

OREGON ASSOCIATION OF RECYCLERS

PRESENTATION ON GENERATING EARNED MEDIA

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METRO PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

1. What is public relations?

- a strategic communications process that helps manage, protect and enhance the reputation of an organization and its products or services
- activities used to influence the media to print stories that promote a favorable image of an organization and its products or services
- communication with various sectors of the public to influence their attitudes and opinions in the interest of promoting an organization, its product or its services
- a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to institute and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its audiences.

Public relations leverages the substantial power of the media, which includes the press (newspapers, magazines and trade journals), the electronic media (radio and television) and the Internet to boost your organization's visibility and credibility. As such, it is an interdependent relationship. You need the media to tell your story, but it also needs you, because it is in the business of telling stories. Therefore, public relations is all about relationships, and you both benefit from the relationship.

Why public relations is good:

It's inexpensive for the coverage you get out of your efforts. When you earn media, the credibility is high because it says that someone else feels that your message is worthy enough to be placed in the media. The media covers news and features only if it feels its readers, viewers or listeners will care about. If you are worthy, they will spend their time and resources to report out about you.

What does public relations do?

- builds an image
- reinforces and further an organization's reputation
- raises awareness
- educates
- increases understanding
- changes behavior
- builds credibility
- influences opinion leaders
- motivates your audience to your desired action

What public relations is not:

- it is not difficult
- it is not advertising
- it is actually pretty easy, because, remember – they need you. You just need to make it easy for them: scheduling, photo opportunities, a good interviewee, and more are essential.

2. It's who you know!

Building relations with members of the media

Identify all media outlets available and that make sense for telling your story. Start with local commercial newspaper, radio stations, television stations, college papers and stations, trade or specialty publications, journals, websites, etc.

Build a list and get to know who works for these outlets. Learn who runs the show so you know whom to contact when you make a call or send a news release - managing editors, news editors, assignment editors, reporters. Read stories to learn what reporters cover, do they have a beat or report on special interests? Find out who the columnists are and determine their focus. For larger newspapers, learn if they have zoned editions, or regular sections. Get their publication dates and deadlines. And know when to call – don't call a TV station five minutes before the news starts, or a newspaper editor on the deadline morning.

Go meet them. From a 15-minute get-to-know you meeting to a visit with the editorial board, remember this – people do business with people they know, so get to know them.

Meetings are a good way to begin, but keep in touch for a number of reasons: don't want go off and not contact them for months, you want them to remember you. Also, let them think of you as a source - even if they are not calling about your organization, you want them to call you! Send a list of who's who at your organization and what their specialty is.

Thank them when they've published a story about you, let them know what the coverage did for you, and (hopefully you won't need to do this,) let them know if there was an error. Be nice about it!!

2. first things first

Who are you, why is what you have to say important, who are you talking to and how do you reach people?

decide these four things:

- Who you are and why you exist (get consensus in your organization, talk with colleagues and staff, brief the appropriate people in your organization so that you are all speaking with one voice)
- Who you need to talk to (your audience)
- What you want them to do (the outcome or deliverable)
- And how best to say it (here's where the media comes in).

A. Define your audience(s): you will have more than one!

Your goal is to persuade, inform and/or educate your audience(s), and in order to do that, you need to get them interested in what you do and how they can benefit from your services.

Possible audiences

- members
- suppliers
- special interest groups
- industry representatives
- general public
- elected officials
- community groups

How/why to reach audiences:

- what issues are important to them
- how can you benefit them
- what do you want to tell them
- what do you want them to do

B. Develop your message(s)

Identify message concepts or key messages to help focus how you talk with your audiences. A key message is a clear, concise, memorable thought that aligns with your objectives. Your key message will tell your audience what you want them to remember and what you want them to do. A key message necessary because there is a lot of competition out there for people's attention, time, and money. You have to rise above the noise to get to your audience. Think like your audience in order to help you do that.

C. Write a communications plan:

A masterplan for your communications efforts and/or

An individual plan for your specific campaign (see example)

Identify which communications tools are best to use for your particular effort.

D. Use all arsenals in your toolkit to deliver your message:

1. Media kits – online or printed

2. YOU yourself - be there for them – give them your cell phone number so they can call you at any time.

3. News releases BUT ONLY FOR timely issues

- know what makes news, it's different from features
- keep it short
- make it newsy
- put the 5 Ws in the lead, WHO WHAT WHERE WHEN WHY then there HOW + WOW)
- make it timely
- add: "your organization news release" on the top and in the email subject header.
- always use a boilerplate – a simple sentence about your organization. For example: "Metro, the regional government that serves 1.3 million people who live in the 25 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area, provides planning and other services that protect the nature and livability of our region." !
- if you need to, add a sub-boilerplates: The Metro Council's 2006 natural areas bond measure funds land acquisition and capital improvements that protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, enhance trails and wildlife corridors, and provide greater connections to nature in urban areas throughout the greater Portland region. For more information, visit www.metro-region.org/naturalareas.
- Or "Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods is an incentive-based program to inspire residents, businesses, non-profit organizations and governments to safeguard water quality, protect valuable wildlife habitat and conserve or restore native ecosystems."

Tidbit on news releases and personal contact: according to Bennett and Company's 14th Annual Media Survey (July 2004)

- 58% of reporters prefer e-mail
- 15% prefer wire services
- 13% prefer posted mail
- 10% prefer fax
- 4% prefer a telephone call

4. general pitches - leverage every thing you can to tell a story!:

Remember though that not all stories are relevant to all media types (maybe press, but not digital unless the story be told in 30 seconds and has compelling imagery)

- Find a local angle – news people want to connect to the national or international story with personalized, hometown
- Use any emerging trends
- Look for connection to pop culture, movie, music, etc
- Upcoming local or big national events; to learn about them, be in touch with your industry, read its newsletter, regularly visit its website, create a google news search to send stories with specific keywords to you daily to keep yourself informed
- Is something about your story unique?
- Is it unusual?
- Is there someone who will benefit from your organization or activity? Pitch a feature story on that person
- Pitch or write a feature story on someone involved in your organization, board member, volunteer, employee, etc
- Don't forget calendar listings

5. Media alerts differ from news releases; they are generally an invitation for media to attend/cover an event and are limited to one page, with background info and not a story attached. Add "Media Alert" or "Photo Opportunity" at the top, and list photo opportunities and interview opportunities

6. News conferences - (must be big issue, compelling or complicated news; or have several players)

- Schedule mid-morning on a weekday
- Select an accessible location with adequate space and electrical outlets
- Provide media parking area
- Put your logo on the podium
- Keep remarks brief and to the point
- Leave plenty of time for Q&A and post-conference interviews
- Have materials for distribution
- Be accessible to reporters afterwards
- Fax/email/messenger information to key reporters who don't show
- Don't leak the story in advance
- Fit the information to the media outlet

7. Tours and events – invite media reps to your place to show them how it works, or to a school if you will be presenting to cute little kids

8. Photo features – pitch to the photo editor, maybe you don't have enough to write about, but a series of 3-5 photos would tell a story.

9. Public service announcements – for events, send a month in advance. Write them in 10, 15 and 30-second segments.

10. Website – we all use the web as background, so make sure your info is up to date, and reflects what you are currently discussing

11. Newsletters, new brochures. Put the media on your mailing list, send them any new collateral materials you print.

12. Letters to the editor – from your director or a stakeholder tying in a news item, or local issue to your services. (You'll have to write them for this person)

13. "In My Opinion" pieces – same as above, but you get more words, up to 600 in some cases.

14. editorial board visits - to seek editorial support for a specific community campaign or issue

- have specific issues to discuss
- bring background materials
- have a good spokesperson with prepared presentation
- limit number of people attending to two or three
- plan to spend 30 minutes to one hour in the meeting

15. Stories that you write on your own and send out for consideration to magazines, special publications, etc.

16. Special Sections: be aware of any, call for the editorial calendar, talk to the editor or planners so you can determine if there's a story in it for you.

17. "backgrounders" – the back story for reference

Other tools

- Viral marketing – emails that you send to the usual suspects (including friends and family) that you ask them to spread around
- Email notices with current events or news releases to interested parties (get a sign up!)
- Photos and/or background for a television story – keep them handy
- B-roll – same as above, but make both GOOD, professional quality or they can't be used.
- Speeches or talks at org events, conferences, etc. local Rotary Clubs, etc – get out there in your community
- Blogs???

About interviews – you will need to prepare those in your organization for them.

- Be prepared
- keep on message!
- use examples when answering questions
- keep your points short (sound byte-ish repeat or refer to the main message)
- if they try to lead you off course, wrastle' 'em back to the point you are trying to make examples form the Internet)
 - "It's our policy not to discuss those types of things, but I can tell you ..."
 - "I think what you're really asking is ..."
 - "Let me clarify. What we're really talking about here is ..."
 - "That speaks to a bigger point, which is ..."

Crisis communication

Another whole 'nother subject