

Media Do's and Don'ts

Do:

Know Your Beat: Read and watch media coverage in your local area. Subscribe to the local newspapers and magazines and watch the local news. Subscribe to media online newsletters and receive RSS feeds (self-updating news feeds often available at your news source's website) of news related to your non-profit field. Encourage your Access Points to know who's who at your local media outlets.

- Develop a virtual media kit that resides on your organization's website. Media professionals prefer to work with an organization that demonstrates professionalism with media and public relations outreach materials.
- Send complimentary copies of your publications addressed to reporters who might have an interest in telling your organization's story. Attach a business card to the materials.

Circulate: Join any organizations where you are likely to meet reporters and editors (*e.g.*, some cities have press clubs that you can join). Establish friendly relationships with reporters who cover your topic. When reporters know a face to go with the information they receive, they are more receptive. Keep up with the personnel changes at your favorite media outlets.

Pitch Your Story: Remember that the media is always looking for good human stories. You are doing a newsperson a favor by offering a story that may be of interest to their readers or viewers.

- Be confident in your approach and tell a story.
- Take advantage of breaking news stories to promote your organization.
- Keep your pitch tight, bright, to the point, and accurate. Make your headline and first sentence count.
- Be relevant. Answer the reader's "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM) in the first few sentences of your story.

Contact the Media Effectively:

- Do go to your primary source at the media outlet to tell your story; don't call several reporters at one media outlet to pitch the same story. If your contact is not interested, then he or she may be able to refer you to another staffer.
- Always use blind carbon copy (cc) when sending out an email press release. Reporters want to think they are privy to exclusive information.
- Make yourself available to the media at any time. They may call once, but chances are they will not call again.
- Always thank a reporter for his or her coverage of your organization.

Don't:

- Don't call a reporter when you know he or she is working on a deadline.
- Don't call to ask whether a reporter received your press release. It is better to simply pitch your story and, while doing so, remind the reporter of your press release.
- Don't tell a reporter he or she is making a big mistake by not covering your event.
- Don't treat a journalist like a friend. Never call him or her to say "hi" and chat.
- Don't make an un-newsworthy announcement. Nobody really cares about the headline "Non-Profit Holds Event." However, the headline "Non-Profit Welcomes Governor to Event" is newsworthy.