

MAXIMIZING MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES



“It’s amazing to see young people so involved in their community and making a donation before thinking of their own needs. We can’t thank them enough.”

- Dr. Anthony Nichols,
Otolaryngologist,
Head and Neck Surgery, LHSC

Understanding the Media

It is a journalist’s job to find news stories and inform the public of what is going on in the community. Buying media advertising space won’t guarantee your event will be covered in their news story.

The first step to understanding the journalists, otherwise known as media, is to determine what you can offer them and what they need. For instance, don’t send a regional story to a weekly local newspaper.

The second step is to know how the various media outlets obtain their news. Radio requires “sound bites” and may request an over-the-phone interview. TV will require something visual and print media may request more in-depth information.

What is News?

Hard news stories include anything serious or time-sensitive that can be a lead story (ex. fatal accidents). These will take precedence over soft stories (inside features). That is why you need to compete for coverage. News rooms are shrinking and there are fewer reporters and videographers – especially during evenings and weekends when most events occur.

Help the media by providing content and telling them why their audience will find your story interesting. Develop the story and have information and interviews ready for them; make their job easier.

TIP: What makes a news story? Timeliness, large number of people affected, prominence, emotion, proximity, oddity, conflict, suspense, trendiness and rarity.

Effective Media Releases

There are different types of releases you could use depending on what your goal is:

Community Calendars – “What’s Happening” section of a website. Includes basic information; no more than 50 words.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) – Invites the public to attend. Sent four to six weeks before your event and alerts the news desk of a possible event.

Media Advisories (MAs) – Invites the media to attend. Specific time, date and directions should be given two to three days prior to an event. Tip: Don’t give away the whole story.

News Releases (NRs) – Tells the media the story with quotes. Sent the day of and up to one day after. Sent to media directly.

Backgrounders (BG) – Is an additional document sent with the NR that includes more research and background information.

Format:

LEAD: Most important information that will grab the reader.

BRIDGE: Key info you couldn’t get into the lead. Provides the transition from the lead to the body.

BODY: Fills in other details.

Sending Your Releases

Main News Desk or Assignment Desk is a good place to start. If there is a person who specifically handles PSAs or Community Calendars, include them.

You can also think outside the box – can your story go to different sections? Would a radio talk show or TV show be interested? Listen or watch a few programs to ensure your event is a good fit.

Do not email large files or files containing animation or GIFs. Most firewalls will reject your submissions. If you need further contacts, find the media outlet’s website – they may have a reporter or editor list. You can also call and ask for this information if it is not on the website.

