

Promoting – press releases, posters and radio

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Publicity is priceless if done correctly. It can help get your group and its aims known and can help you recruit volunteers. Over time you can build up the profile of your group and, as long as your publicity has been positive, this will almost certainly help when you start looking for funding.

Press Releases

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Our enormous thanks go to Stockport MBC and in particular Stephanie Hinde (Community Development Officer) and Fiona Bullock (Marketing Officer, Community Services). All the information in this Media section is based on their Media Pack for community groups; special thanks also to the Mersey Basin Campaign for their media pack on which the Stockport pack is based.

Press releases

Put all the relevant information together and well presented to catch the journalist's eye, make his job easy and make sure the correct message goes out.

What makes a good press release?

Things to think about...

- *What are the main ideas and points you want to get across?*
- *Why is your project newsworthy? What is the news angle?*
- *Be positive.* Make your press release sound interesting and fun. Do a draft then get someone else to read it through. If it doesn't grab their attention then chances are a journalist will react the same.

Press release rules

- *Keep the language simple and don't use jargon*
- *Keep to the facts.*
- *State the purpose of your project.* For example, if your project is to clean up a pond in your community, include information that explains why this is important and newsworthy.
- *Try and get short quotes from people in the community.* Local councillors are always good for a quote.
- *Keep it short.* Maximum length should be 1-2 pages and no more than 500 words.
- *Number each page and make sure contact details are on every page.*
- *Use a wide margin on both sides.*
- *Use letterhead paper if you have it.* It adds clout.
- *Check your spelling.* It makes you look unprofessional if your grammar and spelling are bad.
- *Always leave a double-line space between every line.*
- *Type PRESS RELEASE, then your headline.*

- *Try to come up with a headline that is snappy and even humorous*, e.g. 'Local vicar caught with his hands in the cookie jar' for a story about a vicar giving out biscuits to local school children.
- *Devise a photo opportunity for added impact*. If there is an opportunity for a photo mention this at the end of your press release and suggest a good time, e.g. when the mayor will be arriving to open your event.

Increasing your impact with a V.I.P.

If you can borrow Her Majesty or David Beckham for the day you are guaranteed press coverage. But if they can't make it why not invite the Mayor and Lady Mayoress, local MP, vicar, and even your local councillors. Any one of them will help raise the profile of your event, and it is certainly the case that the press are more likely to show an interest.

Suggested layout

First Paragraph:

The questions Who? What? When? and Where? need to be answered here.

Second Paragraph:

Back up your first paragraph with more details, answer Why? and How? Use quotes from people in the community if available.

Third Paragraph:

State facts on the project/event.

End with a contact name, telephone number and address for further information.

Notes to the editor:

This is important, especially if you are after a more comprehensive write-up and it may give the journalist another angle. Here you can add background information about your group and project: a brief history; aims; work so far carried out on the project; number of members; money raised; and so forth. If you have another quote, put it here, and also mention the details of any photo opportunity.

Targeting your Press Release

- *Contact local newspapers and radio stations*
- *Get to know your local neighbourhood reporter.* Local papers often carry a weekly neighbourhood section with names and contact numbers. If you can strike up a relationship and provide regular stories you are more likely to succeed. If your group produces a newsletter, add the press to your mailing-list.
- *Find out when they go to press.* If possible fax or e-mail your press release about 2 weeks in advance (Check whether they prefer fax or email. Fax can be better as e-mails sometimes don't get read). When you've sent your press release, **follow it up with a phone call** a few days before they go to press to check that they have received it and as a reminder. **Be proactive** – you don't want notice of an event to appear in the paper after it has taken place.
- *Will they be sending a reporter/photographer?* If yes then don't forget to tell them where and when, and task someone with the job of meeting them. Try to think beforehand when and what will produce the ideal photo. When will the mayor be cutting the ribbon? Don't despair if no one turns up from the press. Send them a photo. A few children pretending to dig holes and smiling at the camera, or something with a good prop such as 2 scouts in a boat, are the types of picture editors adore, and perhaps they'll do a follow-up story.
- *Electronic media.* Search on the net for relevant sites to post publicity details - a local tourist info page; newsgroups, community web sites, Ceefax and Teletext (both have weekly lists of forthcoming events in each region).
- *Letters to the editor* may be the easiest way to get your group's name into print and will give you more editorial control. If the paper didn't cover your event use the letters page to thank those who helped to make it a great success.
- **DON'T GIVE UP!** Don't be surprised if your story or mention of your event doesn't appear. Give them a call and tell them what a fantastic time people had and perhaps they'll print something next week. All you can do is keep trying and build up those relationships with reporters.

Poster campaigns

A good poster can attract a lot of attention. They are cheap and can easily reach your target audience.

Basic rules

- *Keep the message simple.* Stick to the basics: event, venue, time and date (include the day of the week if possible).
- *Font or typeface:* using different fonts is eye-catching as it creates contrast, but don't over do it; too many confuses the eye. As a rule of thumb use no more than three.
- *Use simple text tools* such as **bold** or underline, to further enhance your text.
- *Add very simple graphics* but only if it adds to your message.
- *Print in black* as it is quicker and cheaper. But why not print on coloured paper or multi-coloured paper available at stationers?
- *Consider laminating* your posters if they are going to be up for a while.

Size matters

It is a good idea to produce a range of posters in different sizes such as A3, A4 and A5. Take a selection around with you, particularly if you want shops to put them in the window. If you only have A3 posters the shop will probably say no as they may not have the space or it may clash with their own marketing. A6 flyer size are great for handing out to people in the park or on the street, and you may get shopkeepers willing to put a bundle on the counter.

Where to display

- *Posters in visible places will get your message across.* Use the same sites on a regular basis and people will get accustomed to looking out for them.
- *Remember to check your sites regularly,* posters have a tendency to disappear particularly over the weekend!
- *On the day before, or on the day of the event,* why not slap a notice across the poster announcing 'HERE TODAY'. This gives instant recognition.

Useful poster sites

- Park, church and community notice boards
- Libraries, information centres
- Schools
- Shops, pubs and post offices
- Supermarket customer boards
- Youth and community centres

A word of caution

Councils are cracking down on fly posters and those annoying adverts tied to lamp posts that seem to remain there forever. You may be allowed to put posters up on trees, etc, within the confines of your own park or green space, provided that they are removed immediately after the event and there should be no problem with notice boards. Check it out with your local parks officer first.

Radio interviews

Apparently more and more of us are listening to local radio stations so it is well worth faxing your press release and asking for your event to be given a mention. Most feature a weekly *what's on diary* and have phone-ins where you can promote your event.

Preparation

- *Find out what is to be covered in the interview* - if you've gone into the studio to promote a local clean-up event and are asked instead to comment on the European Water Framework Directive you won't be happy – and could be embarrassed.
- *Try to listen to the show before you go on* to gauge how the presenter deals with guests.
- *Make a list*, or memorise, the most important points that you want to get across.
- *Find out how long you are going to be on air* - if it's only going to be a few minutes then try to get your points across early.

In the studio

- *Always arrive either on time, or preferable earlier*, to compose yourself.
- *It is useful to have a sheet of your key points* to refer to but basically you're having a face-to-face conversation with the presenter so try to keep eye contact, and don't read from your press release.
- *Keep your answers short and to the point.*
- *Try to think before you speak.* Wait for the presenter to finish before answering the question.
- *Don't worry if you think you have made a mistake.* Most interviews are recorded and edited in any case. Just try to relax and enjoy yourself.
- *When the interview is over ask the presenter when it is going to be aired* so that you can phone round and tell your colleagues, friends and family.