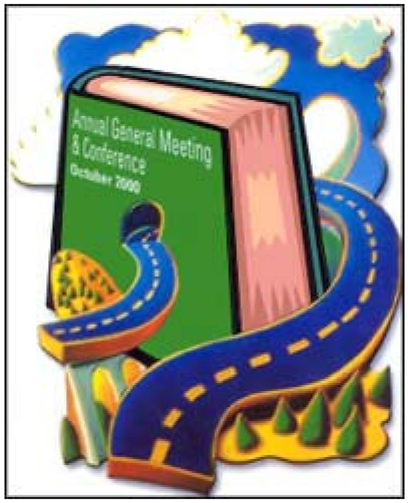
Creative Outreach Strategies for the 21st Century



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Community Literacy
of Ontario

Creative Outreach Strategies for the 21st Century

Workshop #1 - Strategic Recruiting: Using Creative Communication Principles to Find the People You Need
&
Workshop #2 - A Happy Media:
Using Public Relations to Meet Your Outreach Needs

Workbooks for workshops delivered at the October 2000 Annual General Meeting and Conference of Community Literacy of Ontario

Community Literacy of Ontario
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Strategic Recruiting:

Using Creative Communication
Principles to Find the People You Need

Introduction

Strategic Recruiting: Using Creative Communication Principles to Find the People You Need is based on the half-day workshop delivered to participants at the Community Literacy of Ontario Annual General Meeting and Conference in October 2000.

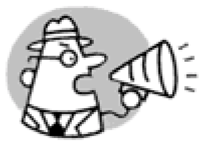
The workshop - and this resource - approach the topic of recruiting from a cyclical communications model. Through the progressive series of exercises, we hope that you will be able to clearly identify who it is you are trying to recruit and then use that information to structure your recruitment messages accordingly. More specifically, we expect that by the time you have completed the 12 exercises, you will have:

- identified your organization's specific recruiting needs
- understood and applied the basic principles of persuasive communication
- identified different cost-effective recruitment techniques and resources
- developed a simple and practical recruitment action plan

developed simple evaluation tools that you can use to help you measure the effectiveness of your recruitment strategy.

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 five sections in this booklet.

In each section you will find one or more exercises on the right hand page. On the left-hand page, you will find text arranged hierarchically according to the following icons.



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

Valuable: This section provides additional information that you may or may not need to help you 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: Also where appropriate, we have included other sources of information on this particular topic, including book titles and Internet addresses.

My Organization's Recruitment Needs

To begin the recruitment strategy you will need your organization's most recent strategic, operational or business plan. Depending on your organization you should have at least one of these documents to refer to for information about the organization's direction for the next one to five years.

Although every organization needs to recruit new people (e.g., learners, volunteers, members, participants or employees), each agency or company has specific, individual recruitment needs. These needs often stem from the goal-setting process where leaders identify the organization's goals for a specified period of time.

The strategic goals serve both as a base for building a recruitment strategy and for evaluating its success. At the end of the goal setting, the outcomes provide objective and accountable measurements that can be used to help assess the objectives and to plan new ones. The diagram on the opposite page visually represents this cyclical process.

If your organization has not yet begun developing a business or strategic plan and you are not sure how or where to begin, here are a few sources you may want to cheek out.

- Peter Schwartz, The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World
- John Bryson, Strategic Planning for Public and Non-profit
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, How to Prepare a Business Plan, http://strategis.ic.gc.ca

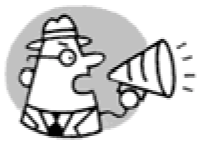
Exercise #1 - Where did I put that thing?

Do I have our organization's...

Business Plan	❑Yes	❑No	⟶	Who can help me get this? ________
Strategic Plan	❑Yes	❑No	⟶	Who can help me get this? ________
Operational Plan	❑Yes	❑No	⟶	Who can help me get this? ________

Notes....

Recruitment Strategy Objectives



Using the information from your planning document(s), you now want to identify specific recruitment objectives. As part of this stage, some of the key questions to ask are:

- *Who do we need?*
- *Why do we need them?*
- *What will they be doing?*
- *How will they contribute to the organization?*
- *How will our organization benefit them?*
- *How many do we need?*
- *When do we need them?*

Objectives flow from goals and provide a more detailed direction than goals. A strategic objective can be defined as "a specific statement of quality, quantity and time values."

To identify specific recruitment objectives, try to ensure that they are both realistic and measurable. For example, instead of "We need to attract more learners to our programs," use words that quantify your task: "Between January 1, 2001, and March 31, 2000, we should have attracted 25 new learners to our programs."

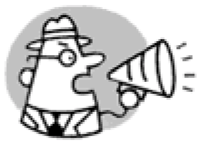
Exercise #2 - Let's Recruit

Using the box below, identify your organization's specific recruitment objectives.

Some of our Recruitment Objectives are:

-
-
-
-
-

Recruitment Strategy Objectives



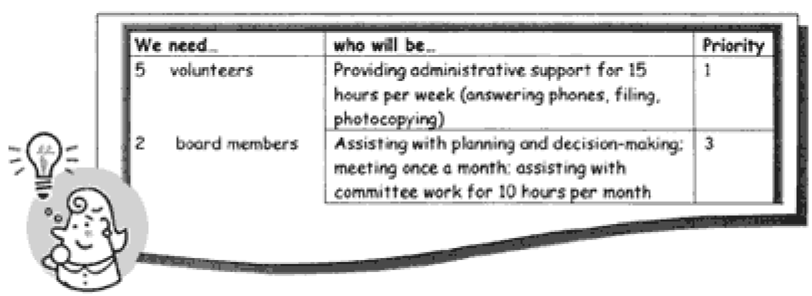
Now that you have identified some of the specific recruitment objectives, it is time to look more closely at who you need and - what their roles will be.

1. Using the box on the opposite page, identify who it is you need to recruit and how many (e.g., 5 volunteers).

2. In the next column, indicate - as specifically as possible - what those particular recruits will be doing (e.g., assisting with administrative duties for 15 hours per week).

3. Finally, indicate the priority for each of the different types of recruits you have selected.

From a strategic communication perspective, this is the first and arguably most critical step in the recruitment process. It is from here that you will begin to identify both the specific message(s) that you went to deliver and the intended audience(s).

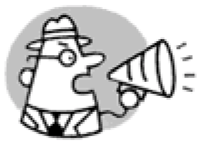


We need...	who will be...	Priority
5 volunteers	Providing administrative support for 15 hours per week (answering phones, filing, photocopying)	1
2 board members	Assisting with planning and decision-making; meeting once a month; assisting with committee work for 10 hours per month	3

Exercise #3 - Who Do We Need and What Will They be Doing?

We need....	who will be....	Priority
______ volunteers		
______ volunteer tutors		
______ board members		
______ learners		
______ community partners		
______ funders		
______ other		

Communication Strategy



1. Using the information from the table on the previous page, identify your top recruiting priority and some of the characteristics of the ideal recruit (e.g., motivated, team player, access to transportation, computer skills, woman/man,

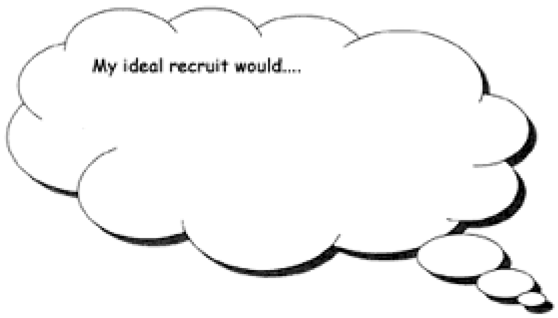
2. Now, write down that information in the bubble on the following page. Use whatever writing style you prefer - bullets, sentences, cluster diagram, etc.

3. Once you have completed this, go back over your list and attach priority rankings to the various characteristics. In short, you now want to determine what is essential, what is important and what would be nice.

4. Then use that priority assessment to write down a profile of each of the recruit types (i.e., volunteers, learners, board members, etc.). You may want to write this profile as if you were writing a job advertisement (e.g., for a volunteer tutor you may decide "The ideal recruit should be a man between 25 and 45 years of age with good computer skills, a basic understanding of literacy issues, some teaching experience and excellent interpersonal skills").

This first communication strategy exercise is designed to start you thinking about who your ideal target audience is and where you might find them. At this stage, you should not worry about whom you think you can get but, rather, whom you would like to get by doing this Christmas wish list exercise, you will be further identifying the characteristics, skills and knowledge that are important to your organization.

Exercise #4 - Our Ideal Recruit



The profile of our ideal ________________ (recruit type) is ...

Communication Strategy

You should now have a mental image of whom you want. It's time to reverse the roles and think about life from their perspectives.

Using the table on the next page, try to identify what would be important to your audience. As much as possible, you want to identify common elements of the target audience. However, it is also important to remember that the profile you develop will not apply to everyone, so you may have to repeat this step for different groups.

To ensure that your recruitment Strategy is targeted (at the right people) and meaningful (to them), it is important to answer two fundamental questions:

1. *Who is our Target audience?*
2. *What are our desired Outcomes for this communication piece?*

The answers to these two questions are critical in all written documents, especially when you, as the writer, are trying to persuade someone to do or believe something. This exercise allows you to start matching your priorities with what you think will be your audience's priorities.

For more information about developing a communication strategy, consider:

- Janel M. Radtke, <u>Strategic Communications for Nonprofit Organizations</u>

Exercise #5 - A little Target Practice

My target audience for this recruitment document is ______________.

	I know this about the reader's...	I think this about the reader's...	I need to find out more about the reader's...
Needs			
Values			
Expectations			
Knowledge of the organization			
Technical knowledge			
Background (e.g. age, sex, occupation, marital status)			

Communication Strategy

Outcomes

At this time you may have a very good idea of who will be your audience. The next step is to clearly identify your intended goals of the communication piece. Using the information you have collected on your strategic objectives and your intended audience(s), write down what you think are one to three possible - and realistic - outcomes. Examples of outcomes you might consider include:

- *Do you want the readers to learn more about your organization?*
- *Do you want to convince them of a need (learner, financial, volunteer)?*
- *Do you want them to fill out a form and send it back?*

Whenever possible, you should adhere to the *one messaqe, one document* principle. Simply, this means that each letter, memo or advertisement should be designed to accomplish one objective or outcome.

Let's assume you have identified the need to recruit more learners. Furthermore, through your research, you have learned that new learners have historically been referred by other service providers in the community. Consequently, you have decided that you went to create a document that will inform your referral sources about the programs and services you provide.

So now you know:

Target audience: primary referral sources

Primary outcome for document: to increase awareness among referral sources about the programs, services, hours of operation and location of centre.

Exercise #6 - The Write Outcomes

Outcomes for this recruitment document as:

Primary Outcome:

Secondary Outcome(s):

Communication Strategy

You have now identified whom you want to target and what you hope to achieve with your document(s). Using the space 1 on the opposite page, begin framing your message.

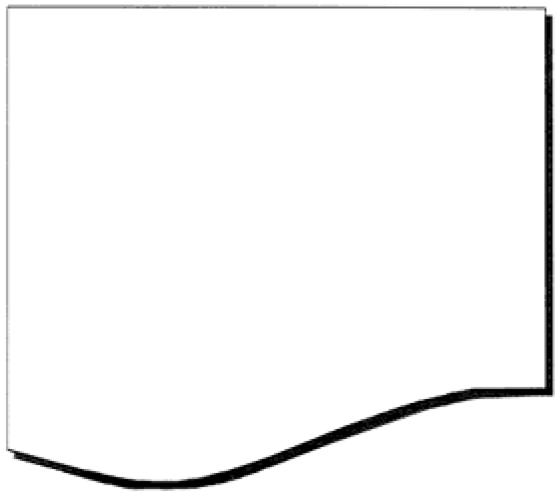
You can use an outline, a cluster diagram or whatever method you like to help you draft your message. Remember, this is just a draft and not the final product, so do not worry about exact wording, grammar or structure.

If you don't feel ready to start crafting a message, you can proceed to the next step, which is to start thinking about the presentation format or formats that you could use, and then come back to this exercise.

Not sure what to write? Try some theme words to get the creative juices flowing. Let's say you want to recruit board directors. Start with a list or cluster of words that you think will be meaningful to them and a list or cluster of words that are meaningful to you.

Board Members	Us
• Valuable experience	• Connections in community
• Minimal commitment	• Broad mix of skills
• Helping others	• Ideas & task people
• Important community programs	• Fundraisers
•	• Commitment to literacy

Exercise #7 - Target + Outcomes = Message



Communication Strategy

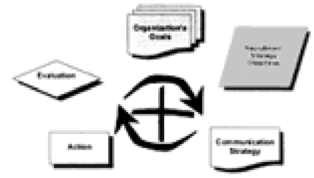
Presentation Possibilities

Given what you know about your audience, try to brainstorm possible ways of reaching your audience. At this time, don't worry about budget or time constraints. Think only about different methods, materials and media that you could use.

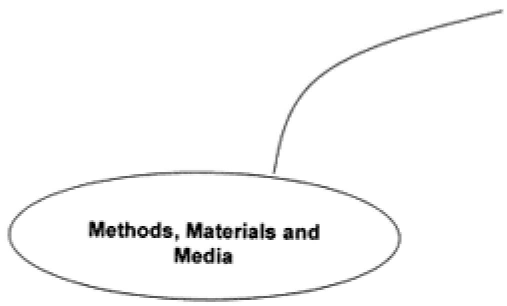
The cluster diagram or mind map exercise on the opposite page is a great way to begin the creative thinking process and to visually see the relationship between different ideas. Try not to evaluate your ideas or worry about where your ideas may be leading you. During this exercise, you should write quickly but naturally, letting your mind establish the associations.

Try to think of at least two sources and/or methods that you have not used or even considered in the past. For example, perhaps you have identified that you might be able to attract new learners through your current learners. Therefore, you could create a referral card that your current learners could hand out to potential learners.

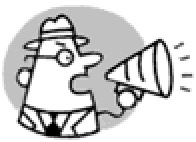
Another variation on this exercise is to brainstorm at least five ideas that will not cost more than $50. The purpose is not to restrict your budget to this amount, but to identify creative and inexpensive alternatives. You can even use the research into your target audience to assist you. For example, perhaps you have identified through your research that 20% of the population does 80% of the volunteer work in your community, and of that 20%, most attend some kind of religious service every week. Therefore, you could produce a flyer to distribute to local churches, synagogues and/or temples in your area.



Exercise #8 - How can I Present the Message?



Communication Strategy



Now that you have identified possible presentation formats for recruiting, it's time to prioritize them. Given what you know and think would be most effective with your target audience and your expected outcomes, review your list above and rank the ideas in order of priority on the opposite page.

At this time, you may also want to review your budget and compare it with your recruitment priorities. It is important, however, to not limit your thinking too early because of perceived budgetary constraints.

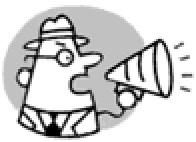
Some of the budgetary questions that will have to be answered include:

- *Do we have the staffing and/or consulting resources to complete this job?*
- *What are the administrative expenses (including printing, graphic design, postage, telephone charges, room rentals, refreshments, etc.)?*
- *How much will the administrative expenses be? Do they fit within our accepted range of administrative costs?*

Exercise #9 - And the Winners are....

My preferred presentation methods, materials and media are:

Action



You can use the review checklist on the opposite page to review your progress to date and to identify areas that still need work.

Additionally, if you have completed the exercises in this booklet once, you may find it more practical and efficient to simply photocopy the review checklist and the action plan worksheet on page 27 and work from them.

Exercise #10 - What a Review!

TASK I have...	Additional information I need	Who can help me with this?	Complete (✔)
1. Reviewed strategic plan			
2. Identified who we need to recruit			
3. What the recruits will be doing			
4. Developed profile(s) of the target audience			
5. Identified my organization's expected outcomes for the communication piece(s)			
6. Identified preferred ways of reaching the target audience			

Action

Using the first box on the worksheet on the opposite page, transfer the information that you have completed in the previous 10 exercises so that you have a summary of the

- strategic objective (Exercise #1)
- target audience (Exercise #5)
- expected outcomes (Exercise #6)
- message details and presentation methods (Exercises #8 and #9)
- a estimated costs.

With this information as your guide, you con use the second table to develop a more detailed action plan for reaching the strategic objective.

If you identified more than one target recruitment group (e.g., volunteers and learners), you should use separate worksheets for each group.

For each presentation format, try to identify at least one indicator of success. These indicators will be your way of evaluating your recruitment strategy. Apart from an increase in the number of recruits, several examples of success indicators include:

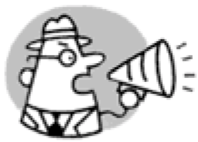
- Amount and value of media coverage
- Number of follow-up phone calls
- Percentage of increase in referrals attributable to recruitment strategy
- Positive informal and formal feedback about the communication piece.

Exercise #11

Strategic Objective: ____
Target Audience: ____
Expected Outcome(s): ____
____
Message Details: ____
____
Costs: ____
____

Presentation format(s)	**Task(s)**	**By Whom**	**By When**	**Indicator(s) of Success**	**Complete (✔)**

Evaluation



At the end of your recruitment strategy, you will probably want to know how successful you have been. By preparing in advance *what, how and when* you are going to evaluate, you will be helping to ensure that you obtain valuable and meaningful information for your organization.

1. Using the table on the opposite page, indicate why you are conducting an evaluation on the communication strategy and what information you hope to obtain.

2. Once you have identified the information that will be important, try to identify three ways you could measure your success.

3. Indicate when would be the best time(s) to conduct the evaluation.

4. Finally, if you have not yet determined indicators of success for your action plan, you can take the information from Exercise #12 and add it to your action plan on page 27.

In addition to providing feedback about a project, an evaluation is often conducted so that funders can ensure their money is being well spent. Other organizations require it as part of their policies and procedures. In these cases, the reason for an evaluation is *justification.*

Another very good, but sometimes overlooked, reason to evaluate is for planning. The information collected from an evaluation - even a simple one - can provide important data that can be incorporated into the next planning process.

In addition to an actual count of new recruits, several examples of simple and effective evaluation methods include:

- tracking telephone inquiries

- monitoring media exposure and using a simple formula to calculate the monetary value of this exposure

- hosting focus groups with new recruits to find out what worked and why.

Exercise #12 - How did We do?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Our reason for this evaluation is:</td></tr>
<tr><th>What do we want to know?</th><th>Ways to measure success?</th><th>When</th><th>What would be an indicator of success?</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>1.

2.

3.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>1.

2.

3.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>1.

2.

3.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
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A Happy Media:

Using Public Relations
to Meet Your Outreach Needs

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.

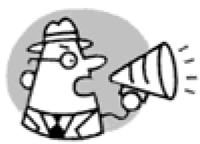
The workshop - and this resource - approach the topic of media relations using a progressive series of exercises designed to help you clearly identify who it is you are trying to communicate with and how to reach them through the mass media. More specifically, we expect that by the time you have completed 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 ex 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 con do on your own or with a partner or group. To quickly scan f or 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, if 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:

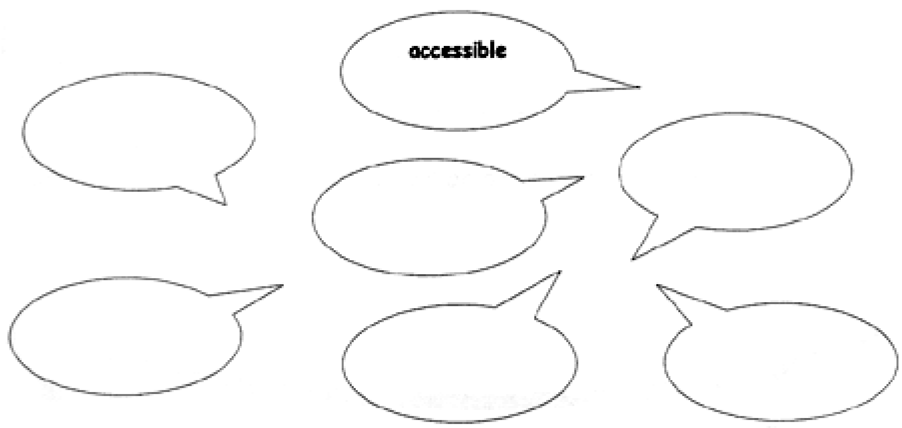
- PR, is one of the most effective tools available for reaching a lot of people quickly and at little or no cost to you.
- A positive article in the newspaper is equal to or better than an advertisement, without costing you thousands of dollars.
- Everyone knows that advertising is paid for and decidedly 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

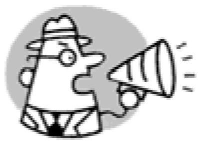
Some of our Strategic Objectives are:

-
-
-
-
-
-

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

Events or activities my organization has done, will do or would like to do, that would make a good 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 announcement to focus on.

My Public Relations plan will be designed to promote:

What's my story?

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, cheek 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. Cheek off the types of people that you went 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-lend' 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 con 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.

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' head lines.

Exercise #5 - Assembling the pieces

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why:

'Perfect' headlines based on my event might be:

____

____

____

____

____

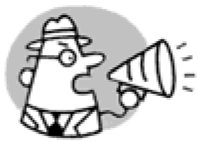
The key messages I want to convey in my press release are:

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 brief ly 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 On 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 Release
or
Embargoed until ___________
release instructions

Contact: ___________________________
____
____
contact info
(name, organization, phone #)*

____
headline

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____
body

-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 ♍ 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.

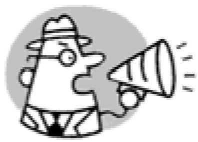
DO follow up:

- 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 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. Define your key messages. Have a look at what you wrote down on page 41 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 post, 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 event are:

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

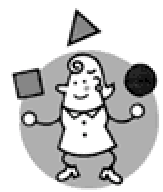
Questions the spokespeople need to anticipate include.

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

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, cheek 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!