

Information tool

Media relationships

This toolkit covers how to improve relationships with the media – from dealing with a press enquiry, to getting your events featured in the media.

You'll gain an insight into how journalists work and get tips on how to achieve more balanced media coverage of your organisation.

Why?

When you're on the receiving end of negative publicity, it's tempting to avoid talking to journalists altogether. So let's take a look at why building relationships with the media is so important.

- Help get your side of the story across
- Raise the reputation of your business or organisation
- Help offset negative press with positive stories
- Connect with people you want to help or engage with
- Improve your stakeholder relationships
- Strengthen your role in the community
- Help you manage a crisis
- Showcase the positive work you are doing
- Celebrate your achievements
- Create and build links with the community
- Boost team morale within your organisation

Who?

Target the right people

Find out which journalists currently write stories about you. Is there a reporter that covers your geographical patch? Is there a political correspondent? Which journalists cover the topics that you'd like more coverage of?

Build a list of contacts

Chat to the reporter that attends your public meetings. Find out who the editor is and what common links you have with them in the community.

Brief staff to be media-friendly

They don't need full media training, but a one-pager would be useful so they know how to respond if approached directly by a journalist, or who they should refer the request to.

Create a news hub

Make it easy for journalists to get in touch with the right people, and upload stories and news that you'd like to be picked up by them. Include phone numbers and email addresses and consider featuring spokespeople and their areas of expertise.

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Meet in person and online

Ask if you can pop into the newsroom to see how it works. Invite a journalist to come early for a meeting and show them round your offices. Connect with key journalists such as editors on platforms like LinkedIn

Offer feedback

Drop them an email when you've had a good bit of coverage and say what you liked about it. Share positive articles on your social media accounts.

What?

Let's think about what kind of stories you'd like to shout about, and what journalists are interested in covering.

As a rule of thumb, all journalists want to cover stories that are interesting to their readers, listeners or viewers.

This is usually a story that's...

- Quirky or unusual
- Relevant to a subject people are already talking about
- Will affect them somehow - for better or worse
- Full of human interest
- Is local and familiar

The easiest way to find out what stories journalists want to cover is to ask them! If you have an event coming up, you can pick up the phone and find out what information or material they would need to cover the story. Some examples include:

- Case studies - stories and interviews with real people who agree to their name, age and photo being used (or to be interviewed for television)
- Statistics - any new figures that show a trend
- Milestones - anniversaries, numbers of people helped
- Figures - Stories about new grants or funding and investment into their community

Don't forget pictures

People relate more to a story when they can see the people it is about. The media need photos or footage of real people to tell their stories - the higher the quality, the better.

Most newspapers and magazines for example need images that are 2MB so they aren't blurry when printed.

They also get sent hundreds of formal cheque presentations, so a photo of people doing something is much more likely to get featured.

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When?

Timings are crucial.

Be aware of journalists' deadline. Always ask what the deadline is and if you can't make it, be honest upfront.

If you can't provide the full answer to what they're asking for, let them know what you can provide eg. "We wouldn't be able to get you a named quote in that timeframe but we can get you a short holding statement."

Avoid saying 'no comment' as journalists will stop coming to you, and you won't get to tell your side.

If you show you are reliable and keep your word, this will help to build that relationship with the journalist.

Your own lead times

Plan ahead to pull together all the elements of a story that you'll need and then send out the package to the media in good time.

If there is awareness day, for example, it's much better to send out the information a few weeks ahead of time, so that they have time to interview people and plan a space for it.

If you leave it till the day before, they are likely to have already planned their news agenda and their journalists may already be busy with other interviews.

A bit of planning makes it much more likely positive stories will be picked up.

It's also worth remembering that journalists are also keeping their readers' and viewers' time on mind. Attention spans are short, and journalists need to make their stories easy to understand.

Expect your work to be simplified- and if the gist of it is right, it's a success.