any time will be used. And never say “no comment”, since that will usually give the impression that you have something to hide. A reporter is always working. There is no “of the record”— unless you have reached explicit agreement on this point. *Never say anything you do not want to read in print or hear on radio or television.*

Two points bear repetition and emphasis:

- ★ Always assume the microphone or recorder is on
- ★ Never say anything you do not want to read or hear on radio or television.

**On and off the record:** Always establish the rules for an interview at the beginning, not the end, of the interview. You cannot undo a negative or inappropriate quote by changing the ground rules mid-interview.

Most of your interviews will be on the record. Remember, you are giving the interview because you want the media to convey your information or point of view to the public. The best advice: *If you don’t want it reported, do not tell a reporter.* There are at least three ways of dealing with reporters:

*On the record interviews* should only be conducted by official spokespeople. Reporters will assume that everything said to them is on the record and for quotation, unless otherwise stated at the start of the interview.

*Background interviews* are just that, discussions with reporters with a prior understanding that the information can be freely used in a story but only on background, without a direct quote. Press staff should open any discussions with reporters by saying, "I would like to talk to you on background only. Most of what I will be saying is exactly what our spokesperson will say but only he can be quoted. You can use the information I am giving you for background material."

Off-the-record discussions are not for quotation or attribution, and usually not for use in an article. Such a discussion may be useful in situations where you need to share information with a reporter, but you do not want your organization quoted or identified as the source. While many reporters adhere to the off-the-record agreement, if you give them really good information they may use it. This is particularly true of untrained, unprofessional journalists. Again, *remember, if you do not want to see something reported, do not tell a reporter.*

#### **4. k) Media Production and Distribution**

This manual will not go into detail regarding how one develops in-house media — newsletters, websites, radio programs, cable access programs. These are extremely effective communication vehicles that enable your organization to develop and distribute tightly developed material to select audiences.

The technical side of these kinds of public relations requires skills with video camera, editing equipment, desktop publishing software, and radio production.

Distribution of the material depends on the technology. With a newsletter, for example, your organization may have a membership list to which the newsletter will be mailed. If not, you may want to talk with local schools, universities, book shops, coffee houses, etc. about the possibility of distributing your material at those locations. Additionally, public rallies may be excellent opportunities to set up a booth where you can hand out your newsletter and other materials.

Newsletters establish a connection with your constituencies and allow you to account for your activities, which is especially necessary for your donors, patrons, sponsors, supporters, and membership.

The most important question a media advocate must ask about these kinds of activities is whether the amount of time and expense required to create the material is matched or surpassed by the range of its distribution. It is not worth spending 10 hours a week developing and producing a local radio show that no one listens to. But, if you find that it does have an audience, it may be worth pursuing.



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## **5. Planning a strategic media campaign**

# Planning a strategic media campaign

**Y**our communications office is staffed and equipped. As the press secretary, you are comfortable with the various devices — press releases, press calls, interviews, newsletters, etc. — you use to communicate with the media about your organization or issue. The next step is to construct an effective media strategy to stimulate media coverage of your issue or organization.

Strategic media planning is a fundamental requirement for any organization that wants to utilize media coverage to help further its agenda. If you do not plan and organize your media efforts, you will spend every day reacting to instead of influencing the agenda.

If you are the press secretary or media advocate for a non-profit organization, you may have to conduct your own internal campaign to educate your colleagues about the value and effectiveness of an active, planned and directed media strategy.

You will have to make it clear to your colleagues that getting your organization's name included in news stories about your issues is not enough. It often takes non-governmental organizations a long time to realize that the failure to create and implement strategic media plans means that your work, concerns, and goals are much harder to reach.

## 5. a) Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment in time and money is a must. Press relations should not be a one-time effort. Working with the media should be viewed as a campaign that needs to be planned, supported, and executed as carefully as a campaign for political office, ballot issues, or fundraising.

The first question an organization must ask itself is How important is media coverage? (Sometimes media coverage is not important) On a scale of one to ten, where do good visibility and media coverage come in your organization's priorities? If media coverage is very important, then time and resources must be spent planning and executing media strategies.

Additionally, if the organization decides media is a high priority, it is imperative that the public relations person (or staff if you are big enough) be included in organizational planning meetings. The people planning the events and programs for which the organization wants media coverage must work with the public relations people from the beginning for the best chance of success. Designing media strategies and actions for your organization should not be an afterthought, but an integrated part of planning.

Press secretaries are not magicians. Some basic tools are needed to set up and run a press operation. Money is needed for designing letterhead and graphics, developing

lists, printing kits, and mailing releases. Money is also needed for telephone calls, faxing, mailings, renting rooms for press conferences, and more. The more money and resources devoted to press relations, the more media coverage your group will receive. However, if you have a limited budget but the right commitment from your leadership, good media coverage can still be achieved.

**Lay the groundwork.** Before you make a single press call or write a press release, you and the top leaders and idea people at your organization need to ask and answer some very important questions.

- ★ Which issues does your organization want to focus its media resources on?
- ★ What is current public opinion about those issues?
- ★ What was the type and tenor of past media coverage of the issue?

These questions cannot and should not be answered by one individual. A successful media campaign or strategy is the result of a team effort.

**Set priorities.** This first step — identifying your organization's media priorities — has organization-wide effects and must be discussed by the group's top leaders and key policy people and you.

*Do not make the mistake many non-profit organizations make and decide to generate significant media coverage on all the issues.* This is a particularly bad idea. Not only does it mean that limited resources are stretched thin, it results in inadequate coverage and impact for any of your issues.

Your organization's leaders and key policy people must work with you to determine which issues you will focus your media advocacy resources on. The input of your organization's leaders is essential for several reasons.

- ★ Your top leaders are often your top spokespeople and as such are a major component of your media strategy; their input, awareness, and commitment are essential.
- ★ Your top officials will have to defend the decision about which issues get media advocacy focus at the expense of other issues; their own participation in the decision will make their defence of it more effective.
- ★ The top leaders of the organization need to understand just what a public relations person can and cannot accomplish. Participation in a strategy session to set priorities, identify media and budget resources, and bring up creative ideas can help leaders understand the process.

**If your organization is large, create media teams.** Once the priorities have been chosen, your organization should create unofficial media campaign teams for each campaign. These teams should include a member of the media staff, the organization's policy expert, and the top organization official who will be the primary spokesperson for the campaign. The media advocate or press secretary is the team leader and has final say.

**Understand public opinion about your priority issue.** Once your organization has determined the issue or issues for which it will mobilize media resources, take time to



educate yourself about two factors that will affect your final media strategy: public opinion and past media coverage of the issue.

*Polling data:* Knowing what your constituency knows about a certain issue and how the public feels about the issue is essential to your work.

★ For example the U.S. environmental community, after extensive market research, determined that the phrase “global warming” is a much more troubling description of the problem than “the greenhouse effect.” The polling suggested that the average American is motivated more by helping to stop global warming than by the uncertain greenhouse effect.

This new survey research gave the environmentalists a fresh perspective on how the public views the problem.

Your organization does not need to commission an expensive professional research poll. Polling organizations can usually provide background reports on the issues by demographic breakouts. These organizations can be an invaluable resource in your use of public opinion as part of your media strategy.

You might also want to conduct some informal groups, in which 5 to 20 people gather to discuss your issue. What you hear from people — how they perceive your issue, your organization, possible solutions — can help inform your media strategy planning.

What you learn through poll numbers and informal groups will help determine whether your campaign goal is to educate the public or change public opinion or activate an already persuaded public.

*Past media coverage:* As important as polling data is to understanding how the public regards your issues, it is equally important that you review past media coverage of the issues you target. Spend time at the public library or the reference room of your local newspaper. Review how the national media cover the issue. Find out if the local media have done similar stories. If they have, track by-lines and start a notebook of the coverage. If they have not, suggest stories about your issue when you approach reporters and editors.

Before setting up a meeting with your organization’s leaders to develop your plan, write a report reviewing previous coverage on the issues. Analyse the following:

- ★ Headlines: What do they say? How could the article’s content be improved?
- ★ How is the issue described: What definitions are used in the body of the article? Does the article accurately reflect the issue?
- ★ Quotes from supporters: Who is quoted? Do the comments put forward our strongest argument?
- ★ Quotes from the opposition: Who is quoted? What are the key arguments against our issues?

From such analysis, a picture should emerge of how the media are currently “positioning” the issue and how much coverage the issue has received. Use it as the starting point for a media strategy session with the leaders of your organization. The headlines, quotes and definitions you see in past coverage will help you develop your mes-

sage, your most powerful phrases and to determine how best to “frame” or “position” your issue.

**Planning the campaign.** The next section of this manual focuses on the strategic media campaign planning process. A media advocate should always devise a complete plan, whether she or he is creating a long-term media campaign or a one-time media event. The following outline will help you to think about and create your plan:

- ★ Organizational commitment
- ★ Policy goal
- ★ Media goal
- ★ Audiences
- ★ Media targets
- ★ Message development
- ★ Spokespeople
- ★ Tools
- ★ Tactics
- ★ Timeline
- ★ Budget

## 5. b) Identify the campaign’s policy and media objectives

The first task is completed; your organization has determined the issues on which it wants to focus its media advocacy resources. You are ready to work alone or, if you have a large organization, you have put a media campaign team for each issue. What is next? You must identify the media advocacy campaign’s policy and media objectives.

**Policy objectives.** The clear identification of your policy objectives will help you target the appropriate audiences, articulate a clear message, create useful and effective communication tools and tactics, maintain campaign focus, and judge the success of your campaign.

To determine the campaign’s policy objectives, the media team should ask itself the following types of questions:

- ★ What does your organization want the campaign to accomplish?
- ★ Is it a public education campaign oriented towards raising public awareness about environmental degradation?
- ★ Is it a political action campaign aimed at affecting pending legislation in the national legislature, regional legislature or municipal legislature?
- ★ Is it an advocacy campaign focused on placing a specific issue on the political agenda?
- ★ Is our objective sensible, rational and defensible?
- ★ Is our objective attainable and within our institution’s area of experience and expertise?

**Media objectives.** At this stage of the planning process, it is important for you to articulate the type of media coverage your institution would like to achieve in the campaign. You need to determine whether the campaign will focus on:

- ★ Regional newspaper, radio and television
- ★ National radio or billboards
- ★ News outlets for one specific city
- ★ The placement of articles you write
- ★ Some combination of potential media

You also want to decide whether the campaign should be a long-term campaign, slowly building up media interest or whether your goal is to generate one day or week of significant coverage. You are not yet ready to identify specific media targets; that task must wait until you have identified and defined your audience.

### 5. c) Audience

**Identify and target your audience.** Careful identification and targeting of an “audience” is critical to any media campaign. Determining which audiences you want to reach and influence will determine, in turn the message you develop and your choice of media outlets.

There are any number of audiences you can consider: legislators and politicians, families, racial or ethnic minorities, women, men, children etc. The audience you choose depends on the policy objective of your campaign.

You should ask yourself a number of questions to focus your targeting options as you begin your media campaign.

- ★ Is your audience broad scale or is it a narrow audience?
- ★ Will your audience, and therefore media targets, change over the life of the media strategy?
- ★ What media are appropriate to use, once you have established your targets and audience?

In the beginning of your media campaign, it might be important to reach only the professionals, specialists or activists in your issue field. Alternatively, you might be interested in reaching policy-makers and “media elites” or your campaign goal might be to focus on certain demographic groups including women, ethnic minorities and later the general public. It is a question of narrowing versus broadening your message and your campaign. This part of the planning process can also help determine time frames and budget.

### 5. d) Media targets

Once you determine who your audience is, you need to identify what media outlets they access. These outlets will be your campaign media targets. Through these target media outlets you reach your target audience. Once you have identified the appropri-

ate media outlets, you will need to identify within each outlet the reporters, editors, producers to whom you will direct your story, send faxes invite to press conferences etc.

★ If you are seeking to persuade activists or community leaders, remember to target editorial pages, which are read extensively by public policymakers

★ If you want to reach people in certain professions, target the publications that cater to that professional group.

It is likely that your campaign will have more than one target audience. Make sure that you identify the most appropriate media targets for each of your target audiences.

*Knowing which audience a media outlet caters to:* Identification of your media targets relies on common sense and a little research. Go to your local newspaper kiosk and look what is for sale. Foreign language newspapers target a certain audience; magazines about cars target a different audience; general news magazines are read by a much broader, less defined audience. Look at those magazines and newspapers that appear to target the same audience you are targeting; those should be placed on your media list for the campaign.

Watching television and listening to radio will enable you to differentiate, as well, between types of programs, their focus and intended audience.

*Ask yourself and your friends some simple questions:* If one of your target audiences is unmarried career women, ask yourself and your friends who are unmarried career women, what media they use. Do they read women's magazines, hobby magazines, watch TV shows or soap operas, read the financial papers or the daily tabloids? The answers you get should guide your efforts. You can ask anyone these types of questions.

*Research:* If you are uncertain about the target audience of any particular media outlet, call their business or circulation office to ask for information about the size of their circulation or the estimated viewing or listening audience; the distribution area or area of coverage; and any knowledge they have of their audience (income level, age, gender etc). Major advertising agencies collect data on publishing and broadcast audience demographics and may be persuaded to share them with you. Armed with this information, you can easily identify those media targets most suited to your purposes.

*Media Directories:* In some countries and cities, there are directories that list the names of media outlets and place those names in pre-determined categories. These guide-books can make the process of identifying your target media much easier.

## 5. e) Message Development

**Framing the issue:** Media advocates must tailor their campaign messages to reflect interests, values and experiences of their target audiences to attract support for their efforts.

Most advocacy campaigns begin with a core of supporters within the general population who quickly respond to themes evoked by the initiative. For example a campaign to save a local endangered animal species is likely to win — without any special effort — immediate support from dedicated environmentalists.

To broaden the base of supporters, a campaign's critical task is to find and use themes that engage the intellect and emotions of those groups and individuals who are not supporters. The media advocate for the endangered species campaign must determine what message about this issue will engage a larger segment of the population. This is known as message development or "framing" the issue.

Your campaign is likely to generate the most support if you cite values that can appeal to people across the political spectrum — values like privacy and freedom of choice that allow liberals and conservatives to associate their own values with the initiative.

**Symbols and language:** Public attitudes are shaped by affirmative and negative symbols that capture and widely reflect shared public values. Press spokesmen must identify and articulate the symbols and language that will most effectively make their point and build public support for policy initiatives. Framing the issue is the process by which advocates convey their message to maximize the affirmative values, and minimize the negative ones associated with it.

*When discussing solutions to the overuse of energy, the terms "energy efficiency" and "energy conservation" have two entirely different meanings to the public. Conservation is associated by many people with memories of reduced lifestyles — wearing sweaters at home, freezing in the dark, etc. Energy efficiency, on the other hand, means using technology to design a better world; the term elicits positive feelings that the crisis can be solved.*

**Research:** You need to learn how your issue relates to prevailing public opinion and values. Understanding how your issue is perceived by the public will help you articulate your message and frame the debate.

Remember, you have done a lot of research on public impressions of your issues during the initial stages of designing this campaign. Now it is time to turn your attention back to the polls, group interviews, conversations, previous media coverage, and develop your message — what you want the public to know about your work and your cause.

As you sift through the various approaches, tones, and possible themes, you will begin to understand the cause-and effect thinking that is necessary to understanding "framing the issue". When determining how to position or project your issues in the media, a major decision will be Are you for it or against it? Examples: Are you for clean air or against air pollution? Are you for the right of free speech or against the government's campaign to censor extremist viewpoints?

The more your message reflects your community's core positive values, the more likely it is that public attitudes toward that initiative will be favorable. If for example, self reliance is a general positive value in your community or country, your organization might consider how to position your support for a certain policy as a reflection of your fellow countrymen's self reliance.

A community also has a set of shared core negative values. When an issue campaign succeeds in associating its opposition (those groups of legislators who disagree with your position) with negative values while continuing to associate the positive values with its own initiative, its chances of generating broad public support are greatly enhanced.

A remarkable case study illustrates the loss of an issue campaign through the opponents' successful reframing of the issue.

*In the fall of 1988, the Oregon Smoking and Health Coalition — an anti-smoking organization — successfully qualified for the ballot an initiative that would have produced the strongest state indoor smoking control law in the United States, prohibiting smoking in almost all indoor public places and work places.*

*Early in the campaign, independent polls showed that more than two-thirds of voters supported the measure, with two to five percent undecided. The polls showed strong public awareness that smoking was a significant public health hazard.*

*The tobacco industry concluded it could not convince voters that second-hand smoke was not dangerous, but that it could portray the initiative as extreme and “unfair” to smokers appealing to Oregonians’ sense of public fairness. With months of planning and millions of dollars to support their campaign, the tobacco industry stayed with one dominant theme: “Ballot Measure 6 Just Goes Too Far.”*

*The tobacco industry’s principal vehicle was a multiple-letter direct mailing to 800,000 households, costing three million dollars and reaching more than half of Oregon’s 1.5 million registered voters. The letter, from a highly regarded retired state Supreme Court Judge (who better understands fairness?), appealed to the addressee, by name, to question the fairness of the measure. Support for the measure dropped 15 percentage points following the mailing. It was followed by heavy television and radio advertisements as election day approached.*

*The tobacco industry distorted a provision of the measure to argue that in certain cases government enforcement agents could invade the privacy of a citizen to stop someone from smoking — thereby invoking the theme of government invasion of privacy. The initiative failed.*

For better or worse, issues are framed by compressing science, facts, and arguments into labels and symbols. The way you frame your issue will determine whether many people will join you in your efforts. Choosing the right symbols and associated your objectives with them truthfully and effectively can solidify your support and even win new converts to your position. Choosing the wrong symbols may doom a campaign to failure.

You must incorporate within the framework of the campaign the positive symbols you have chosen to frame your message and the negative symbols you use to characterize the opposition into everything you do and say.

**Talking points, headlines, and quotable quotes:** Successful media coverage of your issues usually does not just happen. Know what you want the coverage to be, develop materials that reflect the desired coverage, and train yourself and your spokespeople to clearly articulate your positions to reporters.

Begin by asking the other people who work with you in your NGO (including organization leaders and the policy people who specialize in the issue) to imagine for

a moment that they are in a position to write an article or produce a television news-cast on your issue. Given the messages and frame you have chosen:

- ★ What headlines would you like to see?
- ★ What do you want the first paragraph to say?
- ★ What quotes or statistics do you want included in the article?
- ★ What experts or human interest stories would you like to see reported in your article?

The answers to these questions and others like them should help you decide what material you want to give out, how you want to present your point of view, and how to decide on your “talking points” — the three or four points and quotes you want to reiterate in every interview on the issue.

**Quotes and “sound bites.”** Remember that long, complicated statements and responses for broadcast media will not be as successful as short, to-the-point answers. Radio and television news stories are short; your message must be conveyed in a succinct and clear manner suited to the medium. A “sound bite” is a short pithy quote that serves as a central characterizing feature of a broadcast or print news story.

At best a sound bite can serve to encapsulate both information and effective symbols for an audience. A sound bite can compress a group’s position in a quick witty manner, capturing the attention of the media and the eventual consumer of the message.

Successful sound bites and talking points are grounded in the following principles:

- ★ Utilize concrete images that evoke a lively response
- ★ Avoid sloganeering, shrillness, and moralizing
- ★ Stay brief, and divide longer ideas into shorter sentences
- ★ Humour is permissible, but avoid cuteness or frivolity that can down play the seriousness of the problem you are discussing. A well conceived quip can deflate even the most carefully crafted adversary’s statement. Biting humour can be effective in conveying an appropriate sense of outrage, but do not be too harsh.
- ★ Be authoritative and commanding.
- ★ Standard literary devices such as alliteration, rhyming, parallelism, puns, and the like can make a sound bite resonate with the journalist and the audience.
- ★ Ironic rephrasing of your adversary’s statements or popular maxims can contribute to a printable sound bite.
- ★ Remember, the goal is not to earn yourself applause but to advance your media advocacy goals.

Also do the preceding exercise in reverse. Ask yourself what the worst possible headlines could be? What quotes or statistics are your opponents likely to publicize? If your policy initiative loses, what are the worst outcomes? Preparing your colleagues to deal with the worst-case scenario is known as “damage control”. You must be prepared to put the best face on defeat or failure.

## 5. f) Identifying spokespeople

One of the most important decisions your group will make is picking your spokespersons. If you do not choose the person or persons who will present your case to the public — in interviews, at press conferences, on talk shows, and as the author of articles — the media will choose a spokesperson by default. Remember, you can choose different spokespeople for different elements of your media strategy.

A good spokesperson must have following qualities:

- ★ In-depth knowledge of the issue and your organization.
- ★ A high level of comfort talking to reporters both on and off the record.
- ★ A willingness to take time to talk with reporters
- ★ Dresses and acts presentably

Choose the one or two of your colleagues who are most knowledgeable and articulate to act as your primary spokespersons for the campaign. Establish a policy that others who are not the primary spokespeople may provide reporters with background information but are not to be quoted.

It is also best to limit the number of people who initiate or return phone calls to reporters. Make sure all parties know what has previously been said to reporters on the issue at hand. Reporters hate to be bounced around, never knowing if the person they are talking to has any authority to speak for your organization. Nor do they like having to repeat their requests or questions to a half dozen people.

**Non staff spokespersons:** Sometimes an advocacy campaign will choose a non-staff expert, (a nationally known doctor or political figure, for example), a celebrity (a musician, writer, or actor), or an ordinary citizen (a victim of a drunk driving accident or a pensioner who cannot afford adequate heating) to act as spokespeople for the campaign.

This is a good way to generate additional press interest in your campaign efforts but there are some limitations.

- ★ Celebrities or ordinary citizens are not generally expert spokesmen on the issues of the campaign. You must be sure that these people are comfortable with and well versed in the goals of the campaign. Give them relevant press materials, talking points, etc. You must also make sure that these spokespeople refer reporters to you and the organization staff when they are asked questions they cannot answer.

- ★ Non-staff experts and celebrities present another set of problems. As prominent figures, it is possible that enterprising reporters may uncover a scandal, a personal problem, or apparent conflict of interest, generating news coverage that overshadows the actual campaign. Before signing up any such spokesperson, ask the types of questions that will reveal any potential problems. In addition, celebrities may call more attention to themselves than to your cause if they are not properly instructed.

**Training spokespeople:** Being a spokesperson is hard work. You need to be very comfortable with the material, campaign goals, and the interview process. A good press secretary will help spokespeople learn the necessary skills.



One simple way to improve spokespeople's performances is to video or audio tape the media appearances and organize a session during which trusted advisers give positive and critical feedback.

Another simple way to help them learn their craft is to hold trial interviews, press conferences, media briefings etc. During these training sessions, you and the spokesperson can experiment with different techniques for handling tough questions, easy questions, wandering or unclear questions etc.

## **5. g) Tools**

Media advocates use a variety of tools — reports, lawsuits, legislative actions, elections, meetings, public events etc. — as news generating opportunities.

One of the most important tasks a press secretary can undertake is to help an organization's staff think about and develop media-friendly tools. A good press secretary learns to ask certain questions:

- ★ Can this technical paper be turned into a non-technical report?
- ★ Can the speakers at this upcoming seminar discuss issue X, which is of current public concern?
- ★ What internal information do we have that is newsworthy?
- ★ What information should we gather and disseminate that will be of interest to reporters and the public and make our point about the issue?

Other opportunities for you to make public comments include:

- ★ Introduction of legislation you support in your legislative body or local councils
- ★ Endorsement of your issues or positions by columnists or editorial writers
- ★ Any legislative action on measures you support or oppose;
- ★ Judgments on legal cases relating to your issue or position; and
- ★ Public support of your issue by a celebrity or well-known academic, political or national figure.

Your media team should draw up a list of potential tools. Examine each one for its accessibility to the public, its validity as a news making event, the amount of time and effort necessary to turn it into a successful media tool, and its correlation to the message you have chosen for this media campaign.

## **5. h) Tactics: Developing a strategic plan**

Your media campaign team has done a great job. You have identified your policy goal, your target audience, and the media outlets they are most likely to read, watch, or listen to. You have decided how best to present the issue. You have thought through the headlines and quotes you would most like to see, prepared for the possibility that there may be some negative reaction to your campaign, and you've developed or identified a number of news-generating tools. Now what?

Your next step is the development of a strategic plan for communicating your message to the media. The best analogy is the game plan a soccer coach devises for his team of athletes: a coach develops a series of plays he believes will allow his team to win the game. A media strategy is similar; it lays out in detail the game plan for communicating with the media. The strategy you devise should be based on your previous decisions about policy goals, media goals, message, audience, media targets, spokespeople and tools.

A well-thought-out media strategy utilizes a number of different communication vehicles (press releases, press conferences etc.) to publicize the existing information tools (reports, media events, etc.) to the target audiences (local reporters, opinion pages, talk shows) while articulating the campaign's messages.

★ If the goal of your media campaign is to raise public awareness of a certain issue, you might decide to hold a press conference in the capital to release a new report

★ If your campaign goal is to pressure a few key legislators to vote for a certain bill, your strategy may focus on generating a few well-placed human interest stories in newspapers in key legislative districts, followed by a number of press conferences in those districts.

How and where you convey your message depends on the type of campaign you want to conduct and the size of your budget. It is important to keep in mind that everything requires money-mailings, photocopies, long-distance calls, staff time, room rentals are all budget items you need to consider when planning the campaign.

*Leave room for flexibility and spontaneity:* A sound media advocacy campaign requires careful planning, but ample room must be left for flexibility and spontaneity. Media advocacy requires the ability to react quickly and creatively to the evolving news environment. The ability to seize an opportunity is the essence of media advocacy. The public relations person is constantly on the hunt for news stories that can provide a reason to talk to the press, appear on radio, write a letter to the editor, place an article on the subject in the paper, or stage a media event.

★ An American with a 2 1/2 pack-a-day cigarette habit was nominated by President George Bush to head up the anti-drug agency in Washington. The day before Congress held hearings on this man's nomination, a coalition of anti-smoking groups sponsored a full page newspaper ad challenging him to give up his smoking habit. While the campaign did not convince the new anti-drug leader to give up his smoking habit, it did create a lot of press coverage about the dangers of smoking.

Do not be intimidated if your opponents have massive financial recourses. Successful media advocacy requires confidence and the willingness to engage the media aggressively and creatively with limited financial recourses. When your opponents say something outrageous or untrue, challenge them publicly.

## 5. i) Timeline

Once your strategic media plan is complete, you must set a timeline. A timeline is the schedule of events, and the planning necessary to make those events take place.

A timeline is invaluable.

- ★ It enables a public relations or media relations person to keep track of the status of various tasks that must be completed to make a media event effective and successful.
- ★ A timeline encourages you to think through the smallest detail of the press event.
- ★ A timeline keeps you on schedule so that the event takes place when planned.

If your strategy includes a press conference, your timeline will note the following:

- ★ The date of the press conference;
- ★ When the press secretary will make press calls about the upcoming press conference;
- ★ The deadlines for the press packet elements; and
- ★ The deadline for finalizing the press list for the press conference.

Every element of a media strategy must be incorporated into the timeline — the time needed to write an article; the days required to book a press conference room in advance; the deadline for placing an advertisement in a magazine.

Remember, a media strategy is a complex plan with elements that progress at different rates. Without a timeline, a press secretary is likely to find that she has spent three weeks planning a press conference and forgotten to do any of the work necessary to implement the rest of the strategy. A timeline is a press secretary's most invaluable organizational tool. Do not ignore it.

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## **6. A commentary on media relations**

# A commentary on media relations

*Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr. is publisher of The New York Times. The text below is derived from his presentation, "The Chief Executive and the Press," delivered to the American Stock Exchange Seminar, Los Angeles, June 24, 1991. Mr Sulzberger gave this talk to business leaders about improving relations between the corporate world and the press. His advice is equally applicable for members of non-governmental organizations, scientists and the scientific community in their contacts with press.*

## Remarks

In my 17 years as a newspaper man, I've witnessed a drastic change in the relationship between the press and the business community. At the first newspaper I worked for, in Raleigh, North Carolina, our business staff consisted of one man. In 1974 this limited business coverage was the rule for news organizations around the country.

Today a serious newspaper without a business section is unusual. Furthermore, it is not just business reporters who are becoming involved. Reporters in all fields realise that business affects every aspect of modern life — from politics and social change to entertainment and sports. Business reporters are better trained. Better educated and more sophisticated than they used to be. Organizations are being handed a strategic tool. Those who learn to use it will have a real competitive advantage over those who don't.

At The New York Times I am required to be both a businessman and a journalist. In this dual capacity I can assure you that the news organizations can affect public perception of an organization and its performance. In turn, an organization can work with media advantageously.

Business journalism is here to stay. It's time your colleagues become more effective in dealing with the press. Perhaps I can help you with seven points of advice.

Seven points to remember

### 1. Be honest

Trust evolves; it is built over time. A good reporter will try to find out all he or she can. An organization must act responsibly but is not obliged to provide all that information. But what it does provide must be truthful.

### 2. There are many types of reporters.

Reporters vary both in skill and experience. You are always better off with an experienced reporter who knows your business. Remember that no reporter will know all you know about your business. It is in your interest to help educate reporters.

**3. Never expect a reporter to write the story as you would have written it.**

The press will always include other viewpoints, including some that you feel are irrelevant or even destructive. But you should expect your message to be reported accurately, intelligently, and fairly.

**4. Every reporter wants to interview the top person in an organization.**

Often it is appropriate for the top person to serve as spokesman, but the reporter should also have the opportunity to talk to the public relations director or other designated representative for the institution.

**5. If a story has its facts wrong, you have the right to ask for a correction.**

Mistakes can't be entirely avoided. However, reputable news organizations should be willing to correct errors brought to their attention. Don't be timid — journalists aren't.

**6. Handling a media crisis correctly is important.**

When disaster strikes, be prepared to tackle the issue directly. You may present the information from the organization's point of view, but must present the information truthfully and accurately.

**7. Reporters are not staff members.**

Remember that a reporter is an outsider assigned the task of gaining understanding of an organization as if he or she were a member of its staff. There is a natural tension between a reporter and the institution she or he reports on — government, a public corporation, or a sports team.

Let me bring this to close on a philosophical, but fundamental, note.

In a free nation the media shed light on powerful institutions. I think we can all agree that accurate reporting serves the public by promoting an informed populace, the basis of a free society. This is as true in the world of business as anywhere else. Thus, we should value a vigorous press, even if it does not always share our views. The alternative is the long-lost era of public relations handouts that told you nothing you needed to know and that made reasoned business policy and investment impossible.

The press can help your organization to get its story out. It takes time and practice to learn how to work with media. But the results are worth the effort.



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## 7. Appendices



# Appendix A

## Getting started

**B**elow is a brief list of items you will need to develop and build an effective media organization. Each item takes money or volunteer resources. If you have a large and limitless budget — and few of us do — some of the timesaving devices such as speed dialling on your phone can be critical during breaking news stories. If on the other hand you have a limited budget but eager volunteers, think about organizing a volunteer media committee to serve as a clipping service, help hand deliver media statements and stuff media mailings. Recruit support from professionals as well. One of your members may not be able to give time or money, but may be able to loan a fax machine during off hours, a great time to send low cost releases to the local media for next day review.

Also, a local public relations or advertising firm or the press office of an embassy or media centers may be willing to donate slightly out-of-date directories and materials for your use. A new media guide is expensive but a year old copy with hand written changes can be useful to you.

### RESOURCES FOR THE OFFICE

- Local media directories
- Direct phone lines for press calls

### SYSTEMS TO ESTABLISH

(Could be coordinated by volunteers)

- Clipping service and storage
- Taping and viewer news shows
- Messenger service

### MUST SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Local newspapers
- Local magazines
- TV lists

### TRY TO READ REGULARLY

- Publications about your issue
- Ethnic press, if applicable
- Political journals
- Journals that report on legislation
- News magazines
- National newspapers

#### HELPFUL TOOLS

- Press clipping service on your issues and organization
- Membership to local press or PR association

#### ARTWORK AND VISUALS

- Press release stationary and envelopes
- Press kits with pre-printed folders
- Slides with logo name and address of organization
- Plaque for front of podium
- Banner for outdoor meetings

#### MUST EQUIPMENT

- Fax machine
- Audio tape recorder
- Computer/typewriter
- Television set
- Radio

#### USEFUL EQUIPMENT

- Desktop publishing for personal computer
- Video tape recorder (VCR)
- Blank video tapes
- Cassette recorder
- Blank cassette tapes

#### WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE

- Personal computer for storing press names
- Subscription to data bases and picture sources

#### NOTEBOOK FILES ON

- All press releases and media mailings
- Newspaper clips by subject
- Polling data from newspapers

#### FROM THIS WORKBOOK DUPLICATE

- Press calls form
- Press kits form
- Press briefing form
- Interview checklists

# Appendix B

## I. THE ORGANIZATION IN GENERAL

Name of your organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Fax # \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Your title \_\_\_\_\_

Does your organization have more than one location?

no  yes If yes how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly, what are your organization's main goals and activities?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is your organization's annual budget?

Number of paid staff (use fractions to indicate part-time) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of unpaid staff \_\_\_\_\_

Does your organization have affiliates or official relations with other organizations?

no  yes If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

## II. COMMUNICATIONS IN GENERAL

### A. Inventory of services and equipment

Following is a list of communications services and equipment that some organizations use in their various activities. Next to each item, please check any item that your

organization owns, subscribes to or has access to in the second column, indicate how frequently your organization uses any item checked — put a “1” in the space if you use it every day; put a “3” if you almost never use it; put a “2” to indicate something in between.

	OWN, SUBSCRIBE OR HAVE ACCESS (check all that apply)	FREQUENCY OF USE (1 = everyday; 2 = almost never)
1. Telephone based communications		
a. Telephone	_____	_____
b. Long-distance service	_____	_____
c. Fax machine	_____	_____
d. Answering machine	_____	_____
2. Computer based communications		
a. Personal computer	_____	_____
b. Laser printer	_____	_____
c. Modem	_____	_____
d. Electronic Mail	_____	_____
e. On-line database	_____	_____
f. Electronic bulletin board	_____	_____
3. Other Electronic Communications		
a. TV	_____	_____
b. VCR	_____	_____
c. Video production/editing equipment	_____	_____
d. Slide projector	_____	_____
e. Audiocassette player/recorder	_____	_____
4. Which of the following best describes your organization’s planning process for PR and media activities?		
<input type="checkbox"/> PR and media are handled mostly without planning, on a case-by-case basis.		
<input type="checkbox"/> The organization develops a specific media and PR plan on a regular basis.		
<input type="checkbox"/> The organization plans for PR and media in the context of larger programs and efforts.		
5. a) Does your organization maintain a media contacts list?		
<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
<i>If no, skip to question 6.</i>		
5. b) Please list the name and title of the person responsible for maintaining the list.		

5. c) What percentage of that person's time would you guess is devoted to updating and managing that list?

- 75-100%     50-74%     25-49%     less than 25%

5. d) Is the list on a computer?

- yes     no

6. Which one of the following do you think would do the most to improve your organization's ability to handle PR and media?

- More lower level personnel assigned to PR and media  
 Additional training in relevant skills for existing personnel  
 New senior personnel skilled in PR and media techniques  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

### III. PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA

#### A. In general

1. Compared to other functions and priorities your organization has, how important is public relations and media?

- critical  
 very important  
 somewhat important  
 not very important

2. How successful would you say your organization has been in the past three years at accomplishing its public relations and media goals?

- very successful  
 somewhat successful  
 not very successful

3. a) Have you ever engaged the services of a media/PR consultant or trainer?

- yes     no

*If no, skip to question 4.*

3. b) How have you used outside media/PR services in the past three years? (Check all that apply)

- training in media skills  
 organizing a press event  
 producing TV spots  
 producing radio spots  
 developing a media list for a press release  
 other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. c) Overall, did the consultants you used prove to be a worthwhile use of your organization's time and money?

yes     no     mixed

3. d) Which experiences proved to be worthwhile?

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3. e) Which experiences proved to be a waste?

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## **B. Communications staff**

1. Please list the name(s) and title(s) of the person(s) who would be the main point of contact in your organization during a communications campaign.

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2. Please indicate in the spaces below the name and title of the person in your office responsible for managing the following functions and the number of people who work with that person on that particular function:

a) Phone system

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b) Computer system

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c) Press and media relations

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d) Field operations

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e) Staff training and education

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f) Publications

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g) Membership services

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h) Mass mailings

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### C. Specific media and PR practices

Following is a list of various techniques and practice different organizations have used as part of their overall public relations and media effort. For each one, please give us your best estimate of how many times your organization has used that technique in the past three years. Also on a scale of 1 to 5, with "1" being most successful, indicate how successfully you think you have been using the technique or practice. (If you have not used a particular technique or practice in the past three years, please put "0" in the first space and leave the second space blank.)

	<b>How Many Times In Past 3 Years?</b>	<b>How Successful?</b> 1 = most successful 5 = least successful
1. Held a press conference	_____	_____
2. Mailed out a press release	_____	_____
3. Met with a newspaper editorial board	_____	_____
4. Placed an opinion piece in a newspaper	_____	_____
5. Mailed out and editorial memorandum	_____	_____
6. Appeared on a radio or TV talk show	_____	_____
7. Produced and/or distributed a video press release or actuality	_____	_____
8. Produced and/or distributed a radio press release or actuality	_____	_____

9. Produced and/or distributed radio public service announcements (PSAs) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Produced and/or distributed TV PSAs \_\_\_\_\_
11. Produced and/or distributed print PSAs \_\_\_\_\_
12. Produced &/or distributed outdoor PSAs \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. INTRA AND INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Intra-organizational communications refers to contacts among your staff members, whether they are all at one site or are more far flung. Inter-organizational communications refers to your contacts with affiliates, members other constituency groups or other organizations.

##### A. In general

1. Overall how efficient would you say your organization is at coordinating various internal activities?

- very efficient  
 somewhat efficient  
 not very efficient

2. How much time would you say is wasted trying to get key staff members together to make decisions or manage ongoing projects?

- (a lot of time  
 some time  
 not very much time at all)

3. a) Does your organization have a regular newsletter or other publication?

- yes     no

*If no. skip to question 4.*

3. b) How large is the publications circulation? \_\_\_\_\_

3. c) How frequently does it come out? \_\_\_\_\_

3. d) How is it distributed? (Check as many as apply)

- Regular mail  
 Electronic mail  
 Fax  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. e) To whom does it go? \_\_\_\_\_



4. a) Does your organization send out urgent occasional communications, such as legislative or media alerts, to its members or affiliates?

yes     no

*If no skip to question 5.*

4. b) Roughly how often would you say these communications/alerts occur?

4. c) To how many people or organizations? \_\_\_\_\_

4. d) In what other ways, if any, are these communications distributed?

5. a) Do you now subscribe, or have you subscribed in the past, to any on-line databases or bulletin board services?

yes, now     yes, in the past     (no

*If no skip to next section.*

5. b) Which ones do you subscribe to now (or have you subscribed to)?

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5. c) Which do you find (or have found) especially useful?

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5. d) Which do you find (or have found) to be a waste? What are (were) the problems?

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### **B. Specific communications methods**

How important are each of the following communications methods in your intra—and inter-organizational contacts? Rate the importance of each on a scale of 1 to 3 in the spaces next to each technique. Give the technique a “1” if it represents an indispensable method to you, a “3” if it represents a relatively unimportant one, or a “2” if it falls somewhere in between. Put “N/A” in the space after any methods you do not use at all. Please note that we are not asking you to measure how frequently you use

these methods, but how much of a difference they make to you when you do use them.

	<b>INTRA-ORG</b>	<b>INTER-ORG</b>
	(1 = INDISPENSIBLE; 3 = UNIMPORTANT)	
1. Normal telephone calls	_____	_____
2. Face-to-face meetings	_____	_____
3. Voice mail	_____	_____
4. Photocopy	_____	_____
5. Fax	_____	_____
6. Overnight mail	_____	_____
7. Electronic mail	_____	_____
8. Conferences and large meetings	_____	_____
9. Organization newsletter or magazine	_____	_____
10. Audiotapes	_____	_____
11. Videotapes	_____	_____

#### V. COMPETENCIES, NEEDS, AND FRUSTRATIONS

1. How sophisticated would you say your organization is in the use of the following communications technologies?

	ADVANCED	ABOUT AVERAGE	BEHIND
a) Telephone-based communications	_____	_____	_____
b) Computer-based communications	_____	_____	_____
c) Use of TV and video	_____	_____	_____
d) Media and press relations	_____	_____	_____
e) Publications	_____	_____	_____

2. Following is a list of frustrations some organizations have listed among their communications problems. On a scale of 1 to 5 — with “5” representing a severe problem and “1” representing no problem at all — how serious are the following problems in your organization?

(1 = NO PROBLEM;  
5= SEVERE PROBLEM)

- a) Unable to get people on the telephone \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Getting key people from outside together for meetings \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Getting good media coverage \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Coordinating the activities of various parts of your organization \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Coordinating activities with coalition partners or other organizations \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Managing contacts with members and affiliates \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Marketing and distributing reports and publications \_\_\_\_\_

3. Suppose you were putting together a fundraising proposal to upgrade your organization’s communications capabilities. IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, what are the first three things in equipment, personnel or services you would ask for?

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# Appendix C

## Press Calls

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Caller \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

To do:

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Deadline \_\_\_\_\_

Staff \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix D

## Press Conferences

### ONE WEEK BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

Arrange for a room which is not too large as to look empty if attendance is light. (Invite friends of your organization to fill the room as unobtrusive observers if attendance is thin) Sites may include hotels, local press clubs or public buildings near media offices.

#### Check on

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Podium                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Easels                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaker system if needed                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity outlets for TV lights   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Microphone stand on podium                | <input type="checkbox"/> Table for media sign-up & materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audio recorder                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Ash trays                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backdrop, blue if possible                | <input type="checkbox"/> Water, for participants             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chairs, theatre style, large centre aisle |  |

Pick a convenient date and time. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are best. Try not to schedule before 10:00 am or after 2:00pm.

Send out written announcements by fax, e-mail, mail or hand deliver to

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Editors          | <input type="checkbox"/> Your national wire service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assignment desks | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly calendars           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reporters        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other supportive groups    |

Prepare written materials including written statements and press kits.

### THE DAY BEFORE

- Formalize the order of speakers and who will say what. Keep who speaks to a manageable few.
- Call all prospective media and urge their attendance
- Double check the wire-services to see if they have announced your press conference on wire.
- Collate materials, make extras for follow-up
- Walk through the site and review details.
- Type up names and titles of spokespeople for media handout

### THAT MORNING

- Make last-minute calls to assignment desk editors.
- Double check the room several hours before.
- Walk through the press conference with principal speakers.

# Appendix E

## Press Kits

- Cover memo or press release**  
with contact name and phone number
- Fact sheet on the issues**
- History of the issues**
- Quotes or comments by experts**
- Selected press clippings**
- Speeches or statements on the issues**
- Charts visuals or photographs**
- Background biography on spokespersons**
- Annual reports**
- Copies of speeches or public testimony**
- Standard one-page description of your organization**

Date kit sent \_\_\_\_\_

List reporters \_\_\_\_\_

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# Appendix F

## Media Briefings

### **SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE YOUR PRESS BRIEFING**

- Reserve a conference room or large office  
(Choose space with large table)
- Call and personally invite 6-12 reporters  
(Invite double the number you expect to attend)
- Confirm your spokesperson and experts  
(Limit your group to 2-3 people)
- Develop your themes and major points  
(Meet in advance to review your presentation)
- Coordinate written materials and background information

### **REHEARSE THE SESSION IN ADVANCE**

- Check with the receptionists and phone operators  
(make sure they know your whereabouts during the press briefing)
- Check the front door  
(Make sure signs clearly state your location)

### **DURING YOUR BRIEFING SESSION**

- Introduce reporters to your speakers and to each other
- Offer coffee, tea or soft drinks
- Manage the meeting  
(Make sure everyone has a chance to speak)
- Keep a record of who attended and who declined
- Follow up with reporters after the briefing  
(Make phone calls or send materials)

### **DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE**

- Have a sign-in sheet for reporters names and addresses.
- Give out press kits.
- Hand out a written list of participants.
- Make opening introductions
- Arrange one-to-one interviews if requested.
- Audiotape the conference for your later use.
- Photograph the proceedings for your internal publications.

### **FOLLOW-UP**

- Send press kits to those who did not attend
- Call reporters who did not attend but indicated an interest

- Call key reporters who did attend to find out if they need more information, but don't be too aggressive.
- Monitor and tape local broadcast coverage
- Clip newspaper coverage
- Compile clips and send to organizational participants and funders with a brief report, as close to the actual event as possible.



# Appendix G

## On-Air Interviews

Program \_\_\_\_\_

Taping date \_\_\_\_\_ Air date/time \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival time \_\_\_\_\_ Taping time \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_

Station contact \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter doing interview \_\_\_\_\_

Background \_\_\_\_\_

Names and background of other guests \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Interview location \_\_\_\_\_

Address and cross street \_\_\_\_\_

Room (and floor) \_\_\_\_\_

Procedures in lobby \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation details \_\_\_\_\_

Air date and time \_\_\_\_\_

The above may be photocopied. Each time your spokesperson does an on-air interview, fill in the above information and give him or her a copy to take to the station to insure they have the needed details.

# Appendix H

## Print Interviews

Interview date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

In person location \_\_\_\_\_ By phone \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Publication \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter Doing Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Background \_\_\_\_\_

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Was the reporter briefed in advance? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Materials sent in advance \_\_\_\_\_

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Expected Publication Date \_\_\_\_\_

Photo \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

The above may be photocopied. Each time your spokesperson does a print interview, fill in the above information and give him or her a copy to take with them to insure they have the needed details

# Appendix I

## Code of Professional Standards

### *Declaration of Principles*

Members of the Public Relations Society of America base their professional principles on the fundamental value and dignity of the individual, holding that the free exercise of human rights, especially freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, is essential to the practice of public relations.

In serving the interests of clients and employers, we dedicate ourselves to the goals of better communication, understanding and cooperation among the diverse individuals, groups, and institutions of society, and of equal opportunity of employment in the public relations profession.

### *We pledge:*

- ★ *To conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness and responsibility to the public;*
- ★ *To improve our individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the profession through continuing research and education;*
- ★ *And to adhere to the articles of the Code of Professional Standards for Practice of Public Relations as adopted by the governing Assembly of the society.*

### *Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations*

These articles have been adopted by the Public Relations Society of America to promote and maintain high standards of public service and ethical conduct among its members.

1. A member shall conduct his or her professional life in accord with the public interest.
2. A member shall exemplify high standards of honesty and integrity while carrying out dual obligations to a client or employer and to the democratic process.
3. A member shall deal fairly with the public, with past or present clients or employers, and with fellow practitioners, giving due respect to the ideal of free inquiry and to the opinions of others.
4. A member shall adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth, avoiding extravagant claims or unfair comparisons and giving credit for ideas and words borrowed from others.
5. A member shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information and shall act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which he or she is responsible.
6. A member shall not engage in any practice which has the purpose of corrupting the integrity of channels or communications or the processes of government.
7. A member shall be prepared to identify publicly the name of the client or employer on whose behalf any public communication is made.

8. A member shall not make use of any individual or organization professing to serve or represent an announced cause, or professing to be unbiased, but actually serving another or undisclosed interest.
9. A member shall not guarantee the achievement of specified results beyond the member's direct control.
10. A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of those concerned, given after a full disclosure of the facts.
11. A member shall not place himself or herself in a position where the member's personal interest is or may be in conflict with an obligation to an employer or client, or others, without full disclosure of such interests to all involved.
12. A member shall not accept fees, commissions, gifts or any other consideration from anyone except clients or employers for whom services are performed without their express consent, given after full disclosure of the facts.
13. A member shall scrupulously safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former and prospective clients or employers.
14. A member shall not intentionally damage the professional reputation or practice of another practitioner.
15. If a member has evidence that another member has been guilty of unethical, illegal, or unfair practices, including those in violation of this code, the member is obligated to present the information promptly to the proper authorities of the society for action in accordance with the procedure set forth in Article XII of the Bylaws.
16. A member called as a witness in a proceeding for enforcement of this Code is obligated to appear, unless excused for sufficient reason by the judicial panel.
17. A member shall, as soon as possible, sever relations with any organization or individual if such relationship requires conduct contrary to the articles of this Code.





## About the Independent Journalism Foundation

The Independent Journalism Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to promoting free and independent media in Eastern and Central Europe and Southeast Asia. IJF's regional Centers for Independent Journalism offer training and institutional support to professional journalists and students through programs designed to serve local needs. All of the courses taught follow the principles practiced by responsible journalists worldwide.

IJF programs are developed by the Centers through an active exchange of ideas and resources with the Foundation, the local media community and course participants. Open communication helps the directors to properly identify local and national needs, and to teach skills which, once put into practice, contribute to long term sustainability. Veteran journalists and media business managers from all over the world form the faculty of the Centers. Each Center serves not only the media of their own country, but also journalists from neighboring countries and the region.

### **IJF has:**

- ★ Introduced systematic training for working journalists in practical journalism and effective business practices, creating a model for others seeking to do media training
- ★ Taught fact-based reporting and research essential to raising standards of journalism in new democracies
- ★ Assisted universities in developing journalism curricula that reflect actual practices, not just theory:
  - developed and implemented a master's degree curriculum for graduates of other disciplines in journalism skills; the curriculum has been replicated at several institutions
  - Trained young professors in skills based teaching techniques and facilitated their integration into regular university programs
  - Trained university economics graduates to become business journalists
  - Mentored university student publications
  - Created a third year skills based curriculum for university students
- ★ Taught Eastern Europe's first courses in how to use the Internet for news gathering
- ★ Published the first journalism review in the region
- ★ Instituted forums for journalists, government officials and experts to engage in public policy debate, both on the record and off
- ★ Helped struggling media enterprises by bringing in experts on modern business skills and practices
- ★ Conducted minority journalism training and Roma internship programs to increase opportunities for ethnic minorities and awareness of minority issues
- ★ Run summer journalism workshops and year-long training for secondary school students
- ★ Introduced digital equipment for broadcast
- ★ Employed qualified trainers and first-rate resources
- ★ Formed alliances with leading media practitioners and organizations to develop programming
- ★ Supported efforts to strengthen the legal framework for media



# About the Media Diversity Institute

**T**he London-based Media Diversity Institute is a non-profit, non-partisan organisation which promotes conflict resolution through diversity reporting in developing societies. The institute's Reporting Diversity Network (RDN), brings together journalists, news organisations, media assistance centres, journalism schools and others in a collaborative effort to mobilise the power of the news media in support of a deeper public understanding of diversity, minority communities, inter-group conflict, and human rights. The RDN promotes the highest standards of professional journalism as they relate to coverage of minorities, diversity, and inter-ethnic relations, and develops the tools, training vehicles and practical reporting initiatives required to implement those standards.

Fair, accurate, sympathetic and in-depth reporting is vital in promoting understanding between different groups. The media has all too often been used as a weapon, promoting prejudice and discrimination. MDI aims to change that and turn media into a tool for strengthening human rights and democracy.

We do this primarily through education, training and co-operation with:

- ★ practicing journalists;
- ★ journalism professors and academics;
- ★ media owners and decision-makers;
- ★ media, human rights and minority organisations.

Our comprehensive approach, dealing with the issue of diversity from all angles, is the Institute's unique characteristic. We train journalists and media managers in best practice; we teach minority organisations how to communicate with the media; we work on strengthening minority media and we work with the journalism professors who will train future generations of journalists. MDI activities are divided into nine main areas:

1. diversity awareness training for journalists and media decision-makers;
2. practical diversity training and professional development for mid-career journalists;
3. diversity reporting news production initiatives, including team-reporting and news agency projects;
4. diversity curriculum development, in cooperation with journalism faculties;
5. media and public relations training for minority groups;
6. projects designed to promote reconciliation through the media;
7. production of diversity handbooks, resource manuals and training manuals;
8. post-conflict professional development for journalists, with a special emphasis on Post Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD);
9. media monitoring of diversity-related issues.

# Media Relation Handbook for Non-Governmental Organizations

Author: Sarah Silver

## *Publishers*

Independent Journalism Foundation [[www.ijf-cij.org](http://www.ijf-cij.org)]

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