Introduction

A Happy Media: Using Public Relations to Meet Your Outreach Needs is based on the half-day workshop delivered to participants at the Community Literacy of Ontario Annual General Meeting and Conference in October 2000.

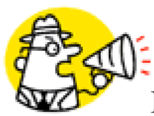
The workshop – and this resource – approach the topic of media relations using a progressive series of exercises designed to help you clearly identify who it is you are trying to communicate with and how to reach them through the mass media. More specifically, we expect that by the time you have completed the seven exercises, you will:

1. recognize the role of the media in your organization's outreach strategy.
2. understand the criteria for selecting and approaching media.
3. be able to apply the principles of developing a good press release.
4. be familiar with methods of preparing spokespeople for media exposure.
5. be able to develop strategies for ensuring the media's involvement.
6. understand techniques for getting articles published without a reporter.

Legend

This resource is based on the participant booklet that was developed for and used during the workshop. In an effort to make this booklet valuable and practical beyond the workshop, we have elaborated upon each of the sections.

This booklet contains both theory and exercises that you can do on your own or with a partner or group. To quickly scan for the type of information you need, look for the following icons:



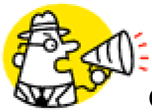
Important: Information contained here includes instructions for completing the exercises.

Valuable: This section provides additional information that may help you to understand the subject and/or complete the exercises.

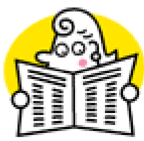
Ideas and Suggestions: Where appropriate, we have included examples and suggestions that you may want to use for your own organization's needs.

Other Sources: Where appropriate, we have included other sources of information on this particular topic.

Why should I use PR?


On the next page, start by identifying what you hope to achieve.
To begin with, think about your organization's objectives. If you haven't already put it into words, think about what your organization wants to achieve in the next 12 months in terms of building public awareness.

Next, think about adjectives you'd like to have associated with your organization, and jot some down in the „thought balloons'.


Public Relations, or PR, is everything you do to communicate your message to the public, which may include clients and members, the media, and the community at large.

If you have used public relations as an effective part of your outreach strategy, then you already know the benefits that can be achieved.

If you haven't, then you should be aware of the advantages of using the media to get your message out. Even if you have managed so far without proactively dealing with the press, or have had negative experiences with the media in the past, here are some reasons to consider PR:

- PR is one of the most effective tools available for reaching a lot of people quickly and at little or no cost to you.
- A positive article in the newspaper is equal to or better than an advertisement, without costing you thousands of dollars.
- Everyone knows that advertising is paid for and decidedly un-objective. Media give your message legitimacy.
- A good relationship with a reporter or editor can be leveraged for years to come and makes each subsequent message easier to publicize.
- Establishing a good reputation in the public eye is an important factor in recruiting good people and attracting clients.

Exercise #1 – Linking to strategy

Some of our Strategic Objective are:

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-
-
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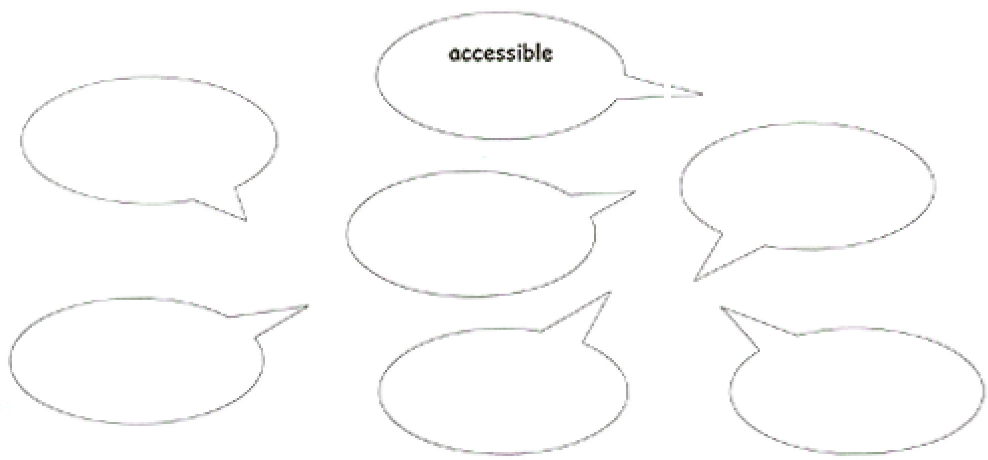
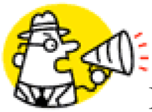
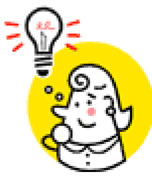
Words or phrases that I would like to have associated with my organization:



What's my story?


In this section, think about what you might do to achieve the objectives you listed on the previous page. Ask yourself what your organization does that can show the public that you are all those things that your thought balloons say you are.


There is a chicken and egg relationship at work here. Sometimes you may already be planning something that would make a great media opportunity. Other times, you may need to generate press so you decide to create an event for them to cover.


Perhaps you are planning an event or activity that you would like to see written up in the press, like a fundraiser or a program graduation. If not, maybe your organization has something great to announce – like receiving an outstanding donation, or graduating your 100th student – where you want to create a media opportunity.

Exercise #2 – Selecting an event

Event or activities my organisation has done, will do or would like to do , that would make news story:

-
-
-
-
-
-

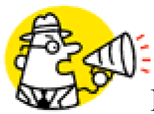
Things my organization would like to announce, or has announced, that would make a good news story:

-
-
-
-
-
-

From the list above, select one event, activity or annoucement to focus on.

My public relations plan will be designed to promote:

Who cares? How do I reach them?



Keeping in mind the event you have selected, you now need to determine your *audience*. The audience is the people you want to receive your message, and they will do this by reading newspapers, listening to the radio, watching television, etc.

1. First, think about where your target audience lives. Is it just in your own community? Maybe people in neighboring communities will also be interested? On the next page, check off the geographical region where your audience is located. Feel free to add to the list.
2. Next, think about the types of people who will want to hear your message. It may be the average citizen, or it may be people who fall into a specific group. Check off the types of people that you want to target, or add your own.
3. Now that you know *whom* you want to reach, you need to know what sort of media will help you reach them.
4. Keeping in mind both the geographical and interest levels you identified, check off the media you want to contact.

A quick note about magazines. Magazines generally fall into two types: **consumer magazines** (which are the type that you buy on the newsstands and which may be purchased by anyone), **and trade magazines** (which are written specifically for people who work in a certain industry and are generally available only by subscription). Both consumer magazines and trade magazines require significant lead times – expect it to take at least three months to see the story in print.

If possible, send an advance release to these „long-lead' publications. That way, the magazine can cover your issue in the month that the event takes place, instead of three months later.

Exercise #3 – Identifying targets

Geographically speaking, my event would be of interest to people:

- ❑ in the community
- ❑ across the province
- ❑ across the country
- ❑ in similar-sized communities
- ❑ in major urban centres
- ❑ in rural areas
- ❑
- ❑

In terms of area of interest, my event would appeal to people:

- ❑ in the general public
- ❑ who are, or whose families are, impacted by this information
- ❑ in a particular field of work ______________
- ❑ in a special interest group or demographic (seniors, youth, ...)
- ❑
- ❑

To reach the types of people in the areas I have indicated above, I need to contact the following types of media:

- ❑ community papers (usually come out weekly)
- ❑ daily newspapers in my area/province
- ❑ daily newspapers in other areas/provinces
- ❑ magazines ___________________________
- ❑ radio
- ❑ local television
- ❑ national television
- ❑ special interest/trade publications ____________________
- ❑
- ❑

Who am I gonna call?

It's easy enough to say you'll target community newspapers in your region, but what are the names of those papers? Who do you call? What's their phone number?

A number of comprehensive resources are available that list print and broadcast media and the key contacts for each. These can be purchased, or you can check your local library to see if they carry them. Some of these include:

Matthews Media Directories
published by Matthews Media Services
Commerce Court East
Ste. 850, P.O. Box 279
Toronto, ON M5L 1E9
416-361-6325
www.matthews.ca

Community Markets Canada
published by The Canadian Community Newspapers Association
90 Eglinton Avenue East, Ste. 206
Toronto, ON M4P 2Y3
416-482-1090
www.ccna.ca

You can also use the Internet to find out the names of publications. The CCNA website lists hundreds of community papers and links to those with their own sites.

If you cannot get your hands on a directory but can come up with the names of the media you need to contact, you can use good old 411 to get the numbers, then call to find out who your contacts are. For consumer and trade magazines, you'll need to do a little research to find out which ones are appropriate.

Call each outlet to ask which reporters might be interested in the story. In addition to the reporter, find out the name of the assignment editor, which is the person who hands out stories to be covered by staff or freelance reporters.

Building a database

By entering the information you gather into a computer, you can easily update it the next time with considerably less effort. You'll find out what works for you, but the basic information is as follows:

About the media outlet:

Publication/Program	Phone number (switchboard)	Mailing address

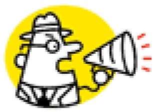
About the reporter/editor:

Name/Title	Direct Phone	Fax	E-mail

Over time you will add information about the publication or program, like circulation and frequency, and about the reporter, like their special interests and preferred method of communication.

Many reporters say their preferred method of receiving press releases is e-mail.

What do I expect to achieve?



Once the event is over, you will be measuring your success against your expectations, so it's time to decide what those expectations are. They should be realistic (better to exceed expectations than to fall short) and measurable. "I hope to improve public perception of my organization" is only measurable if you do a poll afterwards to find out, so don't set a goal unless you plan to do what's necessary to measure your success against it.

It's a good idea to do this AFTER you have decided which media to target, so your expectations will be reasonable.

Here are some examples of measurable goals:

"With our public relations initiative, I believe we can get mentioned in one local daily paper, two community weeklies, two radio stations and one TV station."

"With our public relations initiative, I believe we can reach 35% of the population of Jonestown." (This is measured by adding up the readership/viewership of the media outlets that ran your story and comparing it to the community population. You find out the reach of the media either through a directory or by calling to ask.)

"With our public relations initiative, I believe we can attract 10 new clients in the next two months." (To measure this, you will need to ask all new clients within the designated period what persuaded them to come to your organization.)

For more information on setting measurable goals for PR, visit **www.instituteforpr.com** and browse the section on Measurement & Evaluation.

Exercise #4 – Setting goals

I believe we can get a minimum of the following media to cover the story:

____

____

____

____

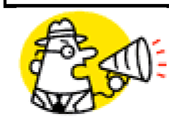
I believe we can reach ___% of the people in ___________ through our media coverage.

I believe we can gain ___ new volunteers and/or ___ new clients within the next ___ months as a result of this media coverage.

I believe we can...

I believe we can...

What should my press release say?



Writing a press release involves two key steps.

Step I - What do you already know about your event? - On the next page, write down the 5Ws for your event.

Step II – Defining your key messages - Your key messages are three to five ideas that you hope to get across to the media and, in turn, the public. On the next page, write down three key messages.

For example:

- *Organization X recently raised $40,000 for a new program.*
- *The new program will help high school kids with below-average reading skills.*
- *As a result of this program, the dropout rate will decline by at least 10%.*

There are two key types of communication that you may send to the media. If you are simply asking the media to attend an event you will send what is called an „alert’, which is the PR equivalent of an invitation. It covers the 5Ws, and that’s about it.

A „press release’ can be sent out either before or after an event, but the goal is to provide the reporter with enough information to write a story. In all likelihood they’ll call for more information, but a good press release can stand on its own.

Thinking of your event in as few words as possible helps clarify the idea in your mind, and can be used to help you craft a title for your release. Try to envision the perfect newspaper headline ... what would you most like to see on the front of your newspaper the day after the event? Is it “Local group raises millions for adult literacy”? How about “Mayor congratulates literacy group on 10 years of success”? On the next page, jot down a few „perfect’ headlines.

Exercise #5 – Assembling the pieces

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

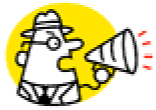
Why:

'Perfect' headlines based on my event might be:

The key message I want to convey in my press release are:

1.
2.
3.

How do I put it together?



On the next page, or using an extra sheet of paper, try to write at least four paragraphs of your release. You can write a pre-event release about your plans and what you hope to achieve, or you can pretend the event is over and that you are sending out a release that describes your success. Remember to use your ‚perfect headlines’ to help you concoct a title.

Press releases should always have the most important information first, since many reporters only have time to read the first few lines. The first two paragraphs should briefly and succinctly convey the key messages and the 5Ws.

The remaining three to five paragraphs should contain supporting detail -- quotes from key spokespeople about the importance of the event or issue, background on the program or organization, and less critical information about the event.

Most organizations have their own ideas of the correct format of a press release, but the outline on the next page gives an example of the elements you want to incorporate and how you might assemble them.

Here are some tips for the final product:

- LESS IS MORE! Limit your release to one page.
- A page or two of background information is acceptable, like the organization’s history or statistics on literacy, but put each on a separate page labeled „Background on ____’ so that the reporter can quickly decide to read it or not.
- Sticking to one page doesn’t mean using really small fonts! Use 12 point or more.
- Don’t use jargon, buzzwords or acronyms.
- Don’t overdo the adjectives, or the reporter will feel that you’re putting words in his/her mouth. Try to stick to the facts.
- Double-check spelling and facts, and always have someone else proofread it.

For examples of press releases, visit **www.newswire.ca**

Exercise #6 – Writing the release

For Immediate ReleaseContact
or
Embargoed until ____________________

(release instructions)

Contact: __________________________
____
____

contact info (name, organization, phone#)

____

headline

____

body

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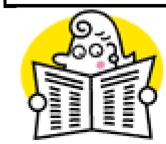
-30-

use to indicate the end of the release

(Letterhead should include organization name, address, phone number)

Note: if the release is more than one page, type “more” at the bottom of this page, and put “Page 2” at the top of the next.

Sending it out

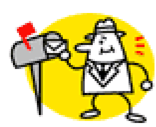


The alert should be sent out allowing enough lead-time for the story to be assigned and the reporter to make room in her/his schedule to attend the event and/or do interviews. A week is a good guideline, but if you are unsure, call and ask the editor.

If you know the reporter's preferred method of receiving releases, use it. Otherwise, use e-mail if you can, fax if you can't, and regular mail if you have no other choice.

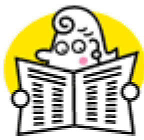
A few tips on e-mail:

- Never send attachments of any sort; paste your release directly into the body of the message.
- Make sure the subject line is meaningful and doesn't resemble junk mail.
- Ensure that your complete contact information, including name, phone and address, are included at the end of the message.
- Check for strange characters – an ® in Word can turn into a Q in e-mail.



Following up...

… At Your Own Risk!



While most PR agencies will tell you that they make a follow-up phone call to every reporter they send a press release to, many reporters will tell you that it is unnecessary, and that they may even decide to pass over your story because of it.

Assuming your release is well written and your media list is accurate, you can generally assume that the release will end up in the right hands, and the reporter will be more than capable of deciding whether or not to cover the story.

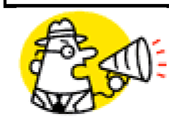
DO follow up:

- if an invitation has been extended for which you require an RSVP.
- if you have something additional to provide – like photos or interview opportunities – that was not mentioned in the release.
- if you need to make a correction.
- if you have established a relationship with a particular reporter and have reason to believe she/he would be interested and not bothered by the call. If the reception is less than warm, make a note in your database not to do it again!

DO NOT follow up:

- to ask if a fax, e-mail or letter has been received.
- just to say, “So, what do you think?”
- even for the „DO’ reasons above if the reporters are nearing their deadlines. If you don’t know what the deadline is, then any sort of phone call could be hazardous.

What do I do about spokespeople?



There is no point getting the press interested if you don't have anyone for them to talk to! On the opposite page are a few steps to follow:

1. Begin by jotting down the names of a few people that you think might make good spokespeople.
2. Ideally working with a partner, anticipate the questions you might be asked.
3. Then take turns interviewing each other until you feel comfortable answering the questions and are able to stick to your key messages.

Reporters like to add the „human element' to any story. Having a person on hand who fits the bill – like a person in your program – makes the story a one-stop shopping experience for the busy reporter.

Here are some quick tips you can use to prepare spokespeople for media attention:

1. Refine your key messages. Have a look at what you wrote down on page 14 and see if you would make any changes now that you have written your release.
2. Practice! Role-playing is an integral part of getting comfortable with the information. Without it, spokespeople may find that they get „brain-block' on the simplest questions like "Tell me what happened here today" or "Why?"
3. If your organization has been in the press in the past, or if there is anything controversial about what you are doing, be prepared to address those issues.
4. If a question is uncomfortable or off-topic, bridge to your key messages: "You bring up a good point ... that's why what we are doing today is so important ..."
5. There is no such thing as off-the-record.
6. If you are going to be on-camera, dress simply and in solid colours. Don't try a fancy new hairdo or wear more makeup or jewelry than you normally would.
7. Relax, be yourself and smile!

The following is a good beginner's guide to media training:
John Wade, Dealing Effectively with the Media, published by Crisp Publications of California.

Exercise #7 – Preparing spokespeople

Potential spokespeople for my event are:

From the organization	**From the client base**	**From the community (person-on-the-street, local businessperson or politician)**
• • • • • •	• • • • • •	• • • • • •

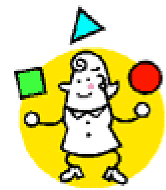
Questions the spokespeople need to anticipate include:

1. What is going on here today? 2.
2. Why are you doing this?
3. Who benefits?
4. Why should the public care about this?
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

How do I make this a success?

Things to remember on the day of the event:

- ❑ If you have too many balls to juggle, recruit some help so adequate attention is paid to your media guests.
- ❑ Set up an easy-to-find rendezvous for media to get oriented, pick up any background materials and arrange for interviews.
- ❑ Have a spot scouted out for interviews -particularly with television and radio - with a good background and a minimum of noise.
- ❑ If you have signage bearing your organization's name and/or logo, try to get it in the background to build recognition.
- ❑ If you have anything else that the press might find useful - background information, photographs, videotapes or people - have them on hand because, in most cases, later is too late.



What do I do if they don't show?!

BREATHE!

It happens to everyone. You cannot control the events of the world, and if a crisis breaks out or it's just a busy news day, you can end up with no media on the scene.

Take heart, then take charge.

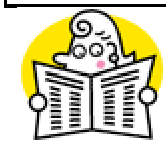
The best plan is to be prepared:

- ❑ Have a camera on hand to take some pictures, and a runner ready to get prints.
- ❑ Get prints scanned electronically if at all possible so they can be e-mailed.
- ❑ Have a complete release, including quotes, ready to fax or e-mail.
- ❑ Find out where your spokespeople are going to be for the next few hours/days before you call any media.
- ❑ Call the reporters/editors on your list, starting with the most likely to be interested (like community papers) and ask if you can send them a final release and photos, either by e-mail or courier.
- ❑ Try to set up phone or in-person interviews between media and spokespeople.

Things to photograph:

- ❑ your spokespeople, preferably in action; participants, particularly children;
- ❑ any well-known people from the community, including politicians, athletes, businesspeople;
- ❑ any presentations or speeches; activity of any sort (pie eating, ribbon cutting, whatever)

How do I measure my success?



Now that your event is complete, it's time to evaluate your success. There are two key aspects to this process:

1. Media Monitoring:

- First, you need to collect all of the newspaper clippings and, if possible, tapes or transcripts of TV and radio stories.
- It is most cost-efficient to ask reporters when the stories will run and to collect them yourself. Many newspapers from other areas can be accessed through libraries or the Internet. TV and radio stories are harder to get.
- If a large number of media covered the story, and/or they are outside your local area, you may want to consider paying for a monitoring service. This can be costly, however, and it can take several months to get all of the clips. For more information, check with a monitoring agency like Bowden's. You can learn more at their website: www.bowdens.com
- You could try a combination of both. If you know an item ran but you do not have access to the clip, you can pay a media monitoring service just for a copy of that particular item. Each item will come at a price, but it is still cheaper than signing up for a monitoring service.

2. Evaluating the Coverage:

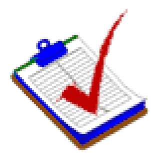
How you evaluate the coverage will depend on the goals you set for yourself. Your final report should also include an assessment of what percentage of the coverage was positive and what percentage was accurate.

Many PR companies measure media coverage in terms of dollars by finding out how much they would pay for an equivalent amount of ad space. For example, an article in the National Post that is three columns wide and eight inches long would be 'worth' about $20,000 if that's how much an ad that size cost. In a community paper, an ad of the same size may be worth closer to $500. It can take some time and resources to get all of these figures, but depending on the coverage it can be an impressive way to quantify your success.

The Big Checklist

You can use this list each time you do media relations to ensure you haven't missed any critical steps. Keep in mind that you may need to shuffle the order or do things simultaneously, depending on the time available to you

- ❑ review communications objectives to ensure „fit'
- ❑ pinpoint your audience
- ❑ select media to target
- ❑ update database
- ❑ outline measurable objectives
- ❑ write out 5Ws
- ❑ determine key messages
- ❑ write the press release
- ❑ format the release
- ❑ e-mail, fax or mail it out
- ❑ follow up only as appropriate
- ❑ assemble and train spokespeople
- ❑ plan for on-site media handling
- ❑ prepare in case they don't show
- ❑ monitor for clips
- ❑ evaluate coverage
- ❑ CELEBRATE!



Where do I go from here?

Often a course like this one allows you to confirm what you already know, while at the same time providing an opportunity for new learning.

We recommend that you use this opportunity to identify the areas where you've progressed, and also those where you would like to do some more work.

Three new things I learned:

1.
2.
3.

One thing I would like to further learn/develop is …	Who can help me with this?	Where can I find out more?