



## **Establishing contact with a journalist**

- Make sure you read the publication, or listen to/watch the programme.
- The first time you call, ask whether it is a good time, or would it be better for you to call another time.
- Once you have them listening, ask about their deadlines - when do they plan their coverage, when do they go to press, when would they like to be contacted?
- Ask how they would like to receive information - fax, email, phone.
- Ask what kind of stories they are interested in - and listen.
- Make sure you get their direct phone line if they have one, their fax number, email address, and any other relevant details.
- Keep a note of journalist's responses - it might be worth making a file. Each time you call them make a note of when it was and what was discussed.
- When you call again, remind the journalist what you discussed before, e.g. "you might remember we spoke about the opening of our new headquarters a couple of months ago." This helps build the relationship.
- Invite them to any event your organisation might have - once you meet face to face they are more likely to remember you.
- Keep the effort going!

Don't forget - you are not going to get every story you suggest into the publication. Don't take it personally.

Remember the factors competing for attention:

### **Bulk**

Journalists are sent huge numbers of press releases, most of which are irrelevant and go straight in the bin.

### **Time**

Journalists will be worrying about their deadlines, their editors, and their colleagues - sometimes they might have to compete for space.

### **Mess**

The newsroom is rarely an ordered place. It is very easy for press releases and pictures to get lost or mislaid.



**Luck**

The journalist may just be in a good mood, have an interest in your kind of organisation for personal reasons, or they may not be as busy as usual.