

Working with the media

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Addendum:

Happy Media: Using Public Relations to Meet Your Outreach Needs - a workshop

Working with the media

For many, working with the media is a mystery. You want your story to be heard, but you are not quite sure how to go about it. There are some basic "codes" that need to be observed in order to make your news release interesting enough for local media to pick it up.

A well-written article in the newspaper giving a positive slant to your story gives you better coverage than a paid advertisement and puts your organization in the public eye. This attention will help with recruitment of learners and volunteers.

Before writing your news release, answer the question, "Who cares?" This helps target the audience you want to reach and by doing this, determine which medium will suit you best; your local paper or radio station; provincial paper or television.

Below are some ideas that will help you get noticed by the media:

- Develop a relationship with your local media and, if you can, develop a relationship with one reporter in each media outlet.
- Make a list of the media in your area and your contacts. Find out:
 - what the daily deadlines are
 - what time of day is best for coverage, and
 - what days are best suited to coverage.
- Find out and record how they prefer to receive news releases – by fax or e-mail and designate this on your list. When you send a news release by e-mail, cut and paste it into the body of the e-mail, never send an attachment.

Tips for writing a news release:

- Write a clear, concise news release. Clutter chokes the meaning of a good story. Be sure to answer the questions who, what, where, when and why early, preferably the lead paragraph.
- Use easy to understand, conversational language. Say it, and then write it.
- Use present tense.

- Write a good strong lead that will catch interest.
- Try to keep your news release to one page.
- Leave a 1.5 inch margin on the left and double space. This gives editors room to make notations.
- Be sure to include contact information either at the top or the bottom your news release.
- Let the media outlet know when to release your information, i.e., For immediate release, or, Under Embargo until _____ (date)
- **Be human.**
 - As much as possible write about people or how your literacy program affects people. Relate the news to people's lives.
 - Find the human element in every story.
 - Make sure your story comes alive with choice quotes that capture the speaker's style and provides insight.
- **Be specific.**
 - Use significant details.
 - Choose words that illuminate.
- **Be clear.**
 - Organize the story in your mind. Decide what news means to you and others and this will produce your lead.
 - Prefer plain words but use the right words.
 - Use specific concrete words when details are desirable.
 - Be direct.
 - Keep one thought to a sentence. Keep sentences short except when the sentence is a list of closely connected ideas.
 - Beware of too many independent clauses.
 - Keep introductory clauses and phrases short and simple.

More tips:

In general, do not use courtesy titles: Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.

Use professional titles on the first reference but seldom after that unless the news release is long and filled with names. On the second reference to a person, use the last name.

The title can come before the name or after, depending on your choice and how it sounds in the sentence. A title more than two words long should be written in lower case and set off from the name with commas and *the*.

On the first line of your story, write a place-line in light-faced all caps, i.e, CITY – Most capital cities do not require the provincial abbreviation after it. Exception: ST. JOHN'S, Nfld., WHITEHORSE, Y.T, YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T.

(Source: The Canadian Press Stylebook pp. 189-190, 299, 336-339.)

Headlines:

- ❑ State the story in powerful words.
- ❑ Are written in the present tense.
- ❑ Include your group's name.
- ❑ Use active verbs.
- ❑ Use specifics from the lead paragraph.
- ❑ Are conversational.
- ❑ Are short and to the point.

Pictures:

- When writing a news release for newspapers, include a photograph if possible.
- Editors prefer that photographs contain no more than three people.
- Recognizable people in photographs must be identified by name in the "cutline" or caption.
- More people in a photograph are okay as long as you are focused on the central people who are identified.
- Write your cutline (the explanation or caption to go under the picture) and tape it to the underside of the picture.
- Clearly identify the picture and what story it is intended to go with.
- Check with your local newspapers to find out more about their policies for photographs. You might get better coverage by following the newspaper's policy.
- Digital photographs are easier to send. Ask editors what format and procedure they prefer.

- Always get permission before taking someone's picture to print in your publications or put on your web site.

Getting noticed:

Write and send a news release two weeks in advance. For examples of news releases go to www.newswire.ca

Ideas that might help you get your event covered:

- Offer to give a radio, television or newspaper interview prior to the event. Radio stations and television stations can "put it in the can," and still use it even if a bigger story breaks.
- For television, offer to "set up" visuals.
- Reporters usually do not attend evening or weekend events, so the best idea is to work with your local media to arrange something to fit their schedule. If it's done beforehand, the piece can be aired while it's still timely.

Note on Television Media:

- Find out when the TV crew plans to be there.
- Schedule the best "visuals" for that time.
- Have people lined up who will add the "human element" to the story.

Note: *Children are rarely filmed or photographed face on for news coverage. This will only be possible with written permission from parents.

Additional resources for public relations and working with media can be found at:

www.nald.ca/province/ont/clo/resource/happy_m/1.htm

www.nald.ca/province/ont/clo/resource/happy_m/8.htm

A copy of *Happy Media*, a media workshop prepared by Community Literacy of Ontario is included at this end of this document for those who do not have access to the internet.

Practice:

What is the purpose of writing this news release?

Who cares about the story I want to tell? (My target audience.)

What are my key messages?

Key messages are important. Clarify what it is that you want the public to know. Write them down. Practice them. Then, when being interviewed by the media, you can draw on those messages, whether you are asked a question relating to them or not.

To reach my audience I want to contact the following media:

My weekly community newspaper _____

Name

My daily community newspaper(s) _____

Names

National newspaper s _____

Names

Magazines _____

Names

Radio stations _____

Names

Television stations _____

Names

Writing a Public Service Announcement (PSA).

Answer the questions who, what, where, when, why or how. Make the PSA concise giving only the relevant information. Ex. The XYZ literacy program is hosting an open house on date, time. Everyone is welcome to come and find out more about the adult literacy program at address.

Media list current as of April 10th, 2003.

Name	Phone	Fax	E-mail
Daily Gleaner	452-6671	452-7405	dgnews@nbnet.nb.ca
Telegraph Journal Fredericton	455-3445	451-7800	White.alan@nbpub.com
TJ Miramichi	622-6352	622-5362	tjmira@nb.aibn.com
TJ Bathurst	548-0815	545-7746	tjbath@nb.aibn.com
TJ Edmundston	736-0114	739-1914	tjedmu@nb.aibn.com
TJ Moncton	383-2558	859-0298	Phillips.Andrew@nbpub.com
TJ Restigouche	753-4229	753-1991	tjcamp@nb.aibn.com
TJ St.Stephen	466-6399	466-4127	tjstst@nb.aibn.com
TJ Woodstock	328-2623	328-2624	tjwood@nb.aibn.com
TJ Saint John	632-8888	633-6758	newsroom@nbpub.com
Times Transcript	859-7149	859-4904	news@timestranscript.com
Bugle	328-8863	328-3208	henleyp@nb.aibn.com
Kings County Record	433-1070	432-3532	kcr@nbnet.nb.ca
Northside News	455-6397	458-9918	nsnews@nb.aibn.com
Saint Croix Courier	466-3220	466-9950	courier@nb.aibn.com
The Observer	375-4458	375-4281	Theobserver.news@nb.aibn.com
The Sackville Tribune Post	536-2500	536-4024	tribune@nbnet.nb.ca
The Tribune	753-4413	759-9595	editor@tribpub.nb.ca

Victoria County Record	273-2285	273-4441	vcrecord@nb.aibn.com
Capital FM/CI HI	450-7633	452-2345	
CBC Bathurst	548-5540	547-0910	bathnews@nbnet.nb.ca
CBC Saint John	632-7710	632-7761	sjinfoam@saintjohn.cbc.ca
CBC Fredericton	451-4000	451-4170	infoam@fredericton.cbc.ca
CFAN Miramichi	622-3311	627-0335	cfan@nb.sympatico.ca
CI OK Saint John	658-5100	635-2636	mbsnews@nb.aibn.com
CJCW Sussex	432-2529	433-4900	cjcw@nbnet.nb.ca
ATV Fredericton	459-1010	451-6671	acampbell@ctv.ca
ATV Miramichi	622-8095	622-7143	atvnews@ctv.com
ATV Moncton	857-2610	857-2618	avass@ctv.ca
ATV Saint John	636-6068	658-1208	mcameron@ctv.ca
CBC TV Fredericton	451-4404	451-4003	Susan_king@cbc.ca
CBC TV Moncton	853-6626	853-6400	
CBC Saint John	632-7710	632-7761	
Global TV	642-6488	652-5965	Pharpelle2@globaltv.ca

Building a solid relationship with your local news outlets will go a long way in bringing your events and issues to the public's attention.