

Public Relations — getting started

What's the story?

Sending a press release to the media is the first step to getting your story publicised, however before you even begin to write your release, you need to think about what you want to say.

Local newspaper and radio stations want to know about what's happening in their area, but they're also very busy and get lots of information sent to them each day. To maximise your chances of getting coverage think about your 'news angle'.

Is there anything about your event, or the people taking part, that could capture a reader's attention if they saw it in their local paper? Why is it relevant to them? Why would they want to read on? Is there something unusual or quirky about a team or theme? Does it have an 'X' factor? Is it a first, a last, the biggest, the smallest, the oldest, the youngest etc.

Try answering the question 'So what?' to help you get to the heart of the story!

And remember, people want to read about people! So if you have an interesting, inspiring or emotional story —tell them!

Often a good way of getting some media coverage is to offer media a chance to interview a local person. A human interest story is always more interesting than a press release and can be used to get your message out there.

Who to contact?

- Buying the papers - often reporters' names and contact numbers are published inside.
- Looking at the paper online. Most sites give contact numbers and details of the areas they cover.
- Listening to your local radio stations to get an idea of the kinds of stories or information they carry. Most will have a website with details on the presenters and how to get in touch.

Who else should you tell?

- Local sports organisations
- Local community groups
- Local TD's and councillors
- Chair of town council
- Schools or youth organisations
- Other relevant NGO's in your community

A useful website to find out about your local media is www.medialive2.com

If you have any further questions please ask your contact at the Irish Cancer Society and we will try to help.

Some Tips

- Do your homework and find out the deadlines for your local newspaper
- Local press usually like to have at least a week's notice as they tend to keep a diary of events. This is particularly important if you want to ask a photographer to attend
- Be efficient, make it easy for them to use your story

Public Relations - continued

Follow Up

After you have issued your press release if you haven't had any coverage you may think about doing some follow up.

When following up be careful not to become a pest. A good strategy is often to revisit your release and ask yourself; was it relevant? Did you send it to the right person? Did you include an accurate header? Is there anything else you can offer them (interview etc.)?

If the answer is yes, call the journalist and tell them about your story, ask them are they interested or can they cover this. This may be enough to bring the story to their attention or they may have some valuable feedback.

Photography can be a good way to get publicity as an alternative to a press release. So if you feel a picture would tell your story better or if your press release didn't get featured you may hold a photocall.

Photography (a picture paints a thousand words...)

A good picture opportunity will really help your story. Look at the kind of photographs your local papers use so you get a flavour of the kinds of pictures they might want from you.

If you want to invite a photographer from your local paper to your photocall or event, you could include a 'photocall notice' in your press release. You need to include clear, specific information including Time and Date, Location (be specific and include the postcode if possible) and What the picture will be (it helps if you can describe it) and Contact (include a telephone number of someone who will be at the photocall).

If the photographer can't attend, you can take pictures yourself and email them to the paper.

If you want to send pictures, email them in 'jpeg' format. Try not to send more than two at a time as it can jam the reporter's inbox.

Most good press pictures have the following in common:

- They tell the story without words
- They capture your attention
- They are animated



See our Relay For Life Sample Photocall notice to get started!