

GWYBODAETH I ARWEINYDDION



INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

Dealing with the press

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DEALING WITH THE PRESS

PUBLIC RELATIONS IS:

“about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you”.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTISE IS:

“the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics”.

Institute of Public Relations

There are three important points:

- ‘Maintaining goodwill’
- ‘Planned and sustained effort’
- ‘Mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics’

These are all vital: you can’t ‘do’ public relations for one season or even week. It needs to be worked at, to be planned, ideally with a declared aim.

Apart from the difficulty of knowing when you have reached a state of mutual understanding, this point brings out the notion of ‘publics’, which is crucial to ensuring that any public relations campaign is a success.

PUBLICS DEFINED:

A 'public' is PR speak for 'key audiences': it does not mean the general public. For an organisation, publics include customers, local communities, employees and shareholders. Each one of these groups will want different things from the organisation and so it has to use different ways of communicating with them.

Who would you describe as being the 'public' for your organisation?

- Young people aged 10-26
- Local Community
- Local organisations (sponsors?)
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REACHING THE PUBLIC

Public can be reached in many different ways: press meetings, briefings, leaflets. For example, regular sponsors/donors can be reached by regular newsletters, possible future donors by presentations and meetings.

How would you reach your public?

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AIMS

Public relations strategies don't work by themselves in isolation: they should enhance the aims of an organisation. The main aims of most organisations can be found in either mission statements or Articles of Association. The main aim will probably remain the same over a period of time, but there will be changing short-term aims, such as raising funds for a particular project.

What are the main aims of your organisation / club?

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MESSAGES

Most organisations have a particular message that they want to get across, which supports the aims **and** should be contained in press releases, leaflets, presentations etc. Messages for most organisations are defined by the **PR** person. It is important that, in sustaining the public relations effort, messages should be consistent.

What would be the main messages for your organisation?

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HOW TO PLAN A PR STRATEGY FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Planning a PR strategy is straightforward and will make use of the tools we have just covered. Firstly we know the aims, secondly, we know the messages: now we plan a series of events, meetings and press releases to support these.

Part of this strategy will be looking at the calendar of the year ahead and noting main events.

PLANNING THE STRATEGY

1. Look at the events that your club has planned for the year ahead.
2. Decide which events would benefit from press coverage.
3. Decide which events, such as an annual dinner could benefit from having a local dignitary being invited
4. Decide who needs to be kept informed about the organisation and how this will be done (press releases, newsletters, etc)
5. Remembers to keep club members / sponsors updated on progress

Using this framework, we can plan a press strategy to produce press releases for particular events.

PRACTICAL PRESS RELATIONS

Identifying and getting to know the press

Which are the main journals in your area?

Which journals are most important to you?

Which local radio programmes would you like to get your club on?

To answer these questions, you need to know the following:

Area covered (geographical and content)

The editor

Correspondents

Copy dates

How they like to receive stories/information (fax, telephone, email, post)

Composing a press release

Press releases are typed, usually in double line spacing, and on one side of the page only. The club's headed paper should be used which will help the recipient immediately identify the source. Type NEWS RELEASE or PRESS RELEASE at the top.

If you can, keep your press release to no more than one and a half pages of text, although usually, a well typed press statement won't need to be more than one side of A4 paper - remember - keep it to the point, and DON'T WAFFLE!

Content

"I keep six honest serving men,
(They taught me all I knew)
Their names are What and When and How
And Why and Where and Who"

This verse is a great guide to help you get the essentials into your press release.

WHAT happened, or what is going to happen?

WHEN will it happen?

WHERE will it happen?

WHY is this happening?

WHO is involved?

HOW is it happening?

Sometimes, not all of these apply, but most of them will, and they must be answered in the press release.

The first paragraph is the most important - many press releases get re-located to the recycling bin if the first paragraph doesn't grab the editor's attention!

You can cram lots of vital information into the first paragraph, which sets up the rest of the press release nicely. The following appeared in the South Wales Echo last year:

'Angry ex-miners and the widows of former pitmen from South Wales are to lobby parliament next week over delays in the payment of compensation for crippling chest diseases.'

'Plans for a massive £500m theme park in South Wales have been slammed by local officials.'

Bear in mind the comment made by Lord Hartwell, when editor of the Daily Telegraph:

"You don't want a lot of high falutin' waffle before you get to the point. If you read the whole of the first paragraph and still don't know what the story is about, it's no good."

REST OF PRESS RELEASE

Having pointed out the importance of a first sentence or paragraph, which will tell the editor and ultimately the reader, what the story is about, you need to go on to the body of the press release. In the case of an event report, who won will be in the first paragraph - remember, it IS NOT a gripping story with the winner as the surprise as the end.

It is always a good idea to include a quote or two in a story if you can - it adds interest.

Remember, editors usually cut stories from the bottom up, so imagine if the release had the last paragraph missing - it shouldn't make any deference to the amount of important information contained in it. In fact, journals could simply print the first paragraph to get the just of the story if space was tight!

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS

'FURTHER INFORMATION' or 'NOTES FOR EDITORS' after the press release should contain contact details of someone who can give additional information on the story if required. Here you can also include more details about the club, the number of members, when and where you meet etc - in fact, anything that isn't an essential part of the story goes here.

Always put 'ENDS' in capitals at the end of the press release!

CONVENTIONS

There are some style points which are worth noting:

- Numbers 0-9 written in full ie two, eight, nine instead of 2,8,9
- Double figures (10 and over) written as numbers ie 11, 68, 222
- Numbers that start sentences written in full
- Date of press release at the top - not the date of the event.
- Make a catchy title which gives an idea of what it's about

FURTHER INFORMATION

Here are the **TOP TEN MISTAKES** of press releases written since the beginning of time!

- **Not saying what the release is about in the first paragraph**
- **Missing out an important piece of information (date place, time)**
- **Sending a press release with no contact name and number**
- **Sending press releases to the paper several weeks late**
- **Sending releases which arrive the day after the copy date**
- **Sending a photograph with no picture caption**
- **Using single numerals i.e. 1, 2 instead of one, two**
- **Frequent Use Of Capitals Where They Are Not Needed**
- **Submitting a press release with 'in-jokes' that no-one understands**
- **SENDING A PRESS RELEASE IN BLOCK CAPITALS**

Remember - a bad press release can make a good event sound bad - but only a good press release can make a bad event sound good!

ENDS!