



Getting your news published on a shoestring (or no) budget

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If your budget is tight and you can't afford to hire a Public Relations specialist, but you'd still like to get your news out in the community, what can you do?

It's my experience that Cape Cod media, print, social, web, TV, Radio really LOVES to report on local activities so they are always interested in hearing about it. Having said that, the better you present the news to them, the easier it is for them to put it in the paper or on the air. Reporters and Journalists are busy people so you must present the information in 'sound bites'.

So, let's get started. Let's say you're organizing a fundraising event in two months and you're selling tickets for the general public. How do you go about announcing this?

- Determine a contact person to list on the release and put that contact name and phone and email information right on top of your letterhead, so the media can call you for more information or a follow up interview. Make sure that you know that this contact person is comfortable speaking with the media and answering some questions and has the details about the event. Again, the media do not have time to chase someone for more information. Ideally, your press release should have everything they need right in it but occasionally, they want a follow up story.
- Write the headline following the Five W's... Who, What, Where, When, Why (and How). For example: Organization X is organizing Event Name on Date at Place to support Cause..
- Write a first paragraph with all the necessary basic information following the five W's again. Even if nothing else gets published, the most important information is all right there. Repeat the headline and add in the time, the specific address where the event is held and make sure to list your organization's name, contact information, web site, phone number, possibly a snail mail address goes if checks have to be mailed in for instance.
- Write the next paragraph(s) expanding on the above. You can put in background information, who is on the committee, more about the event and your organization.
- Write at a 6th grade level and don't use jargon or words that are very specific for your organization or abbreviations the average person would not recognize. Again, the easier it is to read, the more likely the media will pick it up.
- Try to keep a release on one page and indicate the end of the release by xxxx or -End- so that it's clear that there's no more information 'floating' around. In the old days, many press releases were faxed so that was even more important but it's a nice custom to keep.

- Please do a spell check and reread your release. If you have time, have someone else take a look at it, to make sure they understand what's written, but please, a press release does NOT have to be written by committee.
- Most releases can be emailed now, but most media do NOT like word document attachments. In fact, most don't even open them. Either put the full release in the body of the email or attach a PDF. And please, use the Blind copy (bcc) feature, if you're trying to send release to more media in one email blast.
- If you have photos, ideally put them in the pdf, include a photo caption (who is in the photo) and a source of the photo (like Photo: Organization x). Sometimes, media may come back to ask you for a high resolution picture so they can use it.
- Do realize that print media do like releases two weeks beforehand so plan accordingly.
- Do make sure that every release does really have news value.

Make sure you develop a Media list of those media you think are most important for your organization or business. Find the reporter's name, contact email, phone number, fax number and check how the publication wants to receive announcements. For instance, some have a special form to fill out, others are happy to receive a press release. Web postings often have specific guidelines so make sure you follow them. The development of the Media list will take some time but once developed it's crucial to keep it up to date as well. Things (and people) change quickly.

If you have a web site, make sure you post the release there as well.

And, if you have a Facebook page, once you post the basic information, some media will 'feed off' that. The down side of social media can be that if you post information too soon and things change, you may have the wrong information floating out there.

That's it in a nutshell. Dealing with the media does not have to be intimidating and the time spent pays off in so many ways. We all strive to have our organization or business publicized in some ways and press releases really work.

But, if you're too busy to do it yourself or have no volunteer or staff who can help, do delegate your media relations to one of the wonderful public relations specialists on Cape Cod and the Islands.

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