



Top PR tips

Know your product and your people

As well as having knowledge of the products and services your organisation provides, make sure you have a good understanding of the different roles people have. Understanding your colleagues' jobs will make it easier for you to communicate on their behalf.

Have a plan

Use the following headings to guide you through the planning process:

- Objectives - 'to raise profile/awareness' is not specific enough. Why do you want to raise awareness?
- Target audiences - think through all the stakeholders whose opinions and actions affect your work.
- Key messages - develop a crib sheet listing all your key messages and turn it into a game to see how many points you can earn on each communications opportunity.
- Communication methods - think beyond media relations. Other options include publications, direct mail, exhibitions, shop window displays, and facility visits.
- Time plan - focus effort at strategic points to create the most noise.
- Budget - where will your money be best spent.
- Evaluation - how will you measure achievement against the objectives identified? Plan in a debrief to identify what works and what doesn't.

Write your own brief

Most people only write a brief when they are working with an external agency, but it's a good idea to write one for work you are doing yourself because it serves as a checklist to make sure that you have thought everything through. Look at advertising or design agency briefs for good headings, or see the Media Trust guide 'Undertaking a design project'.

Always start by making yourself complete in writing the sentence, i.e. "this piece of communication (e.g. feature article, exhibition, poster) will have achieved its objective if" Really do write it out in black and white. It is often more difficult than you think. Try to achieve an action or measurable outcome as a result of your communication.

Build up your 'media resource bank'

Be prepared to answer media enquiries quickly:

- Have a couple of well-trained spokespeople.
- Build up a file of case studies and obtain consent for their use in media relations.
- Develop a database of facts and figures - not just about the work of your organisation, but the problems you are tackling (journalists love people who can do their research for them).
- Get a local college/university photography course to adopt your charity and build up your photo library.

Understand the value of third party endorsement

Decide whose opinion counts in your local community. Invite them to visit your project. While they are there, get a quote from them about how they feel about the service you are providing. If you ask them when they are seeing positive results you are more likely to get a strong quote. Use it.



Don't expect journalists to do you favours

Always start from the position that a journalist has a job to do and that is to produce a good story. If you haven't worked in the media, try to get some shadowing experience. Understand what a journalist wants and give it to them. For example:

- Provide quotes in your press releases.
- Commission someone to take pictures of your event/news story who is a good photographer (start by asking the picture desk for recommendations).
- Sell whole 'packages' to TV and radio news programmes - i.e. pad out the story by thinking about pictures and interviewees.

Catch the journalist's attention

The headline and first paragraph of your news release are the most important parts. You have to catch the journalist's attention with them. Concentrate on what is news in the release and put it right at the top. Avoid the temptation to put your organisation's name in the first sentence - instead, concentrate on the issue and how it affects the reader.

Steal other people's ideas

Start a 'good ideas box'. Keep copies of great print materials, cut out good photos from local papers, list things which other organisations have done successfully to raise their profile.

Once every six months hold a creative brainstorm. Get PR professionals from local companies to come along as a donation in kind to your charity.

Monitor performance

Don't just measure column inches when assessing the results of your media coverage. Develop a scoring system to assess quality, as well as quantity of coverage, based on number of key messages communicated (as identified in your PR plan). Set yourself a target each month - and celebrate if you achieve it.