

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA: GETTING "INK"

Getting media attention—whether it's a spot on the local news or an article in your neighborhood paper—can bring a powerful boost to your campaign. Media attention toward your issue will not only educate and influence elected officials and the general public, but will also build name recognition for and lend credibility to your campaign or group.

GETTING MEDIA COVERAGE:

Develop a media plan.

- ✓ Outline which media outlets you want to target (e.g., local vs. city-wide media, print vs. television or radio) and how you are going to target them (e.g., press conferences, opinion pieces, radio, etc.).
- ✓ For example, your group might decide to write a series of opinion columns for local newspapers around the borough, or you might issue press releases to local cable channels.

Seek ready-made press.

- ✓ Always be armed with a sound bite about your campaign
- ✓ Be ready to respond and react to any press about the campaign and/or your issue with opinion editorials (Op-Eds) and letters to the editor (LTEs).

Be opportunistic.

- ✓ Look for opportunities to get media attention everywhere.
- ✓ Hold up your banner at parades
- ✓ Hand out stickers and pins at other groups' events
- ✓ Etc.

Build relationships.

- ✓ Get to know the different reporters and how they work. Who covers local politics? Environmental issues? Etc. Notice whether they write long, in-depth features or punchy, newsy shorter pieces.
- ✓ Make their jobs easier by giving them information at times and in formats that are easy for them to use.

Hold some press events on weekends.

- ✓ Sundays are slow news days and local press events help to engage community groups.

Target unlikely suspects.

- ✓ Don't just focus on environmental/parks reporters; try to integrate your issue into other hot-button issues, such as education, crime and health.
- ✓ Reach out to reporters who cover these issues, tailoring your message to each.
- ✓ Pitch your story to magazines, TV and radio stations as well as newspapers.

Be creative.

- ✓ Diversify your story angles.
- ✓ For example, don't just pitch short expose pieces on individual parks or issues; instead, try to work with a reporter on a long, thought-provoking piece or human-interest story.

STANDARD MEDIA TOOLS:

Press Events

- ✓ Holding regular press events is essential in keeping your issue visible and in the news.
- ✓ Good media events include rallies, press conferences, kick-off events, and speeches,
- ✓ All are great opportunities to publicly introduce endorsing groups and VIPs and to demonstrate compelling visuals to the press.

PRESS CONFERENCES

- ✓ A particularly effective media event, because they allow you to control the way your campaign is portrayed.
- ✓ At a press conference you can present your story directly to the media and announce something special or newsworthy (e.g. a campaign kick-off, an important event, a problem affecting people in the community, etc.). *(Refer to tips on Running an Effective Press Conference for more info)*

Press Advisories and Releases

(For more detailed information, see enclosed instructions on writing advisories & releases, as well as attached samples.)

PRESS ADVISORIES

- ✓ Inform reporters ahead of time about an event or press conference that you would like them to attend.
- ✓ A news advisory tells the Who, What, When, Where and Why of the story—without revealing so much so that reporters don't need to come to the event!
- ✓ Should be sent to the press at least 3 days in advance and then again on the day of the event, and should always be accompanied by a personal phone call to the reporter.

PRESS RELEASES

- ✓ Simply announce newsworthy events to the press
- ✓ Usually handed out at press conferences, or sent to the media shortly after an event.
- ✓ Designed to answer a reporter's questions before they are asked and allow you to frame your issue the way you want.
- ✓ A good press release should do a reporter's job, writing the story for them—and indeed, many press releases are printed verbatim, particularly in smaller papers.
- ✓ As with a news advisory, a press release should always be accompanied by a follow-up phone call.

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) and Op-Eds

- ✓ The opinion section is one of the most highly read sections of the newspaper, and one of the easiest places to get pieces printed. Use this to your advantage with LTEs and Op-Eds
- ✓ **LTEs** are easy to write and get published. LTE's are statements of opinion, and unlike most newspaper articles, can be very slanted towards a particular viewpoint. LTEs can be used to correct misleading facts of statements, argue for or against a certain issue, or announce a campaign or organization. For example, you can write a letter responding to a previous article or simply just stating your opinion on an issue. *(see sample and tips)*

- ✓ **Opinion Editorials (Op-Eds)** are longer editorial pieces that are usually written by a prominent person or the editorial board staff. The average length is about 500 words. Op-Eds go into more detail than LTEs and much harder to get published. *(See sample)*

OTHER MEDIA TOOLS:

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

- ✓ A PSA is usually a free 10-20 second spot on radio or TV program, or small announcement or ad in a newspaper about your organization and what you are trying to accomplish. You can use PSAs to announce an event or meeting, or simply to publicize your campaign. Most radio, TV and print media offer a certain amount of free space for these, all you need to do is call and ask. *(See attached list of media contacts for New York City).*

Radio Feed

- ✓ A shortened version of a news release put into a 15-20 second sound bite to broadcast on the radio. You can either record the sound bite yourself or fax the radio station a script. Radio stations will also send reporters to cover events occasionally. Target radio stations that have talk shows or news programs.

Editorial Board Meeting

- ✓ Meeting with the editorial board of a newspaper is useful to brief them on your issue and build relationships with them. If the editorial board is impressed with your campaign or issue they may choose to write an Op-Ed or more in-depth opinion piece on it.

Paid Advertisements

- ✓ If you have the funding, paid advertisements for your organization or campaign are a sure way to get your message out. You can take out an advertisement in the local newspaper, create a poster to be put in subways or busses, or create a commercial for television.

Community Calendars

- ✓ Most newspapers have a community calendar or event section where you can list public events for FREE. Each newspaper has different deadlines on when to submit an event for publication—call ahead to find out. *(See attached list of media contacts for New York City)*