

TOP TIPS

MANAGING THE MEDIA



The key to dealing with the media is to **BE IN CONTROL**. Be confident in the story you are telling, know the facts, state them clearly and simply.

And how do you pull this off?

Follow our foolproof guide to **MANAGING THE MEDIA**.

BE PREPARED

Engage with reality: Editors, journalists, broadcasters and reporters receive dozens of press releases and story ideas every day. Not all even get looked at. Think of it as if you are entering a competition – your story, release or phone call has to be *better* than all the rest.

Who's been to Charm School? Dealing with the press requires tact, patience, charm and good-humour. In return, all media want just one name to be dealing with, rather than a clutch of different people. Work out who has the time, inclination and personal style to be your media representative.

What's your story? What makes your event unique? Why should the reporter or journalist spend their time covering your event or interviewing your representative? What makes it *special*?

Namedrop with style: Who can you approach for a quote? It might be the Chairman of your organisation, or Jeremy Clarkson, if he happens to be your neighbour. Whatever your views on celebrities, newspapers *love* them. A quote in your release will increase the possibility of it getting used.

Ready to receive visitors? The journalist might want a preview of the event, to be guided round by someone with specialist knowledge of your property. Are you ready to arrange this?

Prepare an elevator pitch: Work out how to sum up your event in one pithy sentence. Avoid bland 'a grand day out for all the family.' More along the lines of; "Jacobean history comes alive with a day of feasting, fighting and festivities."

PRESS

It's all in a name: Always try to avoid sending your release to any generic email queue, such as news@meridiantv.com or travel@thetimes.co.uk. It's easy for releases to get lost in these very busy queues. Take time to ring up and find the name of the best person to send your release to.

It's all about image: It's not stories that newspapers struggle with, it's *pictures*. Ensure you have relevant images that comply with the guidelines below.

Tell a story: All journalists want good stories. What they don't want is intricate architectural details or dimensions of rooms etc (unless you're dealing with a specific architectural/historical magazine.) Keep it light and fun.

Short and sharp: Space is at a premium in newspapers and long, wordy quotes never go down well. Prepare your messages and keep focused on what you want to get across.

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Chase up with care: Most journalists will only respond to a press release if they want more details or images – no reply doesn't mean they haven't seen it. If you want to follow up, approach with care – and if it's a weekly paper/magazine, ensure you don't ring up on press day.

Belt and braces: A good journalist will make notes while you're talking, but have a press pack ready to give them, with any relevant releases, ideally a CD with images and any background information that might be relevant.

IMAGES

Prioritise your pics: Newspapers and magazines love high-quality pictures. But there's nothing more frustrating for a picture editor or a designer than a beautiful photograph that can't be used because its *resolution* isn't high enough. High resolution is essential for an image's sharp reproduction in print.

The science bit: Digital images are composed of tiny dots called "pixels" (short for PICture ELe ment). An image's resolution is measured in "dots per inch" or "dpi". 100 dpi means there are 100 pixels per square inch. The more pixels in the same amount of space, the sharper the image. If for instance you print a photograph in a 4"x6" format, the 200 dpi version will be much crisper than the 100 dpi version.

Size matters: The print requirement for images is a minimum resolution of 300 dpi. 72 dpi images may look fine on a computer screen but generally they won't produce a crisp and smooth print. Low-res photos or large images that can be condensed can sometimes be used if the picture is only going to be used as a small 'drop-in' image. Establish with the publication where and what size they are going to use the picture.



Crisp and sharp
Resolution: 300 dpi
Digital photo size: 6"x4"

Same subject
Same print size
But what a difference!



Pixelated and blurred
Resolution: 72 dpi
Digital photo size: 0.8"x0.5"

Check it out: If you don't have access to graphic design software such as Photoshop, it's difficult to determine a picture's resolution. But if the file size is large, e.g. more than 1MB, the chances are that it has sufficient pixels for a satisfactory print reproduction.

If you have no idea how to check your image's resolution on Photoshop, there's an excellent tutorial on Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SX3YE_TeYm4&feature=related

Shoot with care: When taking a picture with your digital camera you want to use in print, make sure the image quality is changed to the maximum setting (all camera user manuals will explain how to do this). It will take up more space on your memory card, but all you need now is a fine blue sky, a sharp eye and a steady hand.

BROADCAST

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse: Being interviewed on television is no different to any other kind of performance. Try to get an idea of the sort of questions you will be asked, and have your answers ready.

Waffles are for breakfast: Be aware of waffling. Answer the question that you have been asked, and no more. Don't re-state the same point twice – and don't keep talking because you're afraid of a silence – it's the reporter's job to keep the conversation going.

Dress to impress: That means simple and unfussy. Avoid loud ties, dangly earrings or brightly-patterned tops. Black is also a no-no, although dark colours are generally more flattering.

Take aim: Work out what the aim of doing the interview is and stick to it. Is it to raise the profile? To get more people to visit? Make sure you get the necessary information across, whether that's a website or contact number. Ask to have it put on the screen while you are talking.

Speak the language: Body language that is – which can be as engaging – or off-putting – as the words used. Lean forward a little, make eye-contact with the interviewer and if you naturally talk with your hands then keep those gestures.

Try, try again: Being interviewed on TV can be utterly nerve-wracking. But remember, unless it's live you can ask to do it again.

And finally: Smile! Be enthusiastic – this is your chance to sell your event and nothing encourages people more than someone who looks upbeat and confident.

RADIO

Check out the form: Firstly, establish the basis for the interview. How long will it be? Who else will be there? Is it a straight one-on-one interview or a round-table chat? And find out what sort of age and type of people listen to the show – and tailor your answers accordingly.

Write it down: The great thing about radio is that you can't be seen, so you can refer to notes and prompt cards. Just be very careful not to sound as though you're reading from a script.

Slow it down: Remember, nervousness makes you speak more quickly – and on radio, clarity is all-important. Make an effort to speak slowly and clearly.

Get the message across: It's imperative to let people know where they can get more information. Write down all the relevant info; website, email, twitter feed, facebook page – and make sure that you mention it, ideally more than once.

Tune in and turn off: Make sure your mobile phone is turned off. Even if it's on vibration it can still be a distraction, and even a momentary hesitation can feel like a lifetime of 'dead air'.

Once more with feeling: If you've lost concentration or can't think how to answer a question, simply ask the interviewer to repeat it. This will give you time to assemble your thoughts and form a reply.

Keep it handy: Although listeners can't see you, talk as if they are sitting opposite you. If you normally move and gesticulate when you talk, don't change for radio; an animated style is even more important when all people have to go on is your voice.

Smile: You can hear a smile too, you know.