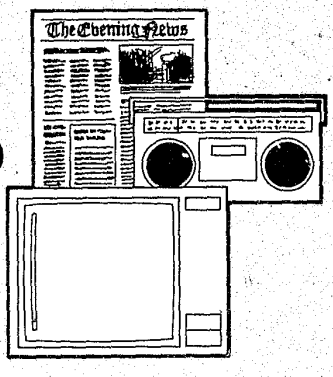

ink & airtime

working effectively with the media

ɔnal Crime Prevention Council
Washington, D.C.

ink & airtime

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National Crime Prevention Council
Washington, D.C.

The National Crime Prevention Council is a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization whose principal mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safe, caring communities. It provides technical assistance, coordinates the Crime Prevention Coalition (110 national and state organizations and agencies who support crime prevention), and works with the Advertising Council, Inc. and the U.S. Department of Justice (Bureau of Justice Assistance) on the McGruff "Take a Bite Out of Crime" public service advertising campaign.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance provides the bedrock funding for NCPC activities and for the National Citizens Crime Prevention Campaign (Contract 86-MU-CX-K002). NCPC is also funded by private and public foundations, corporations, and individual donors.

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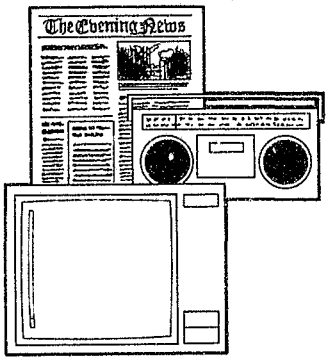


FOREWORD

For forty-five years, the Advertising Council has marshalled the nation's advertising and communications resources to serve the public good. It has encouraged volunteer actions by Americans to improve their quality of life through thousands of public service advertising campaigns such as Smokey Bear protecting our forests, drunk driving killing friendships, reminders that a mind is a terrible thing to waste, and an appeal that people help Take A Bite Out Of Crime, to name a few. Advertising agencies *donate* their professional services; the mass media contribute free space and time—averaging $800 million worth per year—to get these action messages to the public.

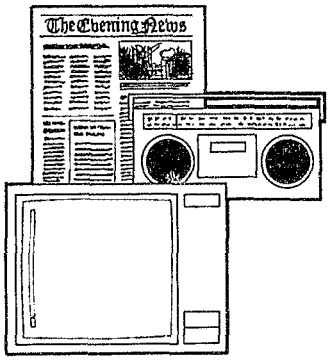
Although Council campaigns are national in scope, they must be relevant to local communities and to people where they live and work. Thus, local media support is essential and the way a campaign and its local programs are marketed and promoted locally makes a tremendous difference in its ultimate success. That is what makes this publication, *Ink & Airtime*, such a valuable piece of work.

The National Crime Prevention Council, in preparing this volume, has provided an invaluable service—a practical guide for those who want to develop productive and mutually beneficial relationships with mass media communicators in their communities.

Its appeal goes far beyond crime prevention; its guidance on dealing with the press is widely applicable. The need to deal effectively with the press is universal; every nonprofit agency, every public service oriented program and indeed countless types of civic groups which have need to reach the public will find *Ink & Airtime* a prime reference and a clearly written, well organized manual to assist in one's publicity and promotional efforts.

This is a book that I'm proud to introduce, and the Advertising Council is pleased to be working with an organization, the National Crime Prevention Council, that has not only proved its appeal and its merit to millions, but that also has produced such a sound tool for all of us in mass communications and education.

Robert Keim, President
The Advertising Council, Inc.



ABOUT THIS BOOK . . .

It's a real and persistent need. You have a story to tell, news to spread. But how to do it? How do you develop effective on-going working relationships with reporters, editors and other media people, instead of relying on luck to get your program the news coverage it deserves?

For anyone working with a community group, how to tap into the power of newspapers, radio, television and magazines which serve your community can be a puzzle.

Ink & Airtime is a tool for solving that puzzle. It's your guide to meeting the media on their home ground—presenting your news in a timely, useful, relevant fashion which attracts attention and holds interest. It's a manual, start to finish, for setting up a press and publicity operation for your group.

It combines journalism and public relations to show you how to make that critical match—your need to let the public know about your program and its accomplishments, and the media's need for news about the community and its residents. Your purpose in putting out news may be to educate, inform, persuade or congratulate. Whatever the case, *Ink & Airtime* will give you the framework in which to place your news; it will show you how to tell your story so that reporters and editors will listen.

Nothing is assumed. We start with basic equipment you'll need; we end with a discussion of ways to evaluate your media effort and to develop long-range plans. In between, we look at needs and opportunities of all kinds of news outlets from community weeklies to nightly television news, and match these needs with yours.

Ink & Airtime draws its examples from crime prevention, which is NCPC's mission. But the book's lessons are meant to be widely useful by community groups and volunteer organizations—any group which has news to impart to the rest of the community. It's designed to be a teach-yourself manual

and to address the needs of people whose release-writing skills may just be rusty as well as those who've never written a news story.

Readers who appreciate this book should join me in thanking a number of people who added enormously to its development.

Thanks are due first and foremost to Jack Calhoun, NCPC's Executive Director, who more than three years ago saw the need for this book. My colleagues at the National Crime Prevention Council not only supported the need but provided invaluable comments and suggestions and identified outside readers for the manuscript. They also were wellsprings of information on new and exciting work being done in the field.

Special thanks to Monica LaMote for her work in researching chapters 6 and 7.

A major thank-you to the readers of the manuscript, from whose candid and experience-based comments each of you has benefited enormously: Lee Belser, a talented veteran print and electronic media reporter; Mel Hickman, now a crime prevention specialist but formerly a Reuters reporter; Kimberly Ensign, who helps train crime prevention specialists throughout Ohio in working with the press; Roy Kindrick, who knows both police and press work intimately and well; Jean Fujimoto, whose record with television and crime prevention in Hawaii is enviable; Elenore Hangley of The Advertising Council, whose professional expertise is exceeded only by her personal commitment.

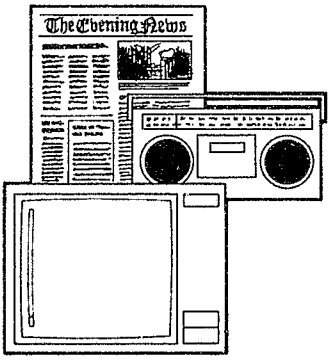
Special thanks for his kind Foreword to Bob Keim, President of The Advertising Council, Inc. To Patrick Murphy and the Schlage Lock Company, for helping underwrite the book's publication, a large and elegant bouquet. The Bureau of Justice Assistance, which funded development of this book, is gratefully acknowledged.

A final thank-you goes to the hundreds of men and women —law enforcement, human services professionals, citizen volunteers, public officials—who have inventively and adeptly carried crime prevention's messages to the public over the years. We only hope *Ink & Airtime* will help you do your jobs even better!

Jean F. O'Neil
Director, Research & Policy Analysis
National Crime Prevention Council
Washington, D.C.
January 1987

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1



YOU CAN GET INK AND AIRTIME!

"We've got lots of programs, but no one knows we're here. How can we spread the word?"

"Great things are happening because of our program for senior citizens. How can we get some attention?"

"I'm a lousy writer. How can I do press releases?"

"I've never been interviewed on TV before; I'm nervous. How am I supposed to act?"

"My budget just won't allow hiring a press aide. And I don't have time. What can I do?"

"The City Editor of our paper just won't print crime prevention news. Help!"

The questions could go on and on. The problems? Getting the word out about what you've done, what you've planned, what you can do. Increasing participation. Building support. Expanding your base in the community.

Ink & Airtime shows you how to tackle these problems, and how to build productive relationships — even partnerships — with radio stations, television stations and newspapers in *your* community. It looks at a variety of media options and opportunities from simple releases to complex cosponsored events and television shows *you* put together.

You may get news coverage with a lucky call to the right person at the right time, but for consistent, quality news and public affairs coverage, you need to understand how to match

your needs and the press's and how to fit media into your long-term plans.

You may have never written a news release or talked to a TV reporter in your life. You may prepare one release a year or three a week.

You want to educate, inform, excite or persuade people. So do the news media. There's a natural match-up. The question is how to make the match and how to make it work well. That's the question this book is designed to answer.

Do you need lots of training? No. Lots of money? No. Lots of time and resources? No. You can surely use them to the extent that you have them. But you can do a great deal with some basic skills and a minimum number of tools.

Getting your share of ink and airtime depends far more on learning basic skills and how to match needs and interests of your efforts and of the news media than on any budget or specialized training you do or don't have. It rests far more on perseverance than on polish.

Shouldn't I Leave This to the Pros?

You are the pro. You know the community, the issues, the subject and the substance far better than anyone not involved in day to day operations of the program. Reporters and editors want to get the facts from the *source*, the expert. They'd *rather* deal with you if you're closer to the story than the agency press spokesman. They *prefer* to get their information from the experts. If you don't have the help of a professional in press relations, you can still get your story out.

What you need is an idea of

- *whom* to go to;
- for *what reason(s)*;
- *how to approach* them;
- *what to say*, and;
- *what to leave* with them.

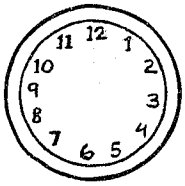
That compendium of "tricks of the trade," ways to work effectively with reporters, editors and other members of the mass communication community, is what *Ink & Airtime* provides. It covers the basics and takes you step-by-step through the process of presenting your story to the press. It suggests a host of ways in which you, as a pro in your subject area, can build partnerships with the media.

How Will I Find Time To Do All This?

If you've already done some work with press, you can testify that with practice, you not only get better but faster. In fact, it takes longer to explain many of these things than to do them. Here's one example of what you might be doing in three months, even if you're a beginner:

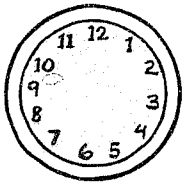
Story Idea: Ten neighborhoods in the Arkdale community will hold block parties on the same day. All of them have Neighborhood Watches. Some have escort services; some have Safe Houses for kids. Various kinds of food, games, dancing and entertainments will be featured.

Time to write out main idea: 5 minutes



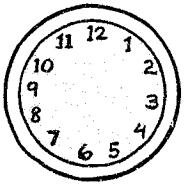
Gathering Facts: Who is the contact for each party? What special attractions will each have? What is the schedule for each? Confirm locations.

Time to gather facts: 1 hour



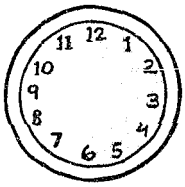
Writing Release: The main story message (or lead) is pretty clear from story idea. A bit of time is required to figure out in what order you should list parties and which features should be highlighted.

Time to write release: 1 hour



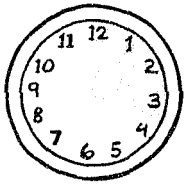
Placing Story: There's so much activity that would make good visual news that you're sure the parties will make excellent television and maybe live radio broadcasts, as well as great opportunities for news photos. You call the four TV assignment editors in your metropolitan area and read them the first paragraph of your release, then send the release. You send it also to the city editor, features editor, and the photo editor of the two daily newspapers and to the editors of the five weeklies that serve the neighborhoods. You plan to make calls two days before the event to remind everyone and pass on any last minute changes.

Time for calls, mailing release: 30 minutes



Follow-up (post event): Two reporters are interested in stories on how local communities got so organized. You provide background and further contacts with key neighborhood leaders to arrange interviews. You write two notes thanking reporters for exceptionally nice stories.

Time for follow-up: 20 minutes



Investing less than four hours of your time, you've gotten

- two television news stories:
- a city page feature;
- stories in five weekly newspapers;
- three radio reports;
- six calls (three from people who want to set up Neighborhood Watches, two from parents interested in child safety and one from a local community organizer asking how you did it);
- the potential for two major stories on crime prevention, one in a daily newspaper and one in the Sunday features section.

Not bad! And you didn't need a staff of twelve to do it! Most of the facts you gathered were ones you'd have needed anyhow.

As we'll discuss, a key to getting press coverage is being able to convince an editor or reporter that your story is newsworthy by his or her standards. Reporters need news to report; you need coverage of your activities. You encounter compelling human interest stories and news events every day. Share these to meet each other's needs; you both win.

You Can Use This Book If . . .

This book can be useful to any number of people — the rusty writer unsure of press release style and format; the person who unexpectedly wound up slated to go on a TV talk show; the committee trying to get attention for its annual event; the group that wants to develop a sustained press and public information campaign.

It's designed with busy people in mind. Organized in logical sequence from basic tools through putting together and selling a story to long-range planning, *Ink & Airtime* is not a journalism text but a hands-on set of how-to's based on practical experience.

It shows you how to link with national programs and resources, such as those of the prestigious Advertising Council's national public service campaigns, and where to look for help at the local level.

Chapter 2, Tools You'll Need — Basic and Advanced, reviews the basic elements of working with the press, from typing releases to setting up press lists and making initial contacts.

Chapters 3 (Getting Your Story Straight) and 4 (Writing It Down) present the fact-gathering, story organizing and mechanical steps for developing and releasing a news story.

Placing Your Story (Chapter 5) explains different approaches to getting your story attention and getting it into the hands of the reporters and editors who want it. It reviews the requirements of different types of media, and suggests do's and don'ts for selling your story.

Chapters 6 and 7 talk about ways to work with electronic media's special requirements. These offer helpful perspectives and convenient refreshers as occasions to talk with radio and television reporters arise, and are invaluable when the question of holding press conferences or other media events comes up.

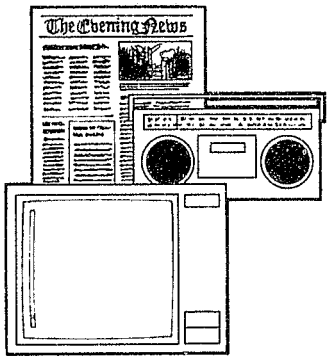
Chapter 8 talks about what to do when things go wrong. It won't solve all your problems, but you'll have a better understanding of how to react when a story is reported incorrectly or

when bad news about the program is the subject of a story.

Chapter 9 is full of ideas for ways to bring the media aboard as partners in your effort, including public service advertising and jointly sponsored events and programs. Chapter 10 outlines ways to measure your program's success and suggests ways to develop long-range plans and devise a media strategy for your group.

You can get more ink and more airtime — and have fun doing it!

Chapter 2



TOOLS YOU'LL NEED — BASIC AND ADVANCED

There are a few essentials for any press relations effort. These range from materials and equipment to information. Some tools are less vital but still extremely helpful. If you are involved in a small-scale effort, you can probably borrow many things. By and large, the tools are not expensive. Sometimes you can get donations.

The more sophisticated or active your operation, the more likely that you will need your own tools rather than having to rely on external sources of support. You will find that such extras as photo files (specially designed plastic sheets for holding photos and negatives) and clipping books gradually become necessities when at the beginning they might have been luxuries.

Typewriter

Whether it's a portable typewriter, a standard office model or an up-to-the-minute computer, use some device which produces highly readable text. Hand-written or hand-printed news releases look sloppy and are hard to read. Editors and reporters tend not to read or use them.

Fancy typefaces aren't necessary. Different typewriters can be used at different times. If you have access to a computer (home or office) on which to draft and edit your release, so much the better. It provides great flexibility and speed.

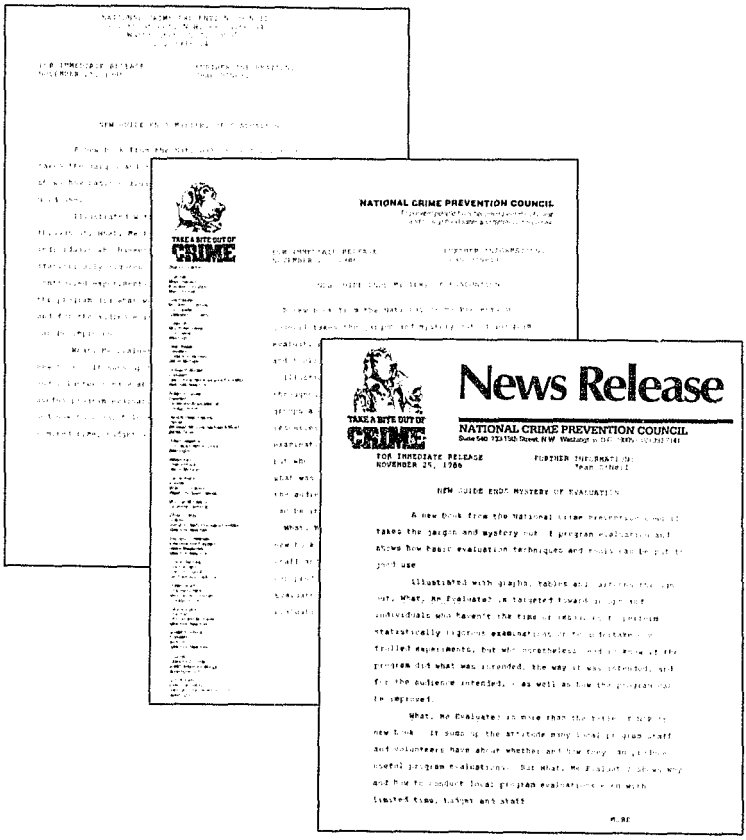
Paper

The top of the first page of the paper on which your story is typed should identify the source. The group's name and address can be

- the organization's regular letterhead, or
- specially printed with the words "News Release" or "News From" or
- typed onto a piece of plain paper.

Having a standard appearance or "look" helps reporters and editors recognize your news. It can attract attention and emphasize your identity. Use a logo or other symbol associated with your program (McGruff, Smokey Bear, United Way symbol, for example) to lend further emphasis to your identity. Second sheets should be plain paper.

Avoid colored papers (except perhaps ivory or another "off-white" shade). They make reading (and editing) the release more difficult.



Copies

Carbon copies are not acceptable. If you are going to distribute releases and background material, you need to provide legible, decent quality copies.

Copying won't be confined to releases. You need to be prepared to copy reports, background material, letters and similar supporting documents to enhance coverage and help reporters develop an in-depth story. Often, reporters need or request their own copies of such documents so they can analyze them and reach an independent judgment.

> **Hint:** Type the story onto *plain* paper, leaving enough space for your letterhead on top of the first page. Then simply put the letterhead in the copier to make page one copies.

Contact Point: Name and Phone for Follow-Up

Someone in the group has to serve as the contact for the news media. Which person may vary depending on the subject, or it can be the same person each time. But someone must be available to answer questions about the story.

No matter how carefully you write, no matter how clearly you describe, you will have omitted something the reporter or editor wants, or there will be a request to confirm your information before publishing it.

Without a contact, your story may lie fallow for lack of confirmation or amplification. One or two simple questions, easy to answer, might be all that stand between your story idea and good publicity on the evening news or in the next day's newspaper.

An important bonus in listing a follow-up contact—if your story can't be used immediately, an interested editor or reporter will keep it on file, and will know just whom to go to for updates and new details.

Dictionary, Grammar and Thesaurus

Misspelled words, poor word choice and grammatical errors all tarnish the image your organization wants to project. Even relatively routine announcements and memos present your group better if properly spelled and punctuated.

Reference tools are necessities for writing well. They don't have to be expensive versions; paperbound editions of standard works can be obtained for less than $25 total. Buy a dictionary, a thesaurus and a basic grammar. A local librarian or English teacher can suggest several from which to pick.

If you have a computer or other word processor, use its spelling check program, if one is available. It's an excellent backstop to your proofreading, though proofreading remains necessary.

Press/Media Lists

Unless you plan to do just one press release, you'll want all the names, addresses and phone numbers of media you deal with in one place. It could be two newspapers, a TV station and two radio stations. It could be a hundred or more contacts. Whatever its size, however frequently you use it, you should have a list.

A list is not useful unless it contains the information you need in ways you can use it. You need to know whom to call about what kinds of stories. You need to keep track of the media people you've worked with. You need to have key facts about TV, radio and print at your fingertips for easy reference.

Hence the press (or media) list. It may be convenient to computerize your list if it is large. It may be more logical to keep it on 3" x 5" cards within a rubber band, especially if you have just a few news outlets in your area.

But at heart, these lists of the names, addresses, affiliations, interests and telephone numbers of reporters, various editors and specialty writers are an in-depth version of a personal "black book" of addresses.

Three ways of filing might be helpful: reporter's or editor's name; name of the publication or broadcast station; topic(s) or geographic area(s) of special interest. Use the one(s) most logical for your situation. If you use two or three methods, have separate files or a cross-reference system.

All sorts of systems have been used. No one is sacred or "right." You could color code the media outlets and the reporters' interests on a master card like the one shown at right. Colored dots or clips or crayon marks could be used to code an especially long or complex list. Computerizing the list can be helpful. It's easy to update, easy to print and easy to locate records. But even with a written list, a file card box or a Rolodex

NAME _____

TITLE _____

ORGANIZATION _____

STREET _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

TYPE OF MEDIA _____

SPECIAL INTERESTS _____

_____

_____

DEADLINES _____

_____

file will be easier to keep current than a list with several entries to a page.

Using a Rolodex or other phone index is fine — but cards for entering information should be large enough to contain what you need to know. Having to look up vital information in a second list from a desk drawer or a file cabinet is time consuming, not time saving.

The press list should include *at minimum:*

- daily newspapers;
- radio stations;
- television stations UHF, VHF and cable;
- wire services—in almost all cases Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI);
- weekly or community newspapers
- ethnic newspapers;
- locally published magazines.

You may have several contacts at each station or paper. Keep track of the assignment editors, producers, feature editors, city editors, editorial page editors and others as part of your press list.

Especially if several volunteers are working from the list — don't count on memory. Don't count on someone else's memory. Keep track of press people and their special interests. *Write it down!*

You may be able to benefit from someone else's work. Check with Chambers of Commerce, local journalism schools, your local government. They may already have compiled (and be willing to share) the basic press list you will need to get started.

Gathering Names and Numbers

Your best sources of media contact names and telephone numbers for your list are your own (or your group members') contacts with the media. Ask others in the group whom they've dealt with about your subject — which reporters, editors, feature writers.

See who reports a story related to crime or crime prevention (or whatever topics are relevant) on the air or in the print media. That may indicate which reporter has your beat (subject area) covered. Call the paper to ask who prepared the story if the reporter isn't named. Sometimes a visit or call to the news editor can produce lists. Sometimes a call to the switchboard is all it takes.

If you are in a major metropolitan area, you may not know all the print and broadcast outlets which might reach your audience. One obvious source of names, telephone numbers and addresses is the local "Yellow Pages." Look under "Newspapers," "Television," "Radio," "Magazines."

Check the local public library for any of several standard reference books — the *IMF Ayers Media Directory, The Gebbie Press All-in-One Directory,* the *Broadcast Yearbook, Standard Rates and Data, Editor and Publisher Yearbook,* to name just a few. These directories will usually include basic information on the circulation (or audience size), the format or style, special interests.

Don't overlook the many other communications networks your community offers. Put on your press list such organizations as:

- churches;
- service clubs (Optimists, Exchangites, Kiwanis, Lions, etc.);
- veterans' groups (American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, etc.);
- senior citizens' centers;
- condominiums and homeowner associations;
- school systems/boards;
- high school and college newspapers;
- PTA newsletters;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- local Economic Development Office;
- any other group in your area that publishes a newsletter or bulletin and might use your material;

Consider adding some "very important people" who would want to be kept abreast of crime prevention developments:

- mayor's office;
- city or county council;
- state legislators for your area;
- U.S. Senators and Representative(s) for your area;
- major business executives.

Other individuals (and groups) will come to mind.

Profiles in Media

Another approach that complements the name-focused list is to write up a media profile. Elements of such a profile might include the format, special community interests, a list of key personnel and brief notes on coverage of your activities.

A profile helps you to (1) have a more informed picture of the media resource you are dealing with, (2) focus on your relationship with a particular station or newspaper, (3) spot coverage failures in a more systematic fashion than you otherwise might, (4) send or call with thank-yous periodically for extraordinary support. A system of profiles may not be necessary if you are running a small operation with perhaps a few radio stations and two TV stations along with a daily newspaper and two weeklies.

Expand your horizons in gathering names for your press list. Fraternal, social, civic and religious groups all communicate with their members; many are happy to pass on your message as well!

MEDIA PROFILE

NAME OF MEDIA OUTLET _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TYPE: NEWSPAPER — Daily _____ Weekly _____ Shopper _____
MAGAZINE — Weekly _____ Monthly _____
RADIO — AM _____ FM _____ — Frequency _____
TV — VHF _____ UHF _____ CABLE _____—Channel _____

CIRCULATION/VIEWERS: _____

NETWORK or CHAIN AFFILIATE? NO _____ YES _____
(If yes, which one? _____)

FORMAT

SPECIAL FEATURES (Talk shows, local affairs shows, special article sections, etc.)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: (Special notes on community activities sponsored)

KEY PERSONNEL:
Name Title Phone

OUR SPECIAL LINKS (People who can help with access)

COVERAGE OF OUR GROUP/AGENCY
Date Story Headline/Subject Reporter

Formats

Daily newspapers can be morning, evening, Sunday only or a combination. They can be tabloid format (about 11" x 14") or full-size (about 14" x 24"). Newspapers can also be published weekly, biweekly or monthly.

Radio stations are usually classified by the kind of signal they transmit (AM, amplitude modulation, or FM, frequency modulation), or by what they predominantly broadcast: rock, adult contemporary, family, religious, country/western, "middle of the road" (MOR), news/talk, for example. Stations can also be rated by their power (from a few kilowatts to 50,000 megawatts). Some AM stations are only permitted to operate from sunrise to sunset.

Television stations can be commercial (the "free" networks) or public education; cable can offer free broadcasts and/or paid programming. Some television networks carry specialized programming (religious, sports, music video, ethnic, among others). Channels 2 through 13 are VHF, or very high frequency; channels 14 and above are UHF, or ultra high frequency.

Stale Information is No Information

The keys to having a helpful press list, whether file cards or computer-based, are simple:

- keep it current;
- keep it accurate;
- keep it legible;
- keep it available.

Having the only copy locked in someone's desk drawer or trunk or house is no help. Having unreadable or outdated names or phone numbers will slow you up far more than the time you "saved" by not updating — and you'll be embarrassed by having asked for the wrong person or office! Don't feel you must do all the updating. Volunteers can help.

If there are two radio stations, a newspaper and a television outlet in town, maintaining an elaborate press list is overkill. But you should still keep a list. If you have many outlets on your list, you may want to be more formal. A computer can be very useful with large lists. But how do you find out whose names and numbers to put on the list?

Getting to Know The Press

The time to become acquainted with members of the working news corps is *before* you start sending out releases and making phone calls about specific stories, if possible.

A visit to each outlet, perhaps with some background material about your program (fact sheet, annual report, brochure, for example) gives you the chance to ask directly how you can best achieve both organizations' objectives—yours to get news of your program out and theirs to report events of interest to the community.

The people you will want to meet with go by a variety of titles — assignment editor (TV/radio), city editor (newspaper), features editor, producer (for TV/radio shows), editorial page editor, public service or community service officer or editor.

Their jobs are pretty similar, though: they are the *management* people who set the *basic policies* about what the newspaper or station will report. As a group, they can best be thought of as "gatekeepers." They are the key point-of-entry for *most* of your coverage.

This does *not* mean you should only talk with these people. Reporters who cover the crime and criminal justice "beat" (or subject area), or who specialize in children's issues or economic development or neighborhood news or other subjects linked with crime prevention (if that is your subject) are invaluable sources of help. Producers of shows have far more to say than anyone else about what gets aired. Editors of sections of papers have the most direct control over their sections, not the general manager or editor-in-chief.

Relations with the press can be personal and friendly, and still be professional and efficient.

When you set up these meetings:

- Make them *brief and businesslike;*
- Schedule at their convenience;
- Have basic information with you about what your group is doing and what its structure and goals are — copies that you can leave;
- Ask informed questions about deadlines, the slowest "news" days for that station or newspaper, special features or other shows which might be useful contacts;
- Find out what departments the publication or station includes, such as features, sports, consumer news. Who's in charge of each?;
- Check on the procedure for after-hours and weekend coverage of late-breaking events. Confirm names, spellings, duties and telephone numbers;
- Leave several business cards if you have them;
- Be yourself. Your own enthusiasm for the program and your knowledge of the subject will convey themselves. There's no need to fear these conversations. You have news and the people you're meeting with need it.

Deadlines and timing: What schedule is the news aired or printed on? When do reporters, camera crews come to work? What is the latest that news can be delivered or telephoned? Are there different deadlines for different kinds of news? What deadlines apply for photos? Remember that newsletter or magazine deadlines may be six weeks (or more) before the publication goes to press.

"Slow days": Although it varies from community to community, some days each week tend to be busier than others for media. The mayor or governor may hold a regular news conference, the city council may meet, or some other scheduled events may make certain days predictably busy. Some days just don't seem to produce any news. Ask which are the slower or slowest days for each outlet. They may be your best chance for coverage if you can control the scheduling of an event or release.

Departments or features: Newspapers usually come in sections. So do news broadcasts. Different departments control each of the sections. Most "news" broadcasts, for example, will be a joint production of the news and sports departments.

In newspapers, the Lifestyle, Family Life, or Features section will have a different editor from the local and national news sections. The Business section usually will have a separate editor. Editors of these special sections may be interested in stories which simply would not be "regular" news.

For instance, the Family or Features editor might want to assign a reporter to write up the teen-led anti-vandalism drive. The Business editor may be interested in a story on how some small business owners working together cut crime in their shopping center.

The assignment editor generally controls TV and radio news reporters' work schedules, so having that individual's name is essential. But each talk or local affairs program will have a producer who coordinates the scheduling of guests or subjects for that show.

Note that at small stations or small newspapers, two or three people may each wear several hats. The Business editor may also be the Sports editor who also produces a special City Report talk show for the companion radio station.

At most major papers and stations, someone's always standing by for news, even if it's a very slow night.

After-hours and weekend coverage: Like much of the rest of the world, TV, radio and newspapers tend to work 9-to-5 hours, or some rough equivalent. There may be one or two reporters assigned to an evening (4-midnight) schedule, but a full staff won't be available. And there is almost always a separate set of priorities for assigning the time of the after-hours and weekend staff. Sometimes a separate person is responsible for assigning those people. There may even be a special night number to call.

Meetings with media help fill out the press list and media profiles the first time through. As experience and events warrant, you will add to and modify both.

Photos, Tapes and Videotapes

Whole books have been written on photojournalism. There's no likelihood that this work will turn you into the nation's top news photographer or video camera operator. But here are some tips about "supplying your own."

Photos: Should be black and white (preferably 8" x 10" though smaller can be acceptable), and should arrive as early as possible. The best photos are *action* oriented rather than straight shots of people lined up looking at a camera. Some newspapers will not accept photos by anyone other than the staff photographer.

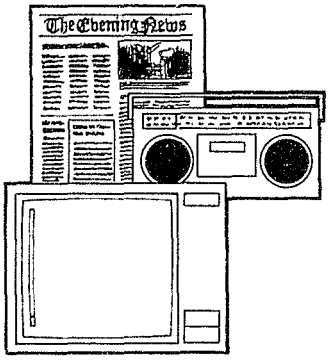
If you provide photos, make sure they are sharply focused, correctly captioned (with all participants identified), and stamped or marked in felt-tip on the back with your name and return address. A sticker can be used for that identification. But *don't* assume your picture will be returned.

Videotapes: Though some TV stations may accept your videos of events, they tend to use only the material they can vouch for — their own, especially for news coverage. Most stations can accommodate VHS videotape; many can handle Beta format also. Almost every TV station can air 3/4" (commercial) tape. Check with the assignment editor or the news director about each TV station's policy. Also ask whether they are interested in having color and/or black and white slides supplied. Policies vary.

Audio recordings: Radio stations like getting tapes if they are public-service oriented, free of background static and not filled with unintelligible mutterings. Cassettes or reel-to-reel may be preferred. Again, be sure they are marked and that a sheet identifying the organization, the subject and the speaker is included.

If the story is about a time-sensitive event and if someone is available for interviews, the station will frequently ask to record a statement or an interview itself. Or you may record a statement and play it over a telephone hook-up for the station to integrate into its newscast. Such a set-up is called an actuality. It can be an excellent method of avoiding the duplication inherent in five or six straight interviews on the same topic.

Chapter 3



GETTING YOUR STORY STRAIGHT

It doesn't matter which way you decide to tell your story. You may be enticing an editor to do a major feature, or briefing a television reporter "on scene," or communicating with a group of business executives. To tell your tale effectively, you must organize your thoughts and get your story straight. On paper, if at all possible.

Why on paper, when what you really need to do is talk to reporters? Should you take the time to put facts on paper when it's urgent news? Yes, especially if you're just starting. Putting your facts in order on paper helps you insure that:

- you indeed have a newsworthy story to sell;
- you've decided your priorities in telling the story;
- you have the whole story, not just parts;
- you won't omit or misreport such key details as names, titles, place, dates and times; and
- you have a quick and easy way to confirm in writing points you've orally conveyed or make sure the details reach the desks of press contacts you couldn't reach.

You may not wind up writing and issuing a formal release. You may only need your facts in outline. But being sure of the facts and having them organized is at the heart of good relations with the news media.

WHAT IS THE STORY?

In the final analysis, you need to convince a reporter or an editor that your story is newsworthy, and that it—rather than another — should win a place in the limited ink space or airtime which is available for news. That means you need to

understand how the press judges whether a story is newsworthy, so you can help them see that yours qualifies.

Obviously, reporting something everyone (or nearly everyone) already knows is not news. But a story that tells how a problem was solved, tickles the funnybone, touches the heart or gives a new slant on an old issue appeals to each of us — and to the editors and reporters who have to make news judgments.

Traditional determinants of newsworthiness include:

- whether the story is *timely* (costume-making stories the week after Halloween seldom are);
- whether it addresses a *subject of importance to the entire community or a large segment* of it (no matter how cute little Nora is, her recital performance is not likely to be major news);
- whether the story is *about or includes a local event, person or situation* (almost always more interesting than events far away involving unknown people);
  - — whether and to what extent it contains *elements of*
  - — *human interest,*
  - — *progress,*
  - — involvement of *prominent people,*
  - — *conflict,* or
  - — *disaster;*
- whether the story is likely to hold the *attention and interest of a particular target audience* (senior citizens may be more interested than a teenage audience in a story on safeguarding family heirlooms); and
- what *competition it faces from other news* on a given day for airtime or newspaper space (a Presidential visit to your community or a major air crash nearby is likely to displace your story on the new Teen Center).

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF NEWS

Your story could be newsworthy in one or more ways. Editors and reporters are constantly on the lookout for three types of news stories and a fourth category of brief items:

- **hard news** — reports of the *activities* of people in your community or state *as the action happens* (major citywide drive launched);

- **features** — stories which have substantial *human interest* (the elderly volunteer who has befriended all the younger children in the neighborhood; crime victim works to help community) or provide *in-depth information,* usually not highly time-sensitive;
- **tie-ins** — *local links to national news* (how your town's Crime Prevention Month plans fit with the national effort); and
- **fillers** — *short items* that provide *tips, hints* or *ideas* for readers; typically used to "fill" odd bits of empty space in newspapers (such as a note on where to call for help with suspected fraud, what to do if you must leave a child at home alone, or a tip on holiday safety).

Take a hard look at what you see on local TV news, hear on radio or see in local newspapers. You should be able to spot each of these types of stories. Use your observations to develop a picture of how local press tend to handle various kinds of stories.

The facts you gather to support and develop the story should contribute to its newsworthiness. Knowing what kind of story you're developing and what news emphasis it is likely to have in the eyes of the press will help you keep that focus.

Knowing the type of news you are presenting will also help you know who it's best to talk with or mail releases to when it comes time to place your story (Chapter 5).

GATHERING THE FACTS

Your sources can be as simple as notes from the last board meeting, or as complex as conversations and interviews with ten people. The facts should include the major points you need to cover in your release.

Let's look at three examples: a neighborhood watch meeting to discuss auto theft problems and plan a party, a safety fair for all at a local mall, and a new elementary school program to combat substance abuse.

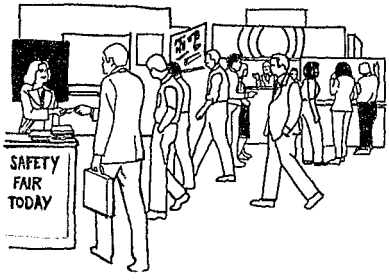
In the first example, you would probably want to gather such details as:

- Why is auto theft being brought up at this meeting? Who will make the auto theft prevention presentation? Will citizen action tips, police follow-up and insurance claims

issues be covered? What party is to be discussed? Annual or special? Where is the meeting being held? When?

In the case of the Safety Fair, you might look into:

- What merchants are involved? Which Civic Federation groups are involved? Are there "lead" firms and groups for various activities? What events will take place? What services will be offered? Will these be free? What part of the Mall is it being held in?



In announcing a new program to help cut school crime and drug abuse, you will probably want to know:

- How bad are crime and drug abuse in the schools now? What grades will be targeted for this program? What are special features of the program? Who will teach it? Has it been successful elsewhere? How soon will it start? Who is paying?

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT FACTS I NEED?

Your priorities are reflected in the *lead,* the first sentence or two of the release. The lead is what editors and reporters will read when making a snap decision about whether to read any more.

There are six traditional elements to every lead. They are traditional because they have worked over many years. A lead should tell

WHO
WHAT
WHEN
WHERE
WHY
HOW

— sometimes referred to as the five Ws and H. These are the basic things you must know in order to get a story organized. You will be selecting the most important for the lead of your story.

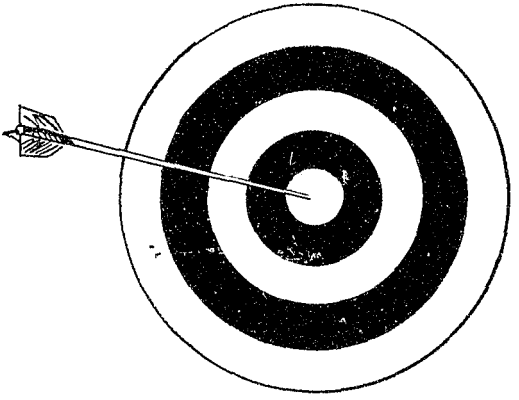
Here's what these five Ws and H might look like for three crime prevention stories:

	Neighborhood Meeting	Safety Fair	School Program
WHO	Tribble Hills Association	Merchants and Civic Federation	Police, School staff, teens, Jaycees
WHAT	Quarterly meeting (topic = auto theft)	One-Day Community Safety Fair	Elementary School Anti-crime/drug pgm.
WHEN	Monday, July 20, 7:30 p.m.	Saturday, March 12, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.	Starts in Sept. at start of school
WHERE	Tribble Community Center	Grinder Mill Mall	Three elementary schools this year
WHY	Update-auto theft and plan party	Provide tips on self/ family safety	Reach younger kids — prevent abuse, crime
HOW	Briefing, questions, discussion	Hand-outs, demonstrations, talks	Puppets, role plays, songs

GATHERING QUOTES

A quote can be easier, more direct, more accurate, more colorful and more stimulating than writing lecture-style. You need to think as you gather facts about how people have said things about the story and which lend themselves to quotes. Quotations should be part of the gathering process.

Be sure the quote is not grammatically or socially embarrassing and clear it with the proposed source. Quotes should be based on what the speaker said or would have said. And as a nearly ironclad rule, quotes are cleared *in advance* with the speaker before being released.



Being on target with facts is not just nice—it's essential if you're to deal credibly with the media.

ACCURACY COUNTS

Professionals are careful to check and recheck the spelling of names of people, places and institutions, and to verify or confirm titles, dates, times, amounts and other facts.

Misspelling a name or title irritates the owner, whether a group or an individual. Citing inaccurate or misleading data casts suspicion on the accuracy of other parts of your story. Either casts a pall over your story and eventually your credibility.

The few extra minutes it takes to make a check-up phone call or to proofread pay enormous dividends. Those who develop a reputation with reporters and editors for accuracy, completeness and precision tend to become trusted sources.

They're the people asked first when press people are looking for story ideas or reactions to news.

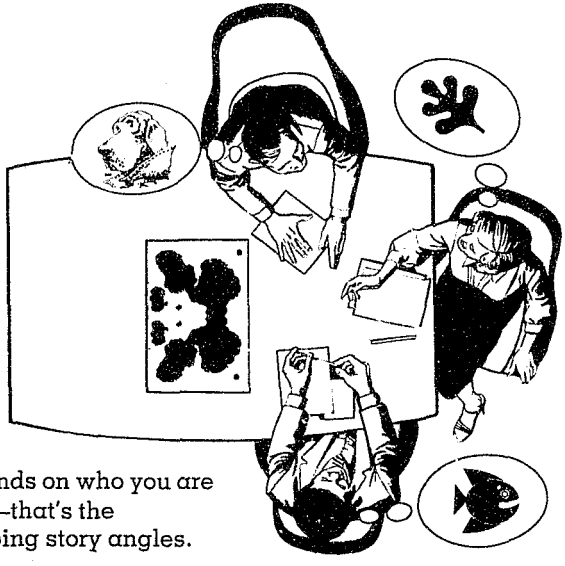
STORY ANGLES

A story angle refers to the perspective from which the story is being presented. The angle, also termed the "' ook" by some, represents the special viewpoint or position of the issuer of the release or story. It can be used to differentiate your group from several others undertaking similar projects. In the case of the school crime and substance abuse prevention program, the angle might be that very young students are being taught these skills for the first time. That angle suggests the positioning and emphasis of the whole story.

In most cases, you should avoid being "cute" in positioning or writing a story. Being humorous without sounding strident or saccharine is a rare talent. It tends even at best to draw attention to the humor, not to the story being told.

But presenting a fresh angle, especially on a subject which comes up year after year (such as the announcement of annual awards or the yearly crime statistics report), can help reporters focus on what *is* new compared with last year. Perhaps this year, the award winners are all first-timers; maybe crime is down for the first time in ten years in the "toughest" precinct of the city.

Using the same approach time after time desensitizes reporters and editors. They won't recognize the real news you have, because they won't look past the shopworn.



What you see depends on who you are and where you sit—that's the essence of developing story angles.

VARIOUS VIEWPOINTS AND FACTS

If you're writing up a news item in the name of someone else — a coalition of many groups or an institutional superior, for example —find out what facts are important from the perspective of the party who will be the public "voice" of the release.

You need to ask from whose vantage point you will be presenting the story. Are you speaking for the Club? the President? the Director? the Board? strictly yourself? Each may include elements or viewpoints or facts that the others would not.

Writing for a coalition can be frustrating. Everyone may want to toot organizational horns and wave banners for pet projects and topics. Ask up front for specific guidance on who must review the release, who *can* review it, who can demand changes, and who has final say-so. These should be decided before the first release is written.

WHEN TO DRAW THE LINE

Truth (and your reputation for it) is a basic tool in dealing with the press. It also reflects your ability to get the facts straight.

It's ten thousand times better to say "no comment," or "I can't respond to that" than to lie. In fact, it's difficult to imagine a circumstance in which you would find it useful, productive or advisable to lie to the press. Don't do it.

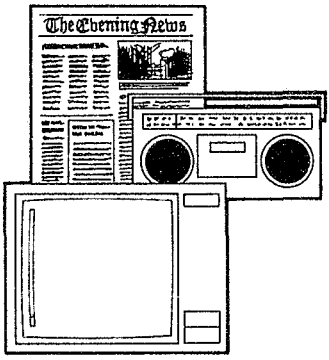
Eventually someone may ask you to prepare a release that is wholly or partially false or misleading. Releases —overt statements by your group — which are untrue *almost always go beyond the "innocent white lie" to the barefaced.* They are all but guaranteed to backfire. They are eventually found out. Refuse to do such releases.

Why? If the deception is significant, your program may be front-page news for its attempt to deceive the public, a sure and certain blow to the organization's credibility throughout the community. If the deception is less significant, it may still mean that you (and your organization) will not be trusted by reporters again.

NEXT STEP

You've pulled together and verified the facts and assembled your tools. Now you move to writing up the story so you can get the coverage you want.

Chapter 4



WRITING THE STORY

The challenge to "write a release" conjures up the language arts version of math phobia for some — tremors, beads of sweat, a sense of overwhelming panic. Others plunge in armed with word lists and sentence parts. Still others wait for the Muse to inspire them. Some just wait.

If you *know* you have news worth sharing, writing it becomes much easier. Your belief in the value of your message powers your writing. Indeed, if you don't believe what you are writing is important, you should question why you are writing it at all.

Formal written news releases aren't always the answer. If you're trying to get a major feature story or encourage a reporter to investigate a story idea, it makes sense to deal face-to-face and on the phone, supplying copies of reports, letters and other documents as needed.

Sometimes, with human interest stories especially, your oral description of a story idea — the person's enthusiasm, achievement, unusual circumstances — may be all that's needed or wanted. The reporter will conduct interviews and research independently.

But writing a release has some major advantages. Written releases:

- confirm what you've said on the phone;
- can be referred to even when you're not reachable;
- avoid — or at least minimize — "telephone tag" (when you keep missing each other's phone calls);
- provide small-staffed media with something they can use directly or with minor editing;
- make better use of your time by letting you tell the story once on paper instead of four or five times over the phone.

The writing task is relatively short. The entire release should take *no more than three double-spaced pages.* Most won't need more than one or two. That's about all most editors and reporters have the time to read. And they can tell by what's on those pages whether they want to call you for more information.

Writing the release is a matter of four steps:

- writing the lead;
- writing the remaining paragraphs in descending order of importance;
- editing what you've written, and
- proofreading.

THE RIGHT LEAD GIVES THE RIGHT EMPHASIS

Let's look at the facts gathering for our examples in the last chapter:

	Neighborhood Meeting	Safety Fair	School Program
WHO	Tribble Hills Association	Merchants and Civic Federation	Police, School staff, teens, Jaycees
WHAT	Quarterly meeting (topic = auto theft)	One-Day Community Safety Fair	Elementary School Anti-crime/drug pgm.
WHEN	Monday, July 20, 7:30 p.m.	Saturday, March 12, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.	Starts in Sept. at start of school
WHERE	Tribble Community Center	Grinder Mill Mall	Three elementary schools this year
WHY	Update-auto theft and plan party	Provide tips on self/ family safety	Reach younger kids — prevent abuse, crime
HOW	Briefing, questions, discussion	Hand-outs, demonstrations, talks	Puppets, role plays, songs

For each of these, several leads are possible. Here are two alternatives each, to give you some idea of the differences. Try your hand at a third version with still another emphasis.

For the neighborhood meeting, your lead might be:

> Preventing auto theft and planning the annual block party will be on the agenda for the July 20 meeting of the Tribble Hills Association. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. at the Tribble Community Center.
>
> or
>
> The Tribble Hills Association's quarterly meeting will be held on Monday, July 20, at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Residents will be given an update on auto theft prevention and make plans for the summer block party.

The Crime Prevention Fair story might lead off with:

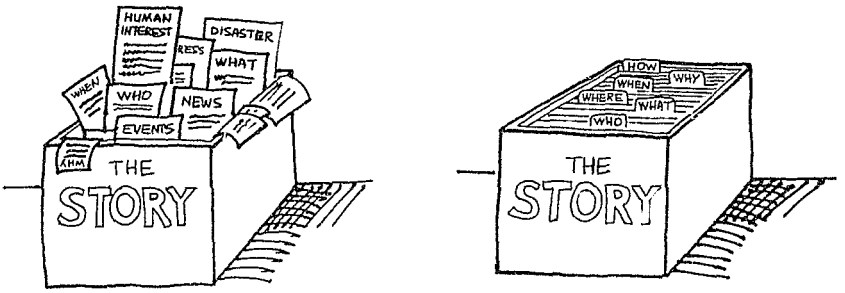
> Saturday, March 12 will be Family Safety and Crime Prevention Day at Grinder Mill Mall. Demonstrations and displays on safety for adults and children will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
>
> or
>
> The Grinder Mill Mall, Yourtown Police Department, and the Neighborhoods Alliance will present a Family Safety and Crime Prevention Day on Saturday, March 12, from 9 to 4. Events will include skits, brochures, safety tips for the whole family, and a special appearance by McGruff, the Crime Dog.

A lead for the story on the new school curriculum could be couched in at least two ways:

> Students from Yourtown High will teach elementary school students how to protect themselves at home, on the street and in school, and how to say no to drugs this fall. Using skits, role playing and special songs, students from the high school will conduct 8 educational sessions in the first semester for students in Grades 1 through 4 at all Yourtown elementary schools.
>
> or
>
> Ways to say no to drugs and ways to keep safe will be key parts of a new program for Yourtown elementary school grades 1 through 4 this fall. Elementary teachers, students from Yourtown High and police will bring this new curriculum to Yourtown thanks to support from Yourtown Jaycees.

Where you place facts in the lead counts. Each of these leads gives a slightly different emphasis to the story.

Within the limits of logic and good grammar, the lead should have the most newsworthy of the five Ws and H "up front." The tests for newsworthiness apply — timeliness, human interest, broad appeal to the readership, etc. They are just narrowed to help select the focus for the lead.



The right lead can help sort out the facts and bring order to the story.

HOW DO I WRITE THE RIGHT LEAD?

It depends. Are you trying to persuade someone to change behavior? Convince citizens to attend a crucial forum? Let people know the Mayor will be at the next community block watch meeting? Give public credit to key volunteers? Publicly pat the school system on the back?

The story's lead may be obvious. Or it may be the hardest part of thinking through what story you should be telling.

A story may seem to demand that two major ideas be featured, or it may seem to have no clear focus. Sometimes you simply have to back away and rethink your story from scratch, if you are struggling over the lead. You may be trying to tell the wrong story or using the wrong focus if you can't write the right lead.

Not sure which are the key facts? Jot down the facts next to the appropriate Who-What-When-Where-Why-How. Sort each set according to importance and write them down on the lead sorter table. If three "who's" came up, ask yourself "Which is the *most* important to the story?" That's number one.

WHO

WHERE

WHAT

WHY

WHEN

HOW

THE LEAD SORTER

	SORTING OUT THE LEAD		
	KEY	SECOND	THIRD
WHO			
WHAT			
WHEN			
WHERE			
WHY			
HOW			

Then look at your KEY list, the angle you've determined and your original aim in writing the release. That should point to the one (or possibly two) things you want to feature from among the five Ws and H.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE STORY?

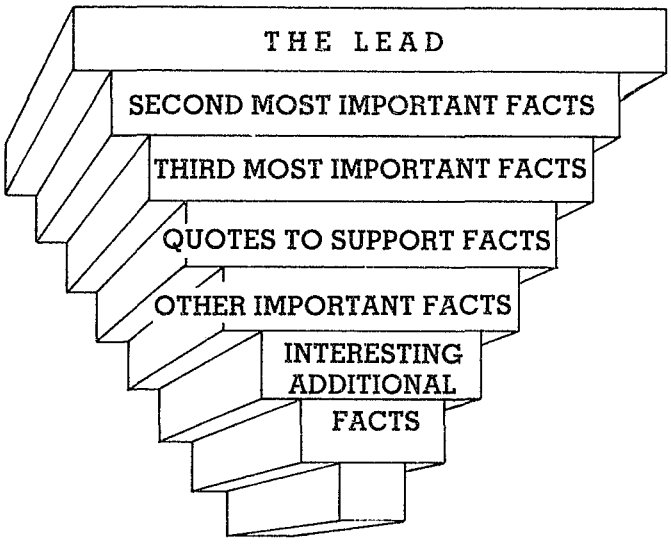
With the right lead, most stories sort themselves out naturally. If the date, time and location of the crime prevention awards ceremony and the fact that the Mayor is presenting the awards are the most important points, the next important "who" would probably be the names of the awardees. The next most important "why" might be the reason awards are being given; the how, how the recipients were selected.

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

News releases should be written in an inverted pyramid style. The most important information is at the top of the release, the next most important in the next paragraph. The remaining paragraphs each contain successively less important information.

The Lead Sorter suggests this format and helps you identify which points should come in which order in the story. Please note that the inverted pyramid does not *imply* chronology. The most important news may be the result, not the process. In that case, the process would be one of the later (if not the last) things mentioned.

Using the inverted pyramid makes your job and the editor's job easier. Your release can be trimmed easily to fit available space or time. If the editor has to choose between a simple "trim" of your story (perhaps taking off just the last two paragraphs) and a radical rewrite of someone else's (because key facts got buried in the middle of less essential items), *you're* likely to win the contest for print space or air time.



The test for a lead—and for a story's organization—is importance and newsworthiness, not chronology or logical order. It's one time when "first things first" doesn't apply.

PERSONS AND TENSES AND VOICES

News releases are traditionally written in the third person (he-she-they) rather than the first person (I-we). Rarely is it desirable to write in the second person (you).

The release can be written in the future ("The Fair *will be* held") or in the past ("The Chief of Police announced today"). The present tense is occasionally useful, but it can be awkward to write in and almost surely will have to be rewritten by the media.

As a rule, avoid the passive voice. Make your release carry the *sense of action* you want by using the active voice, which is both stronger and clearer. Better to write "Experts will lead employee seminars on latchkey child care" than "Employee seminars will be led by experts on latchkey child care." Still better, "Experts will teach employees..." (See how the action verb adds strength?)

These are not ironclad requirements for release writing. They are guides. If you believe your sentence, paragraph or release should depart from the beaten path, the choice is yours.

THE PARAGRAPHS

Paragraphs tend to follow the same basic rules everyone learned in school: one main idea to a paragraph, stated in a topic sentence, developed in an appropriate number of sentences. But in press releases, paragraphs are shorter. Three to four sentences are usually the maximum. The world of press releases actually has been known to condone the one-sentence paragraph.

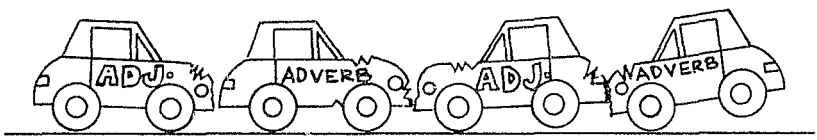
THE SENTENCES

News release sentences are not flowery. They deliver their messages without adjectives and adverbs piling up all over the page. Sentences should not be so long that the reader gets lost marveling at the grammatical maze. "Ten Block Watch Captains will be awarded Citizen Service Medals April 6 by Mayor Zee" is quite sufficient. "Ten people who have served their communities for from four to twelve years as Block Watch Captains will be officially recognized at an awards ceremony on April 6 at which Mayor Zee will present Citizen Service Medals" is just too much in one sentence.

This is not to say all the sentences should be short and choppy. It may take more than a few words to explain the idea. If so, use more. On the other hand, if the sentence needs to be broken up, break away!

THE WORDS

Don't overload on adjectives and adverbs. Such phrases as "the handsomely attired Mr. Jones," or "the charming and ever-smiling First Lady of our City," or "an enormous and excited crowd will gather" are almost guaranteed to be out of place in a news release. They are opinions and fluff, not fact. Reporters take pride in being objective, independent observers. Many tend to distrust releases which use fulsome and exaggerated descriptors in place of simple English.



Modifiers piling up all over the page will only detract from the news you're trying to present.

Neither should words be tired. There is nothing wrong with using a different term occasionally. "Meeting" can become session, conclave, conference, assembly, gathering. Constantly changing from one noun to another is confusing and tiring. But tossing in a new one occasionally can sharpen the description.

Verbs can do a lot to enliven your story. They can *make* things *jump, electrify* meetings, *invigorate* programs. Because verbs carry the action messages in your release, they deserve more attention than they usually get.

QUOTES CAN WAKE UP THE STORY

Quotes can add life to the story. Consider these two version of the same idea:

- Mr. Peterson, the Treasurer of the Coalition, reported that the gross receipts for the recent Community Celebration Day were known to be in excess of $11,000, with two activities still not reporting. Costs are now estimated at $4,700. The major bill outstanding, and not included in this sum, is the bill for soft drinks.

- "Our Community Celebration Day has grossed more than in any previous year," Coalition Treasurer Tom Peterson announced. "We have added between $4,000 and $6,000 to the Community Chest." Peterson said gross receipts were more than $11,000, with the Fishing Pond and the Bake Sale still not reporting. With only the soft drink bill (estimated at $1,500) outstanding, bills totaled $4,700.

The first story reads like the board's minutes. Hardly a rallying cry for community pride. The second account preserves the facts, but by making Treasurer Peterson into a more human figure who puts some pride in his findings, you have conveyed a livelier, more positive and more interesting message.

Remember that you need to quote accurately and to clear any proposed quote with the source unless the statement was made publicly.

SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND THOSE OTHER DULL TOPICS

It's not so much that you will win points with news people for correct spelling, proper punctuation or good grammar. It's that you'll lose by incorrect spelling, poor punctuation or bad grammar.

Often, it's a simple matter of proofreading carefully. Occasionally, you may have to look something up. But it's well worth the effort. You and your audience know you've turned out a professional product. Your reputation can only gain from that.

EDITING

There are two types of editing: content editing and copy editing. Content editing looks at the logic, the completeness and the coherence of the information the release is conveying. Copy editing checks grammar, spelling, punctuation and the like. If you're fortunate, you will find someone who can do both.

A good editor is your backstop. Better your editor saying "Did you really mean to call the program Neighborhood *Witch*" than a host of readers seeing the error because the local weekly paper ran the release as handed out. The editor can be a friend, coworker, spouse or another member of your group. It's a fresh set of eyes to scrutinize what you've written.

Contents Can Be Touchy

Content editing may involve the exercise of review rights by bosses, chairmen or other members of your group or coalition. If the release is issued under an agency's or a group's auspices, its leadership may rightfully want some say-so over what is being said in the group's name.

Do some content editing of your own, whether other reviewers are involved or not. Look at your notes from getting the story together. Ask yourself whether you can substantiate each idea in the story. Ask yourself if every thought necessary to the story is there, and if needless ones have been cut.

Copy Editing

Sometimes writing about a program or subject you know well means you can slip into the tendency to assume knowledge of jargon or "in-house" lingo that the average reader won't grasp. A good editor will help you avoid that trap.

Editing means catching and correcting run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and inappropriate punctuation as well as spelling and typing errors.

Editing Your Own

No editor available? A tried and true trick for editing your own work is to lay it aside for a while, perhaps a few hours or a day. Pick it up and read it as though you had never seen it before.

Look out for lingo. Ask yourself if each sentence makes sense. Are there sentence fragments? Strange grammatical constructs? Extraneous words? Fix them, and you've just become your own editor!

SOME MECHANICAL DETAILS

Every release should identify the organization, including address and telephone number. *Each* release must have the date of the release, the name of the *specific* press contact for that story, the telephone number(s) for that person (day and evening if possible) and any "hold" instructions.

It is helpful to have a headline which attracts attention to the story. Stick with factual, straightfoward headlines rather than striving for shock value or cuteness.

Most stories will be "For Immediate Release," but on occasion, you will have to ask that a story be held. You may be mailing out a notice summarizing what is expected to take place at a meeting or lecture. You may be getting material to the press early as a courtesy.

A "hold" should never be for more than a day or two and should be *objectively* justified — not imposed because you want to be sure the story runs Sunday! Be sure the hold instruction can be seen (try *underlining* or ALL CAPS). A note explaining the "hold" can be helpful. For exampie

NOTE: HOLD FOR RELEASE UNTIL 12/25/87. The story is about what Santa brought McGruff for Christmas.

News organizations *do not* have to honor holds or embargoes. Most will, though, especially if they understand there is an excellent reason for doing so. But be aware that just writing "Hold" on a story is *no* guarantee.

PROOFREADING

Just as there's "many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," there is always room for error in typing up any document. Proofreading is the *final* step before reproduction, and comes after editorial corrections for content and style have been made. It may be a quick final glance for a short release, or a formal line-by-line check on a big story, but the habit of proofreading is a good one.

It pays to have someone *not* involved in the writing, someone who is a good speller and who understands the mechanics of the language, carefully read the final copy before the release is reproduced. Again, if you're the only candidate for the job, it is

Mechanical Checklist

- ☐ The release should be double-spaced, *no more* than three pages, seldom more than two and usually one.
- ☐ Allow about a one-inch margin left and right, and at least two inches at the top of page one for the editor to write in.
- ☐ Put the date, follow-up contact and release instructions at the top, above your headline.
- ☐ Use a simple, factual headline.
- ☐ If the release is more than one page long, type "MORE" at the bottom of each page which has a follow-on.
- ☐ At the end of the release, signal that by typing -30- or -0- or ### centered on a separate line.
- ☐ Before making copies, proofread one more time.

helpful to set the release aside for a while and then proof it. Another trick for proofing your own work is to read it backward (last word to first word) for spelling errors and typos.

HELP!

"But," you wail, "English was my worst subject in school. I'm a terrible speller. And I never did understand about semicolons."

Get help. You're busy anyhow. There are young people studying journalism and writing in high schools and colleges, older people who have written all their lives who are now retired but enjoy keeping their hands in, English teachers who don't mind a little more "homework," and other writers who can come to your aid. Businesses have public relations and press professionals who might be tapped for help.

Your job remains crucial — getting the story straight and deciding what takes priority. If you develop a corps of regulars (or even one steady volunteer), you can work out the transfer of some or most of the actual writing and production responsibilities, if you wish. You'll still be managing the writing and supervising it. But your time will be more wisely spent.

HOW LONG DOES ALL THIS TAKE?

For most straightforward releases, it takes longer to explain how to do it than it does to do it. Much of the technique can be learned in the first few tries. After that, it's simply a matter of practice making you better and better, faster and faster!

If the story is a highly complicated or sensitive one, obviously the writing and review will take longer. So in planning, allocate time for those factors. ALLOW TIME FOR REVIEWS TO TAKE TWICE AS LONG AS YOU THINK THEY SHOULD.

TIMING

Don't forget to allow time for releases to reach their destinations. Whether mailed or delivered, the perfect release is perfectly useless unless it reaches the press in time. What's "in time?" If you're announcing an event, the press should have at least a day to arrange to cover it, so the release should reach reporters at least 24 hours before the event.

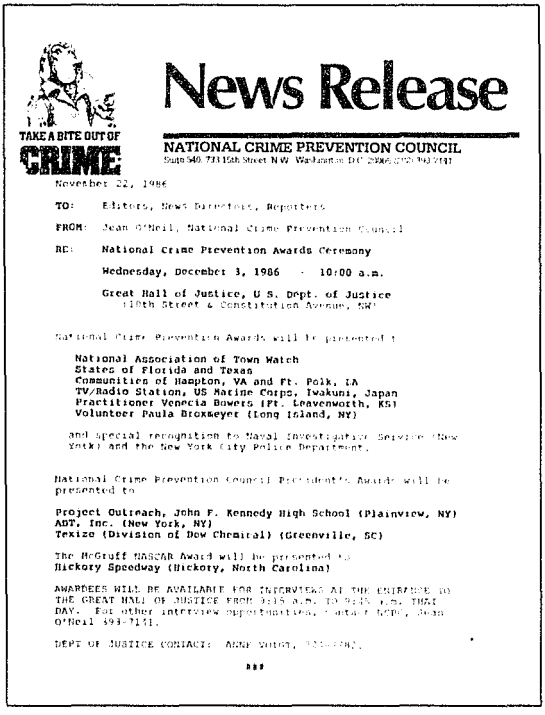
Your "market area" may suggest mailing three days ahead is sufficient. You may be able to walk to a press room where all the reporters can be handed copies of the release. But remember too that the reporter might be out that day. So allow at least a day extra whenever you can.

RELEASES VERSUS ADVISORIES

If you are trying to let reporters and editors know about an upcoming event that is expected to be newsworthy, you can issue an *advisory* rather than a release. The advisory's job is just that: to *advise* the editor (or reporter) of what is happening, when and where it will happen, who will be involved and very briefly why and how. In fact, some of the best advisories leave out the "juiciest" of the five Ws and H, merely hinting at them and indicating they will be revealed at the event.

Your advisory should *never* give out the key news. It should suggest the subject matter and what sort of announcement (new product, new service, new policy, for instance) is expected. Be a tease.

An advisory is generally written in memo format, from you or your group to editors and reporters. It is dated with the current date and NEVER exceeds a double-spaced typewritten page. An entirely satisfactory advisory can be written in two or three sentences. One of those sentences, however, should be the best lead you can imply for your event. Thus, the lead forms the basis for all kinds of press writing.



TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME®

News Release

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL
Suite 540, 733 15th Street N.W. Washington D.C. 20005 (202) 393-7141

November 22, 1986

TO: Editors, News Directors, Reporters

FROM: Jean O'Neil, National Crime Prevention Council

RE: National Crime Prevention Awards Ceremony

Wednesday, December 3, 1986 - 10:00 a.m.

Great Hall of Justice, U.S. Dept. of Justice
(10th Street & Constitution Avenue, NW)

National Crime Prevention Awards will be presented t

National Association of Town Watch
States of Florida and Texas
Communities of Hampton, VA and Ft. Polk, LA
TV/Radio Station, US Marine Corps, Iwakuni, Japan
Practitioner Venecia Bowers (Ft. Leavenworth, KS)
Volunteer Paula Broxmeyer (Long Island, NY)

and special recognition to Naval Investigative Service (New York) and the New York City Police Department.

National Crime Prevention Council Presidents Award will be presented to

Project Outreach, John F. Kennedy High School (Plainview, NY)
ADT, Inc. (New York, NY)
Texize (Division of Dow Chemical) (Greenville, SC)

The McGruff NASCAR Award will be presented t
Hickory Speedway (Hickory, North Carolina)

AWARDEES WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE GREAT HALL OF JUSTICE FROM 9:15 A.M. TO 9:45 A.M. THAT DAY. For other interview opportunities, contact NCPC, Jean O'Neil 393-7141.

DEPT OF JUSTICE CONTACT: ANNE Wright, [illegible]

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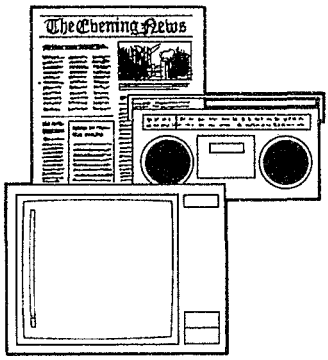
An advisory tantalizes, dangles the bait, whets the appetite—it doesn't spill the beans.

Chapter 5



PLACING YOUR STORY

Your goal is to *match* the story with the audiences who will be interested, via the media that want to reach those audiences. To do this, you will have to know who reaches what audiences. The press list and media profiles you have developed will be very helpful.

Placing the story has two complementary, sometimes consecutive, sometimes concurrent components:

- sending the release to media likely to have *some* interest, and
- personal contact — talking with those *most* likely to be interested in the story, either before or after the release is sent to them.

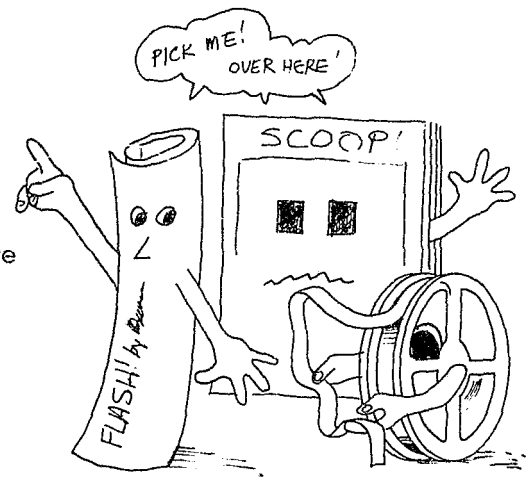
Placement can be a simple matter or a complicated set of judgment calls. It can range from a phone call to a series of meetings. Don't make it complex unnecessarily, but be sensitive to the complexities.

The level of effort should be proportionate to the story's importance. Announcing a routine meeting doesn't deserve the same intensity of effort as the unveiling of a brand new program endorsed by the City Council, the Mayor and the Superintendent of Schools.

Some stories are better suited to one type of medium than another. TV stations like *action* or stories best told in pictures. Every day they have to air news stories which just show people talking (referred to, logically enough, as "talking heads"). Solid story-telling action usually draws TV cameras as a picnic draws the proverbial ants.

Radio stations generally do one or two news broadcasts an hour; they are constantly hungry for voiced news which can contrast with the commentator's and for stories which can be told in two or three sentences.

Newspapers can use photos for some stories, but in general rely on news depth. The detail and permanence of a newspaper story mean that people expect newspapers to be a reference point and to be the final public authority on events.



It's A Battle Out There

You are competing for news space with every other event in your community, the region, the state, the nation and the world. News priorities change from hour to hour or sometimes minute to minute through the day. A story which at 11:40 a.m. is "a sure thing" to appear on the 6:00 p.m. TV news may, by 4:15 p.m., appear insignificant compared to the stories which developed in between. This doesn't mean you were misinformed; it's just how the news business works. A crime report which deserved front page attention Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. may have been pushed back fourteen pages by 1:00 a.m. Wednesday when the presses roll.

Even if yours is not a "hard" news story or isn't time-sensitive, you're competing for space. There are many heart-warming, hair-raising or enlightening things happening in your community every week. There is only so much ink space available and so much airtime up for grabs into which to fit these human interest tales. The question is, how do you get your share?

SENDING OUT THE RELEASE

Your mailing list may have ten names or two hundred on it. Those entries could range from the *New York Times* reporter who called last year to the Happenstance Hollow *Community Newsletter;* from NBC's local news bureau to the small daylight-only AM radio station. Do you send each release to everyone, just to those you believe are interested or exclusively to one reporter or paper or station?

To some extent, every case has to be decided on its merits: a combination of your knowledge of the media in your area and the news value and appeal of the particular story. There are pro's and con's to each approach.

Everyone, a select group, or just one—who gets your news release?

All Hands

If every release goes to everyone on your press list, no one can accuse you of playing favorites or attempting to hide the news. You are unquestionably leaving up to the reporters, editors and news directors the decision on whether to cover a story or not.

If you use this method and send out frequent releases, though, you risk reporters and editors feeling overwhelmed and a bit badgered. The result — people simply stop reading your releases altogether. If a substantial number of releases are not relevant to their interests, they will not bother to separate the wheat from the chaff. They will simply consign all your releases to the wastebasket unread.

What's "a large number of releases?" It will depend on where you are, what's going on in your program and what happens in your community. In some towns, five releases a year might be a lot. In others, eight a month might be a small or middling number.

If you are not sending out many releases, and if you have a short press list, save the administrative hassles and time spent sorting (see Pick-and-Choose) by simply sending everything to everyone. But this may not suit all situations, so read on.

Pick-and-Choose

Pick-and-choose, or selective distribution, means that a particular release goes only to those who are reasonably likely to have an interest.

This strategy requires keeping up with media interests and reporters' special concerns or beats. It also requires keeping track of which releases were sent where, to avoid the embarrassment of calling to follow up on a story that wasn't sent to that station or paper. Having an up-to-date press list and a current set of media profiles (see Chapter 2) becomes essential.

Selective releasing has strong advantages in some situations. If there are several weekly (or even daily) papers or broadcasters, each serving a particular region, it's most effective to send items of restricted or highly localized interest only to those outlets which serve the appropriate community.

If a set of crime statistics is released for one area and not another, a selective distribution makes sense. People fifty miles away are not going to want to read about routine updates for Precinct X.

The chief arguments against selective distribution are two:

— you may forget to send releases to all the appropriate media, offending some, or
— you may misjudge — a release you tagged for selective distribution should have been sent to everyone.

It's not uncommon to combine the two approaches, all-hands and selective, using pick-and-choose for stories with *clearly* limited audiences and all-hands for major events.

The Exclusive

An "exclusive" means that *one* reporter is given the story to the exclusion of all others. Its close companion, the "advance,"

means that one reporter is given the story in sufficient advance time that his story appears first, "scooping" other media.

Using either of these as a normal distribution mechanism is counterproductive. A number of people who work with news media feel exclusives are simply bad strategy. Reporters and editors insist on independence in their news judgment, and will reject your attempt to pick who gets which story — even if there is some competitive advantage to be gained occasionally.

But in some circumstances, an exclusive or advance can be justified. An unusually complex or highly sensitive story may get better attention and more in-depth coverage. But this is not a way to hide bad news with the help of a sympathetic reporter. Enterprising reporters following up on the story will inevitably uncover any negative or embarrassing news you might have been trying to hide.

If the reporter actually helped to develop the story (perhaps the revelation of ways to counter a con game or a fraud scheme which has appeared in the community, or a special insight into how businesses have helped build community safety), that reporter has prior claim on reporting the results. In fact, giving the story to other reporters before your coworker has had the opportunity to report it would be a breach of faith. Another philosophy which can result in exclusive coverage of a story is the "those who ask, get" approach. That is, if a reporter is enterprising enough to bring up the idea, you will respond to queries, even knowing that the story will be exclusive.

Does Distribution Matter In Placing A Story?

In smaller communities, the decision on how to disseminate releases will be moot. If you deal only with two newspapers, two local radio stations and a television outlet, your decision is by and large made for you. Send to everyone.

In a suburban community or in an urban neighborhood the decision becomes more complex. Not all your news will be relevant at the daily newspaper or the television and radio news level. For such stories, selective dissemination makes sense. Choose the media (not forgetting special format radio, weeklies and newsletters) whose target audiences are most likely to be interested or affected by your news.

If you are working at a regional or statewide level, wire services will report your story to their clients around the state or region. But don't rely on (a) wire services reporting everything

you send them, or (b) every good media outlet subscribing to the wire service. Major daily newspaper(s) in the region will usually want to be informed of activities throughout the region or state although they may not elect to cover them. It's worth the investment to send copies of major releases to all major metropolitan outlets throughout the state or region on an all-hands basis.

COURTING

The second component of putting your story into the right hands is making personal contact.

Courting is a process of developing personal relationships which demonstrate your credibility, your understanding of the news media's needs and your ability to provide newsworthy stories in usable form. Of these, the easiest to lose and hardest to rebuild is credibility. If you have credibility, the other two goals can be attained. If you are not credible, the other two won't matter.

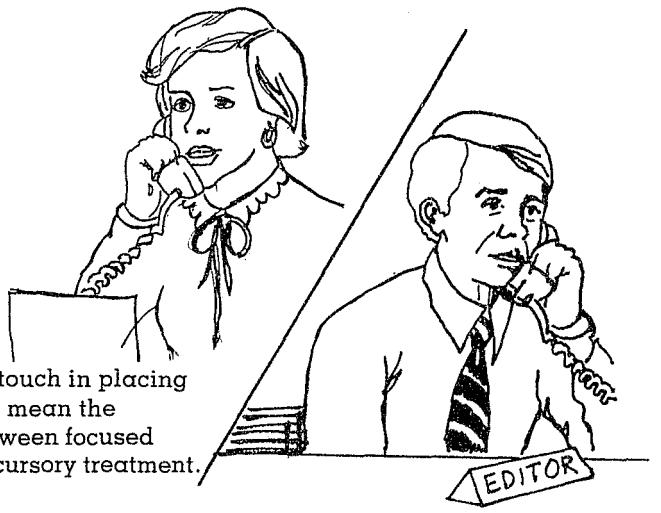
Getting Yours

You've already met (Chapter 2) with various gatekeepers. These include assignment editors (radio and TV), news, city and feature editors. They are *not* the people who write or report the news. They *determine* who will report or write on what subjects.

The task is to match media interests with your news. You may have a story which is obviously attractive, or you may have to do some selling.

If you have kept up those media profiles and the press list (see Chapter 2), you have an excellent start on knowing who your best "sales prospects" will be for a given topic. Each time you talk with reporters and editors, listen for what especially interests them. Ask them. Then keep reminder records on their contact cards or profiles.

When a story comes up, check your lists and files! The best places to "place" your story are places where there's already some interest. A reporter who did several stories on child abuse and family violence would be a prime candidate to do a feature on the new program which educates Neighborhood Watch members on dealing with family violence. The business editor who was concerned about rising liability insurance costs



The personal touch in placing your story can mean the difference between focused attention and cursory treatment.

would love a follow-up reporting on how corporations are educating employees in making home, travel and workplace safer.

Preface or Follow-up Phone Calls

You may decide to preface the mailing of releases with phone calls to key reporters and editors (which seems the more effective way) or you may follow up with calls after the release is delivered.

Follow-up calls have the advantage of putting the release in the other person's hands (if it wasn't thrown out) before your discussion. Preface calls have the advantage of having someone on the lookout for your release and perhaps already working on story ideas from it.

Either way, these are "courting calls." Aim to talk with reporters and editors who can be persuaded that your release is useful.

Timing of preface calls can be tricky. You need to have everything ready *before* calls are made. If the story's good, your calls will lead to immediate requests for a copy of the release or statement. By having something ready, you'll avoid embarrassment and build credibility.

Once you have established personal relationships with reporters and editors, you may be in a position to use them as sounding boards. If you call at a convenient time, they may be willing to tell you candidly whether a story is or isn't newsworthy in general or for them.

Selling the Story: Do's and Don'ts, On the Phone or In Person

Selling your story does not mean artificial enthusiasm, rampant hyperbole or excessive zeal. It means giving your written release the nudge that brings it to the active attention of the editor or reporter.

You cannot persuade an editor that a story is newsworthy when it is not; you can sometimes persuade that your story is the most newsworthy among the many competing for attention in every newsroom in the country.

Some do's:

Have your story lined up and have the facts straight. Would you want to try to decipher someone babbling the facts in random order with a high degree of uncertainty and a substantial lack of clarity? Neither do editors and reporters. Remember the five Ws and H and the lead!

Get your story there on time or early. No matter how great the story, deadlines are deadlines because it takes time to produce a news broadcast or a newspaper.

Call when you will be able to be called back. It's extremely frustrating to a reporter to call back two minutes after you called only to be told "She's left for the day," or "He just went over to the West Side office." Stick around for at least fifteen minutes.

Be concise. Give the high points, not a blow-by-blow account. The purpose of the call is to tantalize, not overpower. If asked, you can provide more information, or offer to have packet ready for immediate pick-up. But reporters and editors who are not interested will still want to talk to you on the next story if they know you will be brief and to the point in describing that next one.

Call once in a while to congratulate the reporter on a good piece of work or the editor on coverage of local events. A friendly, earnest commendation never hurts, if not overdone. See the editor or reporter as a human being with interests, concerns and abilities beyond your business connection.

Some don'ts:

Don't make calls near news deadline (except on extremely urgent late-breaking news).

Don't ask for promises that the story will run; NEVER ask that the story be run just as written. An honest reporter or editor knows that a promise of any one story running just isn't possible to guarantee keeping; no reporter or editor likes to be told he or she has to take your writing without changes. Their job is the effective, accurate reporting of the news, not acting as conduit for your writing style.

Don't call daily to pester about a story. If there's been some strong expression of interest and there's a new development that makes the story more (or less) newsworthy, then call. If time had been irrelevant and is now an issue, advise the reporter or editor accordingly. But calling simply to see if and when the story will be reported does only one thing — put you on a list of people they don't want to talk to.

Don't forget to say thank you.

DEADLINES AND GOOD TIMES

Radio stations: the deadline is roughly fifteen minutes before the newscast begins. These are generally hourly or half-hourly, on the hour, half-hour or five minutes before the hour. A good time to call is usually three to five minutes after a newscast ends.

TV stations: bad times to call are late afternoons (roughly 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.) when final decisions are being made on the evening news. Good times to call are early morning, before crews' schedules have been locked in, mid-morning after they have left, or early afternoon.

Evening newspapers: deadline is usually around 7:00 a.m. or 7:30 a.m. Good times to reach evening paper reporters are early morning (just past deadline) or late afternoon.

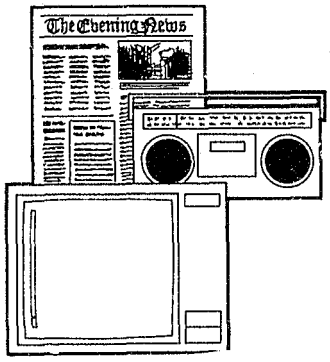
Morning newspapers: Most reporters are writing and editors editing between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. and don't want to be disturbed. But calls at 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. usually catch them in the office and not under major pressure.

Sunday newspapers: Many sections of Sunday's paper are printed well in advance. You may need to call by Monday or Tuesday for the next Sunday's edition! It's important to talk with the editors responsible for the Sunday paper to be sure of their work schedules.

Weeklies: the three days before publication are usually most hectic, with the first two of these being worst. The day the paper appears on the news stand and the day after are generally excellent times to reach weeklies' personnel.

Newsletters, magazines: tend to have long lead times, as much as six to eight weeks to three months. They need news early if it's time-sensitive.

Chapter 6



ELECTRONIC WIZARDRY

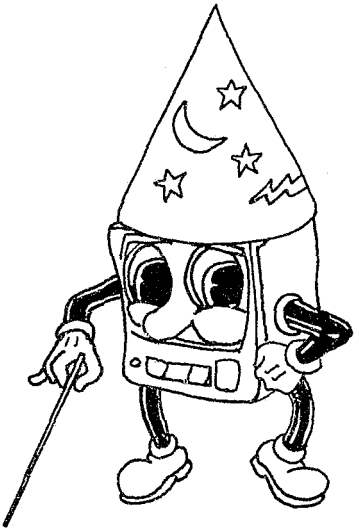
Does the thought of doing a radio talk show or reading an editorial reply on TV set the butterflies fluttering in your stomach? Do you marvel at how a group not unlike yours gets positive stories time and again on the evening news?

Electronic wizardry, the magic which brings television and radio to each of us, is a powerful tool for telling your story. It reaches all kinds of people, communicates concise and useful messages and is a relatively painless source of education for many. Working with radio and television, especially if you have to perform, can be more nerve-wracking than launching a print campaign, but it can also be exciting, fun and highly successful in getting your word out.

Placing general news stories with television and radio reporters is an effective way to get the word out. Most people, according to recent surveys, get their news from television (with radio second and newspapers third). Stories which offer action for the cameras are just what TV ordered. Stories which have eloquent spokesmen are naturals for radio.

But the job of spokesperson becomes tougher on radio and television. Your remarks can be paraphrased in a printed story. You can even get the chance to correct your comments. When your words go out over radio or television airwaves, you can't take them back. But you have the chance to demonstrate enthusiasm, energy and excitement which are much harder to convey in a written statement.

Don't confine yourself to the major network affiliates in your community. Local cable, public access and public interest electronic media have program needs you can meet. Take advantage of their need for news to deliver your message. You'll both benefit.



Television—and radio—can be magically effective ways to convey news and promote programs. Knowing what to do when appearing on electronic media can enhance your ability to use that magic.

Cool and Warm

Television and radio are both cool, somewhat distant media. The viewer or listener can passively look at or listen to the program. Audiences can simultaneously watch (or listen) and talk, do chores or undertake other activities.

Newspapers, on the other hand, are a warm medium. The reader must physically interact with the newspaper to read it. It requires the audience's full attention.

The coolness of television and radio can be your ally. If you can convey the energy, enthusiasm and excitement of your program, your volunteers and your results, you will have a desirable commodity to sell to TV and radio news directors and assignment editors.

GETTING ON

To land a spot on a television or radio show, you first have to let the show's staff know who you are and what you can contribute.

You may be in for a delightful surprise. All you'll have to do is ask for time and you'll get it. The show may be local morning news, a locally produced show during the day, a late-night talk show, or a Saturday special in space reserved for local broadcasting. On the other hand, don't expect such good fortune all the time.

Each show has a producer. Some shows may have lots of other staff. But in most instances, the producer is the person who determines the show's subjects and schedules and coordinates guests, and who is the best one to approach about an appearance.

Third parties can help. A PTA Chairman might be the best person to urge a producer to present a segment about teaching children safety to and from school.

Offer to be flexible about scheduling. Point out that you can bring citizens along to help discuss the programs and the need for them. But above all, have a clear idea of your message and how to relay it concisely and precisely.

If you can bring attractive visual aids — copies of pamphlets, booklets and posters; graphs and maps showing the patterns in and locations of crime; letters from kids to McGruff are just some ideas — they will enliven your presentation. Just make sure visuals are large enough for the camera to see — certainly bigger than 8" x 10" for graphs, charts and similar devices, or make advance arrangements to have them mounted on boards to be shown in closeup.

You can bring your own videotape to show brief segments of your program in action. Most stations can show VHS format (also known as 1/2") tape or Beta format tapes. Almost all can show 3/4" (commercial) tapes. Check with the producer about whether videotapes are permitted, the format, and the lead time needed for the station to set up your tape.

Selecting a Spokesperson

If you are a solitary crime prevention officer or the only teacher working on the program, the choice of spokesperson will probably boil down to you or the boss appearing. If you are part of a contingent or coalition, you may have to pick a representative.

Here are some tips on selecting wisely:

- Be sure the spokesperson knows the program and the facts, without need to refer to notes and briefing papers.
- The speaker should agree with and be fully able to explain the basic purposes of the group or organization — easily and concisely.
- The representative should be able to get to the point quickly and capable of answering unexpected questions clearly and responsively.

- Television is a cool medium. It's hard to get the viewer's emotions engaged. If your choice is a formal versus a friendly personality, choose friendly.
- Equip your friendly personality with warm, human examples and anecdotes for the same reasons.
- Be sure whoever is picked is comfortable with the format. Some people read aloud well but are poor extemporaneous speakers. Others speak eloquently off the cuff but freeze or falter when asked to read a prepared statement.
- Looks need not be perfect, but the person should be neat, clean and reasonably stylish and businesslike.
- Someone who is forthright and generally unafraid and comfortable around groups will usually carry that same image on TV.
- Avoid if possible anyone who has unconscious nervous habits like twirling hair or fidgeting in the chair, or people who constantly gesture. Gestures *can* be effective if not extreme.

McGruff's an effective spokesdog because he's friendly, firm, consistent, warm, and eloquent.

AT THE STUDIO

- Be on time or a few minutes early. Each minute is planned, and you will be needed when you are expected.
- Listen carefully to any directions you are given.
- Look, listen and speak to the person talking to you during the interview.
- Be prepared to bring up a new topic with your host during a commercial break if your points are not being covered.

- Try to visualize a good friend in place of the camera or microphone and talk in ordinary conversational tones to that friend.
- If you are reading from a Teleprompter, practice several times first. Try to read ahead in good sized "bites."
- Until you are told you are off the air, remember that anything you say can be heard by the audience — no wisecracks!
- Don't be intimidated by the equipment — let the staff worry about it.
- Don't make unnecessary movements and noises. Quick hand or body movements are difficult for the TV camera to follow and create mysterious and distracting noises on radio.
- Don't look at yourself on the TV monitor or try to listen to yourself if the radio station is on a taped delay (what you say gets aired about 7—10 seconds after you say it). It is distracting and tells you nothing useful.
- Don't answer questions with just a "yes" or "no." That will kill conversation.
- Don't make up an answer if you don't have one. Honesty makes a good impression.
- Don't slouch, hold your chin down or get too casual in your sitting position. It looks bad on television and adversely affects your vocal tones on radio and television.

EXTRAS ON RADIO

- Maintain a distance of six to eight inches from the microphone. You may rest elbows on the table.
- Talk normally. Normal tones and measured pace rather than rapid speech project your message best.
- Remember that your audience can't see you. It can only hear. Your tone, emphasis and phrasing must paint pictures and deliver messages that you could otherwise send with gestures.
- The microphone is very sensitive. It will pick up most "asides," so be warned.
- For similar reasons, don't wear jewelry which clanks, jangles or makes other noises which could distract listeners.
- Arrange any reference materials so that pages are numbered and you can softly lay pages aside when you're done with them. As a rule, remove paper clips and staples.

EXTRAS ON TELEVISION

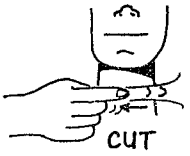
- If you want to use visuals, clear it in advance with the producer and arrive ahead of time so the production crew can check them out and set them up.
- Television crews will follow *you*. Don't worry about where the microphone is or whether the camera is doing something you don't understand.
- Wear something comfortable, classic and flattering. Suits in plains colors or subdued patterns are fine. Black on most people looks harsh. Avoid wearing white or very light colored shirts, blouses or sweaters as well as very dark suits or bold floral dresses. Women should insure that they can sit gracefully in whatever skirts they might wear.
- Normal daily makeup is usually adequate for women. If a man needs makeup, the station will provide it.
- TV microphones, though generally directional, are sensitve and can pick up what you might think are inaudible asides. Take care!
- Jewelry is fine if it's not overdone, large, highly reflective or noisemaking.

TELEVISION (OR RADIO) PROGRAM IDEAS

These are just to spark your imagination. You know your community and the issues which cause concern about crime. Use this list as a jumping off point to make your own:

- Interview Neighborhood Watch members on how they help victims of crime (if yours don't, call the National Sheriffs' Association for how-to's, 703-836-STAR);
- Talk with younger children who've been taught by teenagers how to keep themselves safe and avoid drugs;
- Offer to announce the winners of a big poster or essay contest on a particular show and to present the award;
- Let producers know you're willing to talk about seasonal or holiday safety tips as well as citizen crime prevention in general, to add a timely theme to their shows;
- Suggest a forum on a key topic (such as "Can Neighborhood Watch Prevent Violent Crime?"). Provide ideas about panelists (Neighborhood Watchers, a violent crime victim, the chief of police, a psychologist, a domestic violence counselor, a local minister, for instance).

TAKING DIRECTIONS FROM HAND SIGNALS



(The Silent Communications System for Radio and TV)

Time remaining: the number of fingers displayed by the producer represents the number of minutes remaining.

Stretch: a motion similar to pulling taffy, which means either read or speak more slowly — or we'll have time left over.

Speed up: both hands rotating in a circular motion, which means read more rapidly — time is running out.

Wrap up: one hand rotating in a circular motion; bring the program to a conclusion (usually a signal to the host) as soon as possible.

Louder: hand is raised, palm up.

Softer: hand is lowered, palm down.

Cut: index finger is drawn across the throat to indicate that the program or spot will stop abruptly.

CABLE TELEVISION — A NEW TWIST

There is more to cable television than MTV and the movie channels. Cable can offer inexpensive access, free production facilities, actual training in production and camera work for taping your own shows and highly targeted programming.

With local franchises covering small geographic areas and national services aimed at special groups (e.g., sports fans, Hispanics, older people), cable is building large audiences out of small ones — "narrowcasting" as opposed to broadcasting.

Broadcast Channels

Cable was originally designed to improve reception for viewers whose antenna reception was poor. A common antenna, high enough and strong enough to pick up signals, would be wired by cable to subscribers' sets.

Most modern cable systems go a step farther. Using satellite technology, cable systems pick up stations from other cities. These are usually independent stations. The distant station may be a reluctant emigrant, or it may promote the relaying — as does Ted Turner's channel in Atlanta — by sending its signals to a space satellite for bouncing to interested cable systems. Cable audiences can be far broader than your community, especially if you take part in a satellite-networked broadcast.

Cable Networks

Among a constantly growing number of new services designed especially for cable systems, cable network shows are usually distributed via satellite.

Cable can be pay or free. In pay systems or networks, subscribers pay an extra fee over the basic cable charge to be able to tune in the special channel. Though pay TV is hard for nonprofit groups to crack, Consumers' Union (the *Consumer's Report* magazine publisher) has a regular show on the HBO pay network. Pay TV can exist independent of cable as well.

Other special networks that broadcast via cable systems include religious, sports and children's programming networks.

Local Cable Programming

In some communities, local cable programming consists of a calendar of events, a list of programs, a weather report, a clock and a crawl (a written message moving right to left across the bottom of the screen) with advertisements. In other cities, an intricate local programming structure is being built up.

Public access channels can be set aside for showing local government meetings, airing educational shows or permitting community organizations (and sometimes the general public) access to television as a communication medium. These channels are the most accessible to nonprofits.

Your Imagination's The Limit

Don't think the use of cable stops at airing public service announcements. The only limit to what you can broadcast is your imagination.

Sock Hop With The Cops

Members of the Illinois Crime Prevention Association Region Four pooled talents to reach young people in the fifteen jurisdictions they represent. Using the popular American Bandstand program as the model, each show features young people from a different high school in the area dancing, learning crime prevention and enjoying themselves. The monthly tapings are aired *two to six times on the ten cable stations which service the region.*

Each show focuses on a topic which might bring teens into contact with police such as drug abuse, running away, drinking and driving or vandalism. Public service messages are mixed with popular music. Teens in the studio and home viewers can win prizes for correct answers to quiz questions.

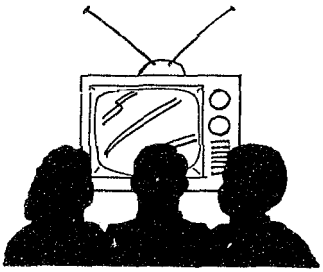
It's an informal opportunity for law enforcement officers and teenagers to work — and play — together; it gets crime prevention messages across on non-threatening basis, teen-to-teen.

Neighborhood Watch and TV

The Oxnard, California Police knew the city's Neighborhood Watch program would, at the rate of 3,000 enrollees per year, take about forty years to reach all community residents.

But over four out of five homes in Oxnard use the same local cable firm for television service. This meant 80% of citizens were reachable through one facility. The cable company liked the idea of positive public service combined with a chance to attract more subscribers and build a safer community.

It was this combination that brought Neighborhood Watch onto the airwaves in Oxnard. Neighbors meet at a resident's home to discuss Neighborhood Watch. But instead of an in-person briefing, the session is televised. The first hour of the 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. session is a pre-taped explanation of the Watch program. Then the program cuts live to the Oxnard crime prevention coordinator.



In the live segment, viewing audiences get to ask questions via phone. Both the question and the response are broadcast for the entire audience.

A large map of Oxnard highlights crime trends and patterns. The crime prevention coordinator discusses each crime on the map, explaining briefly what happened. If there are any suspects sought, identifying information is given.

The response is staggering. The cable company has expanded the time allotment for the program to a full ninety minutes of live programming after the hour-long taped introduction.

The results of Oxnard's programming have been gratifying. Crime is down dramatically, with residential burglary leading the decline with a 15% drop in 1985. The news media credit this drop to the crime prevention efforts of the Oxnard citizens.

Helping New Immigrants

Cable television is used to provide regular crime prevention features and talk shows in Arlington, Virginia. Beyond that however, shows on crime prevention and the legal process for the County's many immigrants are produced in Asian languages and Spanish.

Youth Speak Up

High school students in Florida develop and produce their own shows for local cable television on ways in which teens can build safer and better schools and communities, and on how teens can reduce their own chances of victimization by crime. Topics ranging from drug abuse prevention to helping the elderly are addressed.

A Community Crime Prevention Channel

In Edgewood, Kentucky, the crime prevention officer uses one of the city's cable channels to show crime prevention films from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. weekdays. Children's films are featured in the summers. Groups may schedule films to be aired at specific dates and times. Videotapes of local crime prevention events are also aired.

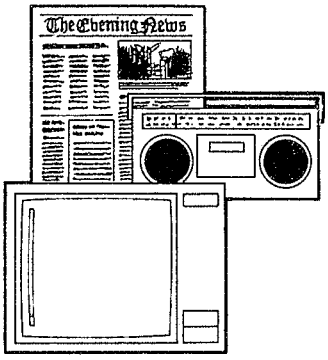
Kids and Television

Children spend a lot of time watching TV, especially in the summer months. Putting McGruff on television with other familiar characters not only captures their attention but teaches them how to protect themselves and help others.

McGruff can make special public service announcements, appear on locally originated programs and visit shows which air during the after-school period or on Saturdays. Some jurisdictions have taped the McGruff Elementary School Puppet Program for use by local stations. Hawaii's Criminal Justice Commission taped excerpts to be used as children's public service announcements.

A partnership with your TV or radio station can result in community-oriented and family-oriented safety events where McGruff appears. These become news events in themselves.

Chapter 7



NEWS CONFERENCES AND MEDIA EVENTS

The temptation to shout "call a press conference" can be great. Sometimes, however, it needs to be resisted. Knowing when to go ahead and when to resist holding a formal news conference or other media gathering can be important to maximizing the limited resources you have for publicity.

Any function you plan where the attendance of the media is a central goal can be classified as a "media event." The most common examples of media events are press conferences, news availabilities, press parties or receptions, and a fourth category which is sometimes called "media event," which can also be termed a "special event."

News Conferences

The first example, the news conference, is a formal event at which someone on behalf of your organization makes an announcement of a major news development (a new program, a record-breaking year, a significant achievement) in a formal setting to representatives of the news media and (usually) provides them with opportunity for a question-and-answer session. Questions are asked as part of the event; any reporter can ask any question and all will hear the answer.

News conferences are seldom the site of a lavish feed, though coffee and pastry might be appropriate as a convenience. A packet or kit containing a press release, background information and related stories may be handed out.

The news conference is the most overused tool in the news-making arsenal. Reporters tend not to show unless they deem the event highly newsworthy, because they've learned that their judgment of newsworthiness is on the whole probably twice as accurate as that of someone with a story to sell.

The news conference is a powerful tool for making important announcements by a person or people of some stature, or for marking a significant milestone. But significance, like newsworthiness, is in the eye of the reporter (and editor) and the audience. Your view doesn't count much.

News conferences should be purposeful and brief.

An interesting feature of the news conference is its role as a boost or promotion for your organization or cause. Inviting major sponsors, supporters and dedicated volunteers to a news conference provides them with a sense of the size of their achievement or involvement and helps anchor their commitment. It builds a sense of prominence and permanence by virtue of the involvement of the media. That benefit alone may be reason enough to have a press conference occasionally if the news even remotely warrants it.

Availabilities

News availabilities are in many respects a less formal version of news conference. You are often better off substituting an availability in most cases that might otherwise suggest a news conference.

News availabilities are less structured than full-blown news conferences. The idea is not so much an announcement at your convenience, but a designated time and location set up for the

Availabilities provide one-on-one opportunities for reporters to explore a story.

convenience of the news media representatives who would like to interview your spokesman about a story.

If, for example, you are releasing an important Neighborhood Watch report or new crime statistics, or announcing a new school program combating drug and alcohol abuse, you could schedule a news availability so reporters could get answers from the experts. If you are involved in a hearing, those who testify could be "made available" outside of the hearing to elaborate on their testimony.

Schedule a news availability as conveniently as you can for reporters in terms of time and place. Be sure there is a room in which to talk without being drowned in noise and a waiting area for reporters. You will probably want to assemble some background information or even a press kit, unless the story is a very simple one.

Press Parties and Receptions

Press parties are more common in the business world than in government and community service circles. They involve a meal, a reception, or both. A problem in government or community service circles is "who pays for the party?" especially if government funds are involved.

The purpose of a press party or reception is to combine business and pleasure. A bar or buffet (or both) opens before the "official statement," then reopens afterward.

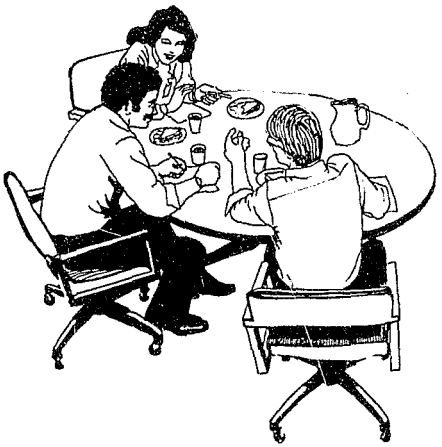
Press parties are customarily held when significant new products or findings of major reports are unveiled to the media. They are usually afternoon or evening sessions. Invitations may include spouses or guests. The question-and-answer period is generally brief but offset with extended opportunities for the press to mingle and talk with key individuals for specific interviews during the socializing.

Regular Meetings, Briefings/Backgrounders and Editorial Boards

Chief executives of government bodies (mayors, county executives, etc.) often hold regular press conferences which cover a variety of subjects. Unless you are actively involved in an on-going and fast-developing program or campaign of wide public interest, it is unlikely that you will want to set up such a schedule.

But another way to keep regularly in touch with reporters is a monthly, bimonthly or weekly breakfast or lunch, Dutch treat, including informal discussion and exchanges of views, in which conversations are agreed in advance to be either on or off the record. "On the record" means you are willing to be quoted. "Off the record" means the reporter won't quote you, though the information may be used without being attributed to you. Assume, unless there is *clear* agreement in advance to go off the record, that whatever you say is on the record (a good rule always).

Briefings are generally factual presentations on current or pending issues of some complexity. They give in-depth information and detailed analysis which might not be of interest to the media at large but will be keenly desired by those who have a special interest in your subject. A typical example might be a discussion of new blood bank procedures or how changes in the zoning ordinance will affect those owning undeveloped property.



Talking together on a regular basis is a good way to sustain relationships with key reporters and editors.

A *backgrounder* can be any sort of general discussion of the motives for, consequences of, or alternatives to a major public event. It is almost always off the record and is given by a senior person with access to the decision-making process. It is in some respects the process and opinion equivalent of the briefing, but it focuses far more on the *why* of a story or situation.

A more formal session, which may or may not involve a lunch or breakfast, is a *meeting with the editorial board* of a newspaper *or the editorial committee* of a TV or radio station. These are policy-level, not news, events. They are usually focused on whether the station or newspaper should adopt an editorial position you endorse. At these, you want the biggest, most persuasive "guns" the program can muster — people of high stature in the community who support your cause, coupled with eloquent human interest examples of the importance of your program.

From ribbon cuttings to run-a-thons, from birthday parties to parades, special events can attract media attention.

Special Events

The fourth type of media undertakir.g has been called "media event." This is mostly because nobody can think of a kinder name, and most shun its earlier name, "publicity stunt."

Call them what you will, these are activities planned and executed with the press in mind, regardless of the merit or lack of merit of the event in a more general context. They are gatherings of people doing things to gain attention. There's nothing wrong with this. Sometimes the best way to get attention for a worthy cause is to stage a stunt — McGruff rides a bike to lead off the Kids' Bike Safety Day, or lands by helicopter to visit the shopping center, for example.

Kick-offs of major community developments, from ribbon cuttings to grand openings, are almost always set up to accommodate media as well as to reflect community celebration. It is in your interest to avoid any sort of event which is even in

questionable taste. The event should have some tie-in to the purpose for which it's being held, and that tie-in should be consistently emphasized to the press.

One variant of the special event is a "photo opportunity," which is usually aimed at newspaper photographers and television crews looking for strictly visual stories. A famous person (McGruff, the Governor, Miss America) is pictured with another person who may or may not be famous but who has a message, a check, a proclamation or some other communication or presentation to make. These should be arranged for a specified time (e.g., 10:00 to 10:15 a.m.) and should have suitable backgrounds and props to tell the story effectively. Photo opportunity gimmicks include jumbo-sized checks for donations, plaques or framed letters, specific products or publications.

DECIDING WHICH KIND OF EVENT

Whether you're considering a major news conference in a four-star hotel or an availability in your office, someone (probably you) has to decide if it's worth the trouble and expense of planning and executing. Be honest with yourself. You may well get the same (or even better) results sending out a release and making five phone calls. Here are some guidelines to help you decide.

Is this more newsworthy to the general public than usual business? The addition of two crime prevention officers to your unit may be great news, but it isn't press conference material. If you can announce a new product or service that will affect the public, you may consider an "unveiling" or "preview" event. Your new partnership with the local high schools involving teens who will do security surveys for the area's senior citizens is news that you probably want to announce to the press.

Can you offer something in person that you can't offer in a release? Having the news media come to you for information they could have received more conveniently through a release will not only have a negative effect on the story itself — it will discourage future attendance at your events.

Sometimes, however, the live interaction adds the human touch which sells your story. Perhaps the Lions' Club donated a new curriculum for elementary school students. Hold a press conference with local club officials, the school principal and Superintendent, and some children to present the gift.

Can you afford it? Even if the potential returns are attractive, the cash outlay comes up front. If it's going to mean financial hardship for your budget, you should opt for a less expensive alternative like sending out releases.

Can you get everything prepared in time? In addition to preparing text for a release, reproducing everything, ordering and receiving other materials and handling the mailing and maintenance of invitations, you'll have rooms to book, press packets to prepare, and many more things to do. How much time is left? How much of your time is available? And how much time will you need? If the answers don't fit together, don't start.

Putting On the Event

Once you decide that you do want to hold a press conference, availability or party, you must attend to the details.

In some cases, the details will be easy. The City Hall conference room will have adequate light and space. The backdrop is good for cameras to photograph. The announcement consists of one release. No press packet is needed, just copies of the report.

But you may be more ambitious than that. You may be seeking a full-blown press conference or media event. Here is a checklist of basic steps to make the event work:

Basic News Conference Checklist

1. Determine who will make the official statement or announcement and who will follow up (remember protocol). Be sure they can be present when and where needed. Use their scheduling to help you set dates. Pick at least one alternate date.
2. Establish time, day, date for conference. Beware of (and check for) conflicting events in the city or region, deadlines and schedules and availability of media. Then confirm all commitments for principals' attendance in writing.
3. Plan for a total formal press conference time no longer than twenty minutes, plus questions and answers. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually adequate. Make it clear to each speaker exactly what he or she is to cover so there is no repetition—which drives the press away.

4. Determine conference location and space; take into account accessibility to media; finalize site as soon as possible, especially if it's not a usual news conference site.
5. Check and update your press list — print, broadcast, photo.
6. Make a list of all releases, speeches and other materials you will need.
7. Check facilities based on what you need:
   - room (size, doors, conflicting noisy events nearby, confusing corridors, security). You don't want a cavern; be sure there is room for TV crews to set up and move around. But a room on the small side lends an air of crowdedness and excitement.
   - tables and chairs — how many and where, check sight lines to be sure all have a relatively clear view.
   - arrange for PA system (and someone trained to operate it). Absolutely required even for presenters who protest they don't need it (they do).
   - decide on arrangement of stage or platform, use of lectern or podium, who will be up front and where they will place themselves.
   - audio-visual: slide projector, 16mm/35mm projector, video cassette recorder? Operator needed? Screen? Are tapes and slides cued to be ready to start immediately? Are light switches being manned?
   - parking convenient for TV and radio people who have to haul lots of gear (if free, so much the better).
   - are there enough power outlets for TV cameras, displays, equipment, etc.?
   - have room and facilities available in advance for final checking.
8. Designate contact person for media and be sure to name him/her on press materials. Date all press materials.
9. Invite any VIPS as far in advance as possible, preferably two to three weeks. Press should be advised at least one week in advance, ten days to two weeks if possible.
10. Don't give everything away in the invitation or advisory. Tantalize. Say enough to indicate nature of significant news coming, enough to whet curiosity. Indicate topics to be covered, not the substance.
11. Follow up with media who have not responded. Remind news media twelve to twenty-four hours ahead if notice was far in advance of event.

12. Staff for the conference. Think carefully about the number of people you'll need to direct traffic flow, answer questions, escort VIPS, etc. The person in charge should have no specific duties except to be in charge. If possible, overstaff by one.
13. If it is not exclusively a press event, set up special press table near the speaker and escort press to table. Be sure the table is large enough for reporters to take notes comfortably.
14. Start conference as close to the announced time as possible, and end at the announced time. Don't cater to one segment of the press. If TV is late, don't halt proceedings while they set up. Schedule private interviews as soon as the conference has ended.
15. Follow up within forty-eight hours to see who might want additional information. Follow up both with those who attended conference and other key media who didn't. If feasible, suggest customized feature story angles to editors with specialized interests.
16. Critique every step of the operation carefully and make notes for next time.
17. Thank (either in person, by phone or by note) the news media who attended.

The next checklist is a more complete one, for those interested in conducting a major news conference.

A Comprehensive Checklist

1. Determine who will make the official statement or announcement and who will follow up (remember protocol). Be sure they can be present when and where needed. Use their scheduling to help you set dates. Pick at least one alternate date.
   Plan for a total formal press conference time no longer than twenty minutes, plus questions and answers. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually adequate.
   Make it clear to each speaker exactly what he or she is to cover so there is no repetition — which drives the press away.
2. Establish time, day, date for conference. Beware of (and check for) conflicting events in the city or region, deadlines and availability of media.

3. Determine conference location and space; take into account accessibility to media; finalize site as soon as possible, especially if it's special or isn't usual press conference site. Give yourself lots of time to indoctrinate the site management on what will be going on. Confirm in writing the attendance of principals.
4. Check and update your press list — print, broadcast, photo, freelance. Determine what press should be added.
5. Make a list of all press releases, speeches, exhibits, samples, publications, mementos, audio-visuals (slides, photos, graphs, charts, etc.), press kit covers, captions and miscellaneous materials to be developed. Brainstorm specific themes or angles to run throughout the materials.
6. Establish timetables for first drafts, revisions, camera ready copy; assign individual responsibilities.
7. Draw up proposed budget.
8. Check facilities based on what you need:
   - room (size, doors, conflicting noisy events nearby, confusing corridors, security). Avoid a cavernous room, but allow space for TV personnel to set up and move around. A smaller room suggests a larger crowd.
   - order any long lead-time props or demonstration materials required; determine decorations or backdrops needed.
   - determine menu, if applicable.
   - tables and chairs — how many and where, check sight lines to be sure all have a relatively free and clear view.
   - arrange for PA system (review controls twice with staff) -absolutely required even for presenters who protest they don't need it (they do).
   - obtain easel(s) and blackboard(s) if needed.
   - room lights (know where controls, dimmers are).
   - decide on arrangement of stage or platform, use of lectern or podium, who will be on stage or at head table (don't forget place cards to show them where they'll sit).
   - audio-visual: slide projector, 16mm/35mm projector, video cassette recorder? Operator needed? Screen? Are slides and tapes cued for immediate use?
   - sign-in table and contents — paper, pen, press packets.
   - tape recorder or VCR for your record of event.
   - parking (if free, so much the better).
   - check-room if inclement or cool/cold weather.
   - pay phones' locations; are special phones or wire facilities needed?

- typewriter(s) needed? extra pads and pencils?
- power for TV cameras, displays, equipment, etc.
- room and facilities available two hours in advance for final checking.

9. Designate contact person for media and be sure to mention on all press materials. Date all press materials.
10. Prepare about one-third more kits or packets than you expect to use. Extras are cheap on the initial order and will be needed for follow-up.
11. Check budget and set final budget (include materials reproduction, phone, postage and messenger, own back-up photographer, taping, room rentals, refreshments, travel, contingency).
12. Determine format of and develop copy for advisory or invitations. If site is not well known, include detailed travel instructions. Or consider providing complimentary transportation from a central location.
13. Mail invitations to VIPs, if any, *a minimum of three weeks in advance.* Press should be advised at least one week in advance, ten days to two weeks if possible.
14. Keep record of invitations, acceptances, and attendance. (Remember to list unexpecteds who show up at the door.)
15. Don't give everything away in the invitation or advisory. Tantalize. Say enough to indicate nature of significant news coming, enough to whet curiosity. Indicate topics to be covered, not the substance.
16. Follow up with media who have not responded. Call a couple of days before the event. Call after to see if media still want press kits or packets.
17. Consider advance placements — on an embargo basis. Consider one-on-one interviews before and after event. By having presenters available for personal interviews, the press can get in-depth information, perhaps even get some new angles on the story.
18. Rehearse. If possible, get all presenters together, a few days before. If all can't be there, use stand-ins. Rehearse use of audio-visual props. Also, rehearse expected tough questions and answers.
19. Consider press reminder twelve to twenty-four hours ahead.
20. Prepare name tags (and bring some blanks) for sponsors/presenters. Arrange in alphabetical order on check-in table.

21. Ready materials to be messengered or mailed (day of conference or day before) to key media people who are unable to attend.
22. Finalize and make provisions for manpower needs — think carefully about the number of people you'll need to direct traffic flow, answer questions, oversee the arrangement of food while the conference is going on, etc. (person in charge should have no specific duties except to be in charge); if possible, overstaff by one.
23. If it is not exclusively a press event, set up special press table near the speaker and escort press to table. Be sure the table is large enough for reporters to take notes comfortably.
24. Start conference as close to the announced time as possible, and end at the announced time.
25. Don't cater to one segment of the press. If TV is late, don't halt proceedings while they set up. Schedule private interviews as soon as the conference has ended.
26. Follow up within forty-eight hours to see who might want additional information. Follow up those who attended conference and other key media who didn't. If feasible, suggest customized follow-up feature story angles to editors with specialized interests.
27. Critique every step of the operation carefully and make notes for next time.
28. Send thank you letters to press who attended.

In summary:

- There's no substitute for news value. Have something to say!
- Consider media's needs as well as your own organization's.
- Tightly organize the press conference.
- Conduct prompt and adequate follow-up.

NEWS AVAILABILITIES

After reading the checklist for news conferences, you probably want to know how to organize something less cumbersome, like a news availability. While it is much easier than a full news conference, it does require some work.

1. Schedule the availability. Finding a "slow news day" is not as crucial, since the press comes to you at their convenience. You still must decide on a day — or the large part of a day — when your spokeperson will be available at all times.
2. Determine the location. Your office would probably be fine. However, if your "office" is one desk in the middle of a room, you'll probably want to find another place with a little more privacy and less noise and traffic. Consider that you'll probably need a waiting area, if you are speaking to one reporter when another arrives.
3. The room should contain a table or desk and a few comfortable chairs. Be sure it's big enough for TV cameras, if you invite the broadcast press, and that it has suitable power outlets.
4. Prepare an advisory on the news availability, and a release summarizing the story, together with any background information.
5. Notify the media of the date and time of the availability and the subject matter by mail and/or phone.
6. Have a staff member assigned to greet reporters and to keep you informed of how many people are waiting. If your budget allows, have refreshments (coffee, sodas, etc.) available.
7. Don't let anyone monopolize the spokesperson's time, especially if others are waiting. Keep an eye on the time.
9. Conduct follow-up within forty-eight hours to see who might want additional information. Suggest customized follow-up feature story angles to those with specialized interests.

MEDIA EVENTS

Novelty is the chief attraction to most "media" or "special events." It may be dare-devil, it may be comic. But it will have to be novel to get the press to turn out. It's an old axiom that everyone loves children and animals. But it tends to work that

way when staging events. If children, animals, humor or risk are involved, you may have a real winner.

Some examples might include the Mayor climbing into a fish tank to publicize a new acquarium (it happened!), a ribbon cutting with a twist (cutting a dog collar for the new animal shelter) or McGruff appearing at a major city park passing out souvenirs for safety.

If you can stage your event where there are routinely large numbers of people or where pedestrian traffic is heavy, you will build the attractiveness of the event for press coverage. The middle of a downtown business district at lunch hour is a prime choice, especially since this makes you very accessible to camera crews, which are usually dispatched from the downtown or near-downtown offices of the media. A good second choice is immediately after work, no earlier than 4:00 p.m. With live on-the-scene reports so common, you might want to go as late as local news permits, sometimes 6:30 p.m.

The essence of a media event is that it's a gimmick, a fun way with as much novelty as possible to call attention to your message. The news media will be wary of those who stage frequent media events, but they do have their place and purpose.

Events Can Be Joint Efforts

Putting together your own press gathering can be extraordinarily rewarding. The more people you involve, the better. Some ideas about events to get you started:

McGruff Crime Prevention Run — enlist local businesses to sponsor a run against crime. Entrants pay an entry fee and raise pledges of funds per mile run to go toward community crime prevention efforts.

Community Clean-Ups — contact community groups, schools, senior citizens and beautify a part of your city. Don't forget to invite the press.

Neighborhood Watch Block Party — show that crime prevention is more than just watching out; get a block watch together to have some fun and get publicity.

Awards Ceremony — recognize members of the community —business owners, government officials, civic leaders, teens, children, who have made substantial contributions to making the community safer and better.

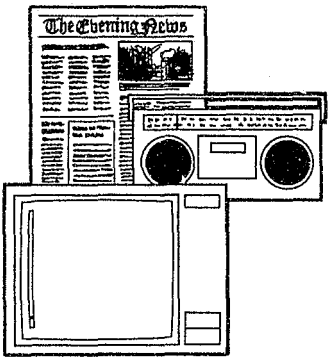
Annual Observance — Crime Prevention Month, Victims' Rights Week, other annual weeks or months at the national level can be localized with a twist to fit your own community.

An anti-drug poster contest for elementary schools — with the winners displayed on TV.

Senior high students putting on a play to educate peers on how to get help for physical or sexual abuse.

Unveiling new crime prevention van, having the Mayor *issue a proclamation* for crime prevention month, cutting the ribbon for the new crime prevention library . . . the possibilities are endless; all you need is a little imagination and energy.

Chapter 8



BAD NEWS

We all make mistakes. A math mistake goes uncaught; a reporter misunderstands a key sentence in the release; a name is misspelled. A quote out of context makes your whole program look stupid. Or negative news about the program is brought to light.

No one wants bad news, but if you're prepared to handle it, you can minimize it. Ignoring the possibility of bad news will not make the prospect go away. It will just make the reality harder to deal with because you're unprepared.

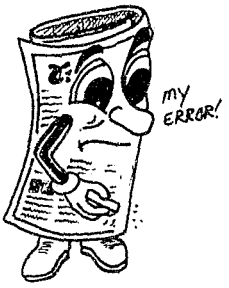
HOW DO TV, RADIO AND NEWSPAPERS CORRECT MISTAKES?

They publicize the correct information. But the fact is that *many* fewer people notice the correction than saw or heard the original report. That's another argument for doing the release right the first time and carefully briefing everyone. If incorrect information does slip out, the damage can be countered through one of three methods.

Which of the correction mechanisms are used and why can vary from station to station and newspaper to newspaper. Know the policies of the media you deal with regularly.

Corrections are simple statements, either on the air or in print, which acknowledge that the prior report was inaccurate in some fact reported, and state the correct *fact* in its place. For example:

> "Yesterday's story on local leaders identified John A. Wilson as the President of the Block Watch Captains' League. The President is Jane A. Wilson."



Retractions are customarily used to rescind an opinion statement or interpretive comment made in a story. They may be done on the editorial page or in the station's editorial broadcast slot. If broadcast, the retraction should be run at about the same time of day of the newscast in which the erroneous statement was aired.

Letters to the Editor or various *electronic "Speak Out" or Editorial Reply* features permit you to air your complaint if a matter of judgment is involved. Sometimes, you and the reporter or editor simply don't see eye to eye. You express your message directly to the audience, either in a letter which the newspaper publishes or in a taped statement which is aired as an editorial reply.

THEY GOT THE STORY WRONG

Editors and reporters are human. They can (and do) make mistakes. Two types of "wrong" can be involved: the factual error and the interpretive error.

Factual errors are the less controversial to deal with. If it is a relatively harmless one, you may find it best simply to call the reporter and advise of the correction. If the error is more substantial, call the reporter and write to confirm your conversation, with a copy to the editor or news director.

If the factual error results in damage to the group's image, hinders its mission or undercuts the main message of the story, you may need to ask for a correction. The correction should not just state the corrected fact; it should indicate how that correction affects the story:

> "Neighborhood Watch programs are active in 60% of the communities in Bagville, not 16% as reported in yesterday's story on crime in Bagville. It is the *most* widespread prevention effort in the city, not the least."

What if the station or paper won't make a correction? You have the right to appeal to the managing editor, station manager, editor-in-chief, or even the owner. But consider the merits of going "to the top." It could be costly in terms of bad feelings and blocked communications. Be sure that any correction you go all out for is worth it. Remember that many people never noticed the error in the first place.

If the error is an issue of interpretation or understanding, be certain that correcting it is worth the time and energy involved in arguing judgment with someone on a news staff. Be sure that your release and your presentation of the story weren't part of the confusion.

Talk first with the reporter, especially if it is someone with whom you work regularly. You may have to appeal to the editor if you and the reporter are in disagreement, but talking to the reporter first maintains good relations and gives you insight on whether the reporting or the editing was the source of the problem.

If there is a major error, especially one of interpretation, it may be necessary to sit down with the Editor and talk it over.

Be warned. Just because the lead disagreed with yours, or the facts *you* thought important wound up at the end of the story, you *do not* have a valid cause to complain. These things are within the judgment of the reporter and editor.

You can write a Letter to the Editor or air an Editorial Reply to restate your case if the station or newspaper insists its handling of the case is appropriate.

IF YOU MADE THE ERROR

It's going to happen, sooner or later. You will give the wrong title, type "never" when you meant "always," or include last year's data rather than this year's. There are a thousand things that can go wrong. It's surprising that so few do.

If the story has not been run, call immediately all the outlets you know are likely to use it. Tell the editor about the error and either give the change by phone if simple, or ask that the whole thing be pulled, explaining that you will mail a "corrected copy" immediately.

If the story has appeared and you know the error is yours, call the reporter and let the reporter know about your mistake so she isn't blamed for it. Talk to the editor as well. Ask if a correction attributed to your organization could be run in the same locale as the original story.

A Letter to the Editor (or a taped Editorial Response) may be the only assured option for correcting a mistake you made. You can state your case and make your apology directly.

WHEN IT'S *REALLY* BAD NEWS

Sometimes there's no sugar-coating the facts. Something happens that gives the program a black eye; someone does or says something unsavory. Some in-house "dirty linen" is publicly aired.

Black clouds of bad news may not always have a silver lining, but you can help the storm pass by knowing what to do.

It could be a volunteer in the children's program who never hurt a child in the program but had a history of unsavory behavior with respect to youngsters. It could be a treasurer who "lost" a hundred or a thousand dollars. It could be an extremely negative evaluation result, like having burglary skyrocket *only* in the "model" Neighborhood Watch community.

Whatever it is, the day will come when you get a call asking for reaction to a negative story about your group. Or worse, your first knowledge comes when you see or hear the story. Or still worse, your boss or your Chairman sees it before you do, and calls you.

Be sure you know what the flap is about before you react. If you did not hear the comment, see the report or review the evidence first-hand, you have a right to do so before you comment. Ask the reporter who calls you to show you (*not* just read to you) what transpired. Don't react at all until you fully understand the cause of the furor.

It is possible to recover from such a blow. First, don't deny the truth. If something is wrong with the program, it's wrong. Period. Denying it will only destroy your credibility (and that of the organization). You can refuse to comment. That's your right. Most seasoned reporters won't be surprised at that initial reaction.

Don't react in anger or in haste. You have the right to consult with other people and to present a straightforward and logically thought-out response to the situation. And remember that you can be gracious about it. An old axiom in the media relations game suggests turning every bad story into a positive one, by showing what's being done to correct the problem. It may not always be the best course, but consider seriously "turning" the story. If attention shifts to correction, the story tends to die of its own accord.

If the report is one-sided (perhaps reporting one error and ignoring a hundred successes), then you have the right to ask for a follow-up story correcting the impression of the first one. The station or newspaper has the right not to grant it. In that case, you can prepare a Letter to the Editor or an Editorial Reply giving "your side."

If the facts are wrong, you should immediately insist on their correction at a level consistent with the error of the original bad story. If the bad news was a page one report, the correction should not be buried on page 57 among the classified ads.

You also have a legitimate complaint if the reporter failed to attempt to reach you for your side of the story. If you or another spokesperson were "unreachable" for several days, however, the reporter or editor can't be expected to wait forever.

DON'T CLUB IT TO DEATH

The worst possible situation is to permit yourself to engage in a series of denials, statements, counter-denials, claims and rebuttals. Negative news is painful, but keeping it alive by your own actions borders on masochism.

Exchanging barrages and taunts will attract all the press who *didn't* report the original story. Remember, conflict is one of the newsworthiness tests! Do what you can to minimize the damage, then stop drawing attention to the bad news. If you have to, resort to "no comment."

Remember that the public attention span and memory are, as a general rule, mercifully short. Though your sense of injustice may be inflamed for weeks, others will have forgotten about it in days, if you don't insist on reviving the corpse.

If you try to beat down bad news by brute force, or flail the issue publicly for days, you'll only make matters worse.

LEARN FROM THE BAD TIMES

Too often, bad news, a reporting error or an inaccurate release is viewed as a one-time episode that "won't happen again."

That wastes a good learning opportunity. If you have just gone through a news firestorm, or even a heavy squall, *learn* from the experience. Review your procedures. Pinpoint what could have been done to ease the impact, strengthen the response, tighten controls or prevent the error. Then do it.

It's better to have a periodic review which is not engendered by disaster rather than post-mortems and clean-ups. But if some positive lesson comes from the negative experience, then you and the organization have benefited.

WHEN YOU'RE IN A REACTIVE SITUATION

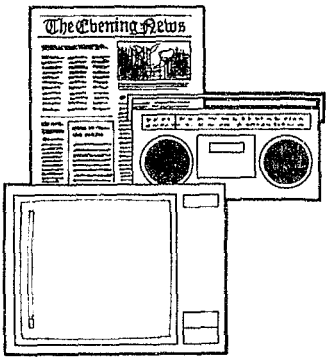
Police and other public safety personnel are often sought out by reporters because they are intimately involved in the conflicts and disasters which seem to make up much of our news.

Anyone in such a situation will benefit from having guidelines for relationships with the press set out in advance by senior management personnel. The Police Chief in Honolulu met with major media there several years ago; all agreed on how police and reporters should work together to preserve the right of the public and the rights of victims and defendants. And that agreement seems to have held.

Some golden rules tend to be helpful:

- Don't lie.
- "No comment" is your right.
- "I don't know" is an acceptable reply.
- Remember that reporters are doing their jobs, too.

Chapter 9



PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Media people are community people, too. They have the same pride in their community, the same kinds of concerns and interests that other residents do. They worry about the same kinds of problems and want to help solve them.

Building partnerships with the press can benefit you both. These partnerships should be mutual and active. Media people can become wholehearted supporters of your program and among your staunchest advocates, because you're addressing a problem they want to help solve by using their talent and the power of their mediums.

Two major avenues to building press partnerships are public education (or public service) advertising campaigns and joint sponsorship of events and programs.

DEVELOPING THE RELATIONSHIP

Your relationship with the *news* reporters and editors is to a large extent separate from your public service partnerships with the mass media (except when working with very small staffs). In any event, you should always view the two as separate because the relationships are driven by different motivations and requirements.

You will generally be working with the community affairs or community service office, whose task is to identify problem areas in their community and bring the influence of their station or publication to bear to help solve these problems, through informing the public and motivating individual citizen action. In making these contributions to the well-being of the community, they can of course enhance the reputation of their company among their various audiences and establish it as a

good and concerned corporate citizen. You have the opportunity to play a critical role in all this. By explaining the importance of educating the public about crime prevention, and documenting the significance of crime prevention in meeting community needs, you can pinpoint a problem these people will want to help you solve.

The chief of this section goes by any of a number of titles: public affairs director, community liaison, public service coordinator, community affairs coordinator, promotional director. The staff may be one or two or ten. There may be an assistant or a part-time person or a vice president in charge.

Why do stations court listeners and publications readers? The larger the audience (viewers, listeners, readers), the more that can be charged for commercial advertising time, which is what pays the bills. Prestige is important, too. Top-ranked stations feel they can secure better access to community policymakers and leaders.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE MEDIA

Newspapers are historically well aware of their role in shaping the attitudes and opinions of the community, and of their potential to persuade readers to act. News editorials on all kinds of subjects — from whether to install lights at Wrigley Field in Chicago to which candidate deserves to be President of the United States — attest to the level of involvement newspapers have long exhibited.

Radio and television stations feel a similar obligation. In addition, they are, unlike newspapers, licensed by the Federal government to use the public airwaves. They are obligated as part of their license to serve the communities in their areas. The Federal Communications Commission, in granting and renewing licenses for the use of public airwaves, judges an application in part on how well the proposed licensee can serve or has served the community's interests.

These facts don't mean that your program, as a public service effort, can claim unlimited ink or airtime. There are community interests beyond your particular agenda. Other problems are urgent, too. For example, television public service directors in many cities receive dozens of requests for public service announcements every week. But by working at the task diligently, with skill, enthusiasm and good communication, you can carve out a share of public service time and space for your program.

PUBLIC SERVICE ADVERTISEMENTS

Public service advertising campaigns can be excellent tools for reaching people. They offer a significant opportunity to enlist support, to capture a "share of the mind." And they get results. They are a classic partnership in which you and the media meet each other's needs while meeting your own. The media need (and want) to contribute to the improvement of the community. You want more people to know about and participate in your effort.

At the national level, the Advertising Council, Inc. has since 1942 help set — and raise — the standards for public service advertising, while encouraging and sustaining countless voluntary contributions by people all over the country to their communities. The Council conducts more than 30 national media campaigns every year using donated services of top advertising agencies and other advertising professionals to insure that public issues deserving of national attention get it. Each of the campaigns emphasizes local action and initiative, taking full advantage of the nationwide scope of the ads and their direct communication with individuals in the audience.

Examine the list of current major campaigns being conducted (or developed) by The Ad Council. You undoubtedly recognize most of them. They appear in magazines and newspapers and are heard and seen on radio and TV across the country throughout the year.

Chances are that you are associated with one of the national non-profit groups or federal agencies that sponsors one of these campaigns. Perhaps you are with a local chapter, or a state committee or a regional association or a local counterpart agency. If one of these major nationally developed public service campaigns is already working for you, you are in luck. Ad Council campaigns offer highly professional materials for all kinds of media — from outdoor advertising boards to display cards inside subways, from live radio copy your favorite DJ can read to professionally executed television "spots" to be aired on local TV stations.

In that case, the smart thing to do is get information from your national partner about the current ads, obtain copies of relevant materials, and promote the playing of the ads on TV and radio and their printing in the newspapers in your community.

You will find that media people are well impressed with Ad Council material, and want to broadcast and publish these

The Advertising Council's 1986 National Campaigns

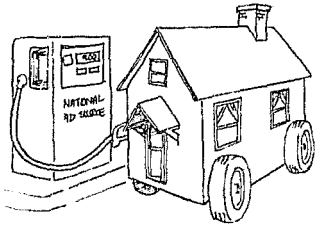
Aid to Higher Education
Youth Alcoholism Prevention
American Red Cross
Buckle Your Safety Belt
Child Abuse Prevention
Child Find Mediation Program
Citizens Against Government Waste
Cooperative Education
Crime Prevention
Drug Abuse Prevention
Drunk Driving Prevention
Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
Export Awareness
Food Stamp Information Program
Forest Fire Prevention
Free Press
Help Fight Pollution
Help Revitalize America's Neighborhoods
Individual Giving/Volunteering
International Executive Service Corps
Jobs Training/National Alliance of Business
Opportunities for Minorities/National Urban League
Participation of Disabled Citizens
Peace Corps
Protect Your Public Lands/Take Pride In America
Religion in American Life
The Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island Centennial
Understanding Mental Illness
United Negro College Fund
United Way
Volunteer Against Illiteracy
Vote

In addition, five new campaigns are being developed, and 33 other campaigns by national groups are endorsed by the Advertising Council.

messages because they know that top advertising professionals have carefully researched and thoughtfully prepared them, keeping in mind a strategy to meet public education needs.

You can take this one step farther. Localize the messages. Ask that stations advertise *your* agency's or group's name, address and telephone as the local contact for action. Some Ad Council campaigns arrange for easy localization as the ads are produced. Check on this opportunity!

GETTING PSAs AIRED



There is no obligation for local stations and newspapers to use one public service ad over another. There's no quota of public service advertising these media have to meet. In fact, competition is fierce for the limited free print space and air time which is available. Some TV PSA offices report getting as many as a hundred requests in one week. So how do you get *your* public service announcements on the air or in print?

You ask, directly. You justify. You demonstrate that the problem in question is real, that your solution is effective, that your information is important, and that the audience will be glad to have it. You show that prominent citizens who are in tune with public perceptions agree with your assessment of the problem. You document that people who *pay* for advertising think your message deserves free time.

You and members of your group are in the best possible position to explain how important the subject is in your community. You have it in your power:

- to make an anonymous national message come alive as a local issue for the public service directors and community service staffs who schedule such ads, and
- to link the national message to a real, identifiable, comprehensible local effort to solve the problem.

In order to ask stations to play the ads and the newspapers to print them, you must be sure that they have copies. Check with the community service, public service or community affairs

contact to see if the taps or print ad has been received. Be prepared to obtain and deliver a copy of the print or tape.

An ideal technique is to *deliver the ads in person.* It gives you an excellent opportunity to explain to the people who make decisions on the airing of the ads — those community affairs and public service staffs — how this issue affects your (and their) community.

> You can inject a little humor in your delivery. Some groups have McGruff come to the station or newspaper office to present his ads in person!

In making your presentation, *appeal to self-interest* as well as public-spiritedness. The station or newspaper can expect to enhance its image with all of your group (a thousand Neighborhood Watchers and their families, twenty-six hundred elementary school children?) and with your allies' constituents and families as well.

Get support from prominent local citizens — the police chief, the school superintendent, the mayor, the head of a major business or two. They can write letters urging use of the ads, explaining why it's important to the whole community.

Ask major advertisers to urge that your ads be used. Station and newspaper personnel *know* that their advertisers understand the value of the time or space being given away.

Individual citizens can also write the newspaper or broadcast station. They should write personal letters attesting to the need for the ad's message in your community, not form letters. If they can cite personal experience on behalf of the ads, so much the better.

Don't make the initial visit the only communication. *Update public service personnel about the ad campaign and the results you've seen.* Have calls for appointments doubled? Are inquiries about services up 50% over last year? Is public awareness markedly higher? Do statistics show the situation's improved? Has the problem gotten worse, requiring renewed effort?

Saying thank you for positive results and keeping the community affairs staff posted builds your program as one in which they have a significant personal investment. And you'll reap the interest on that investment.

WHEN YOU SELL THE ADS, SELL YOUR PROGRAM

Let the media know what you're doing at the local level. It supports and reinforces the national ads, especially. Advertise the *benefits,* not the features, of the program. The program may have an excellent "intake process" (means of gathering and initially assessing clients for its services), but the benefit, not the process, convinces clients — "quick sympathetic attention to your problem; you're matched immediately with an experienced counselor." The features make the benefits "go," but the audience wants to know what *they* will gain, not how *you* will enroll them.

Include incentives to act now. Whether the desired action is donating blood, writing for more information, or reporting suspected child abuse, the listener/reader needs a nudge, a statement that prompt action produces positive results.

But be sure you're ready. Will your program be able to meet the demand created? If you urge home security surveys in an ad campaign targetted at 20,000 homes and 10% respond, how do you plan to conduct 2,000 surveys? Could you advertise a pamphlet on home security instead? If you ask people to volunteer as victim counselors, can you train them promptly? Is there space and work for them?

> Using a national figure or symbol? It's almost sure to be trademarked or copyrighted. Check with the holder for permissions and clearances. To use McGruff, for example, send a *draft* script to the National Crime Prevention Council, which will review it and advise on the revisions necessary. Seek a review *well in advance* of your planned production schedule.

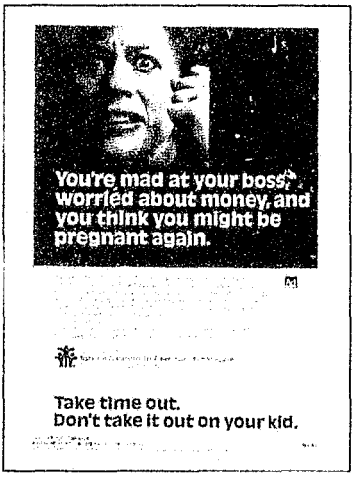
EXTRA TIE-INS TO NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

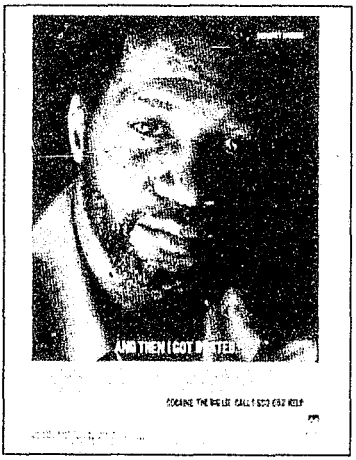
Crime prevention people in Hawaii taped excerpts from the McGruff Elementary School program, showing the puppet as it performed taped songs. These supplemental local ads are a hit with young islanders.

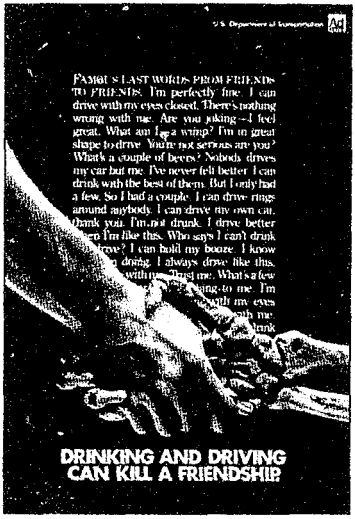
The Connecticut Crime Prevention Association simply mails out each week a brief set of crime prevention tips and news. It frequently consists of the Association letterhead and suitable ID at the top, with a preprinted camera-ready article reproduced

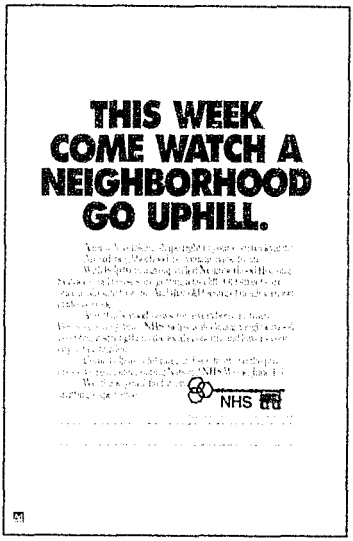
on it. Many of these are copied from National Crime Prevention Council brochures and kits.

Don't limit your tie-ins. Many campaigns by the Ad Council are on subjects directly connected with or closely linked to each other. Take crime prevention: Youth Alcoholism Prevention, Child Abuse Prevention, Child Find Mediation Program, Drug Abuse Prevention, Forest Fire Prevention, Neighborhood Revitalization, Volunteerism, United Way come to mind as potential link-ups. Each of these contains messages important to crime prevention as well. Join forces with them and with their local sponsors; tie your efforts in with theirs to help you both get ink and airtime.









DOING YOUR OWN ADS

If you want to launch your own locally produced ads, several things have to be considered. First, are ads the best way to do the job? What do you want to accomplish? Could news stories do the work for you instead?

Second, do you have the production facilities for high-quality video and audio tapes (as well as print "slicks" or reproducibles) readily and locally available? It's not efficient to produce your own ads if you have to travel two hundred miles to get to the studio!

Third, how's your budget? Even if you can secure many donated services, postage and costs of tapes for production and other "out-of-pocket" costs must still be met. And you may have to pay the going rate for some professionals' help. If you still are interested in producing your own ads, the Advertising Council has produced an excellent video presentation on developing ads. It can be purchased or rented through the Council, 825 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

FOCUSED CAMPAIGNS FOR SPECIAL REMINDERS

Holidays, the start of school, and the vacation season are good examples of opportunities to get timely messages across, on the air or in print. Materials from such sources as the National Crime Prevention Council can be inexpensively distributed to media with a local identifier in the form of print ads or live scripts for broadcast use.

There may be a particular "crime wave" or crime scare in your community, which needs a highly focused effort to instruct people in appropriate preventive measures and help alleviate unwarranted fear. It is possible to use a short-term public service ad campaign to do these jobs.

RESULTS

PSAs present a unique opportunity for evaluation. They can be measured by the price the space or airtime would have brought had it been sold commercially.

Keep a clip book for newspapers and a log for TV and radio, or ask for information from the stations' logs on the airing of your PSAs. Estimate (or get from the media or from an advertising agency) the prices charged for the time/space in question.

Then you can place a dollar value on the space donated for your public service message. The crime prevention staff in Portland, Oregon was able to document about $100,000 worth of advertising this way.

These facts are not just useful at budget time. They can be used to support grants. Sometimes the value of the ads can be used as "match" money for grants with such requirements!

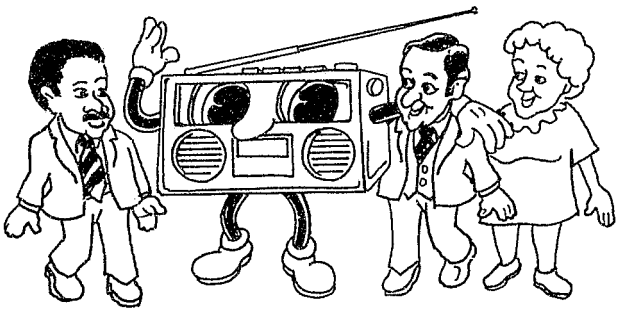
REACHING OUT

Partnerships with the media can go beyond public service announcements which spread your message. The media can become advocates *with* you. You'll need to convince senior station personnel that your program:

- deals with a problem of concern to the whole community;
- is responsible and reputable;
- is effective, that if people follow your advice things will improve;
- can benefit from media exposure more than other campaigns seeking support;
- will contribute to a good public image for the station or newspaper.

This will require substantial salesmanship. Your contact with the station or the newspaper may start with an employee — a press operator, an engineer, a salesperson — who is concerned. But you will eventually have to convince the station management.

The best sales force for such a task is the community itself. Gather a group representative of your supporters, but be sure to include those with substantial public influence, such as ministers, political leaders, local business owners and senior corporate officials, high-ranking professionals. Enlist people whose stories will document your claims of success with a human interest story to tell. Don't forget "grass roots" civic leaders, such as community association presidents, heads of tenant groups, officers in the local small business association, church leaders, and others. They are vital.



You will need a list of ideas of how the paper or station can help. But remember that part of the success of a partnership is that *both* parties "own" the concept. Encourage the station management to come up with ideas and be receptive to them. Be sure that your tentative action campaign list matches actions with benefits which will accrue to the community, to your group, and to the station. Be up-front about how you as well as the station will gain. But be most emphatic about how the community will gain.

Some ideas for a partnership might include:

- A weekly feature;
- A contest among viewers/listeners/readers with the station providing (or helping you secure donation of) the prizes;
- Special events such as live broadcasts from local sites or appearances by popular personalities at fund raisers;
- Joint promotions such as "Station SDFX and the Toptown Community Association remind you to _____";
- Coverage of positive community news on your issue.

The only limit on your "wish list" is your imagination. Expect that a number of your ideas will be discarded. The point is to walk into the station or the newspaper with action-oriented plans which will jog the imaginations of the decision-makers and help them see you as an active partner, not one content to ride their coattails in the partnership.

Show how local businesses already support the campaign. It won't hurt if these businesses are major advertisers with the newspaper or station you are talking with.

Be prepared to marshal volunteers, crowds, and enthusiasm for jointly sponsored events. The station will do its part —

providing publicity and some support, perhaps including giveaways with a joint message. But you and your group must be ready to help run the events. The station cannot hire additional people to take on your campaign.

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Regular Appearances

A number of regular appearance options offer attractive returns on your time. You can appear in newspapers or as part of a television or radio show, or in your own broadcast show.

Be aware, though, that the press of weekly appearances and the need to come up with different, relevant and suitable material can place a strain even on people who are paid to do nothing else but write weekly. Anticipate the possibility of problems and agree to any regular effort for a *trial* period first. Make an honest reassessment before you renew the arrangement about whether the returns to your program are worth your energy.

Columns and Fillers

Writing a column weekly or providing a weekly supply of fillers can be done pretty much on your own schedule during the course of the week. You will have a deadline to meet, but you can write anywhere, at any time until then.

These are especially attractive offers in the eyes of weekly newspapers with very small staffs.

Columns and fillers also permit you to "borrow" from other materials, such as national newsletters and brochures (provided they are not copyrighted).

Shows — Theirs

Appearing as a "segment" of a regular local TV or radio show can permit you the access and strengths of television without the headaches of production and management. The segments can be brief and can even be pre-taped if the station permits it.

On the other hand, appearing on someone else's show means you have to accept their format and their audience. You may have little room to experiment. But the opportunity is still an extraordinary one and should probably be taken advantage of, if offered.

Shows — Your Own

One way to get your message across as you want it, aimed at the audience you seek, is to present your own radio or television show. In Illinois, a group of crime prevention officers produce a monthly "Sock Hop With the Cops." In Louisiana, a weekly radio show presents "FYI" personal and home safety tips. A Virginia crime prevention staff uses cable shows to provide native-language prevention programs for new immigrants.

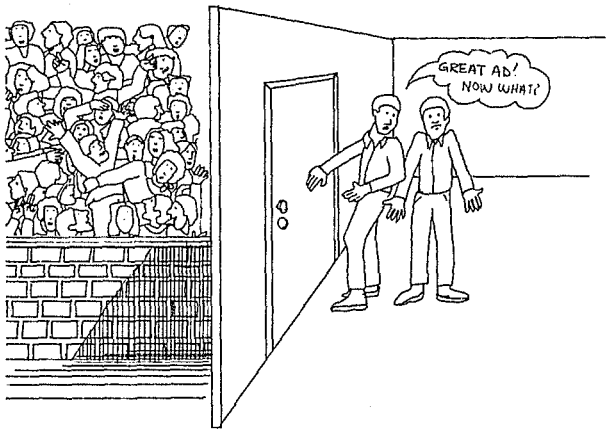
But such efforts involve finding a production facility, locating and getting regular help from people skilled in production, developing scripts and story ideas, and appearing — or arranging appearances — for each show. It can be time-consuming, to say the least, unless you have such people on staff already. Make a realistic estimate of the rewards to be gained and other ways to reach those same goals.

You can get other types of help. Local high school and college groups and classes offer production talent you should tap. Retired volunteers may have well-honed skills you can put to good use in creating a show which the whole group can claim as its own.

IS IT WORTH THE EFFORT?

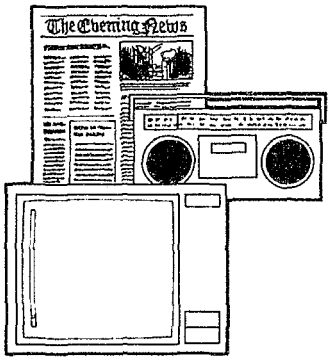
If using the media to reach people weren't worthwhile, the advertising business would have died off a long time ago. Newspapers, radio and television are seen and heard. Over 99% of American households have a television. Over 95% of the people over 12 listen to a radio at least once a week (80% or more in a single day). Newspapers are not simply read, but are kept and clipped for references and ideas in homes throughout the country.

It's got to be the most cost-effective way there is to reach people, or we would all have found something better by now.



If you promote your program, be sure you can meet the new demand for services.

Chapter 10



HOW DID YOU DO? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Press, publicity, media — whatever you call it, it has the enormous appeal of being one of the most effective ways known to reach and educate the public. It deserves to be planned for and to be part of your overall strategy.

Perhaps it seems there's enough to do just preparing and placing releases, devising public service announcements and being able to respond to bad news. But without plans which link publicity to the organization's overall goals, the interests of the media, and the prospects for partnerships, you have only scratched the surface.

Long-range planning will help you take advantage of opportunities, identify which parts of your media effort are effective and which need more work, offer opportunities for getting needed help and develop ways in which press efforts can buttress other goals and activities of the organization.

GOALS FOR PRESS RELATIONS

The media relations effort, no matter how meager or grand, old or new, should have goals and strategies which complement and support those of the organization. Some obvious ones include:

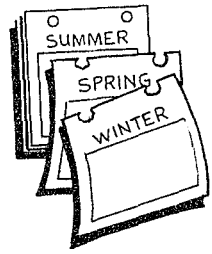
- maintaining an up-to-date press list and media profiles;
- issuing timely and appropriately written releases;
- securing placement in newspapers and on radio and television of a reasonable proportion of these stories;
- keeping current a clip book of all the stories which appear about the program, with copies in subject files as appropriate;

- devising and executing a self-evaluation;
- developing partnerships with "x" number of media outlets;
- securing assistance from "y" number of volunteers and groups to bolster your in-house media efforts.

These can be expanded or made specific depending on your organization's needs and aims and on the kinds of media you work with in your market area or community.

Measure your success in meeting your goals by looking at the outputs of your programs (numbers of releases, numbers of television appearances, etc.) and the outcomes (greater public awareness of prevention techniques, growth in establishment of neighborhood watch programs, increased involvement of teens in community activities, etc.).

Show that your program changed attitudes, caused productive action, solved problems, created positive situations. These are persuasive arguments to funders, political leaders, supporters and prospective volunteers and donors.



THE CALENDAR CYCLE

In many subject areas, certainly in crime prevention, there are messages and tips and stories which are seasonally appropriate. Warnings about ski security are not particularly appropriate in Phoenix in July, but they are welcome in Aspen in January.

Christmas, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving and other festive occasions can be the cause for news stories alerting audiences to crimes which are more frequent in that season and how to avoid or prevent them.

Seasonal events offer excellent opportunities to focus on crime prevention related to the season's activities. Back-to-school stories might report suggested safety tips for latchkey

children and alert parents to a new "warmline" service their children can call if they want to just talk to an adult. A Spring feature could explain how to spot home repair frauds. A Christmas holiday story might address ways to prevent thefts of presents from autos.

By making up long-range plan, you make the calendar cycle work for you. Frequently, the same basic story as last year, attired in this year's clothing, is all you need. And because the story is locally rather than nationally generated, it usually gets more favorable coverage.

The calendar cycle is also useful in reminding you of such observances as Crime Prevention Month every October and other commemorations and celebrations, such as National Victims' Rights Week, National Child Abuse Prevention Month or National Police Week. You can add important state, regional and local annual events to your planning calendar as well.

Keeping a master calendar helps you anticipate press opportunities and prepare to make the most of them. In a volunteer organization, such a calendar is especially important for you to inherit from your predecessor and pass along to your successor.

THE SPIKE

In old newspaper parlance, the spike was literally a pointed thin metal rod which the editor used to hold (or "spike") stories which would not go stale (become untimely) but which could not fit in the current day's paper. The spike became synonymous with stories which could be kept on hold, to fill a slow news day. This type of story is sometimes called an "evergreen."

You can devise your own spike for story ideas which you will be gathering and having sent to you. But you must remind yourself to collect, edit, and use those story ideas. Incorporating the spike into your future planning helps in collecting and using such ideas. And your plan must include reminders for you to review your spike at regular intervals.

PARTNERS TO THE RESCUE

You've been encouraged to enlist the talents of others in dealing with the press. Your partners can range from business PR staffs to high school and college journalism majors, from

retired writers and directors to interested citizens who want to try their hand at press work. Larger-scale partnerships have been suggested as well.

Include in your long-term planning ways to develop and reinforce such partnerships. Don't forget to provide rewards and recognition for your partners.

KEEPING A RECORD — AND EVALUATING YOUR EFFORT

It's unlikely that you will be able to record every single public service ad, and every column-inch of space in every newspaper relating to your program. But you can maintain a record of those stories you do know about. It helps in spreading the word of your program and in keeping track of how well you've done.

How to keep a file? One time-honored device is the clippings book, in which all printed stories are entered (either pasted or in "no-slip" acetate display sheets). The stories are usually filed either chronologically or by newspaper and then chronologically. This system fails, however, to link the stories with the release, and doesn't track radio and television use.

An alternative system is to base your record-keeping on the releases you mail. Clippings for that release go in the file for that release. Notes on radio and television use also get filed with the release to which they apply. You can even devise a checklist of media outlets for each release, indicating whether each was contacted with the story or was just mailed a release (or left out on that particular story), whether a reporter called for information or clarification, and what happened to the story. This is a fairly fancy maneuver, but if you are in a large media market it could be worth the effort.

Records of your press activity are vital. They are justification for continuing press efforts — or for abandoning them as unproductive. And records provide clues about ways to improve your effectiveness.

With a cross-filing system, or a well-maintained media profile, you can tell quickly what stations or papers are or are not using your stories. Perhaps one station refuses to use certain kinds of stories. A particular newspaper may use all the stories it receives on a given topic.

Rather than asking about failure to use a particular story, which is bad practice, you can ask for a meeting with the editor in question to review the situation and learn how to improve. Ask what you can do to enhance your chances of coverage. You may find it's as simple as sending the information to the attention of a different person.

OTHER WAYS TO JUDGE YOUR PROGRAM

In addition to whether and how individual releases are used, you will want to make some assessment of the frequency of coverage your program received. Was it twice a month in every major daily newspaper? Were three TV stories generated in a calendar quarter? How do these compare with last year's numbers?

If you have done public service advertisements or provided pre-written, taped or live segments for various public service purposes, estimate the value of that donated airtime and print space. Determine the commercial value of the time slot (or print space) in which your ad appeared. Multiply that times the number of appearances in that position. Add the results for a total value. Also point out how many people were reached with these messages. An advertising agency or the station's advertising director can give you basics on how these numbers are computed, or may be able to provide them to you.

Qualitative assessments are possible as well. Front page stories and "hard news" TV coverage may be worth more than 1:00 a.m. PSAs. Media sponsorship of a major community event can be far more valuable than two or three routine stories. And you can reach into the program itself for examples of how the media effort has touched human lives.

"I knew I should call if I heard *anything* suspicious; I had seen the ad on TV," or "I heard about this support group from your radio ad" or "The program sounded like it would help me

from what you said in the newspaper" livens up your report and brings back the immediacy of the task — in this case helping people avoid being victims of crime.

You should evaluate your program in terms of whether you met your goals or not. You can simply prepare a narrative which states the goal and then outlines its status at the end of the year. It doesn't have to be an exquisitely detailed document. But the goals are worthy of measure. Otherwise, they should not have been goals.

What has all this evaluation to do with your long-range plan? Plenty. First, evaluation will help you spot procedural weaknesses to be buttressed. Second, it will assist you in determining whether you met your goals — and in suggesting ways to meet them better.

A REASSESSMENT AT INTERVALS

Obviously, a built-in evaluation component will be important in your planning. So will a periodic review and reassessment. You may want to reassess annually or biannually or semiannually. Just don't forget to do it and to plan the time to do it properly.

A reassessment should involve operational people (who actually deliver program services), participants from the program(s) and either your superiors or members of your Board. The questions should be framed thus:

- Are we getting the kind (and quantity) of media coverage we want?
- Are there positive steps we can take to improve coverage?
- Are there messages to be sent and stories to be told which we have not yet taken advantage of?

This is not an evaluation. It looks at more basic communication issues. Participants will almost surely find themselves embroiled in discussions over the organization's operations and the program's future direction nearly as often as they address media relations. But the "input" such a discussion can provide is invaluable.

USE YOUR RESULTS AND YOUR PLANS

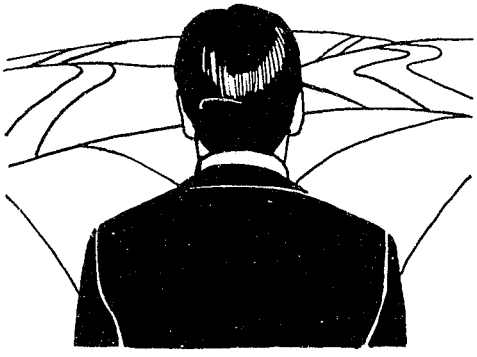
All your successes and your publicity go beyond your file box. The organization should be using its favorable publicity to attract new volunteers and reward current ones, to help get funding and/or to broaden (or start) a coalition.

Some of your press clips may be just the thing to enhance a new proposal or provide positive comments on the agency's capacity. A good human interest story on how well your program works can entice new funders and encourage old ones. And current volunteers can be energized by seeing reports of their success in print or on the news. Organizations which had given little thought to joining with you will be far more interested if they perceive success through your press clips.

A well-planned media effort not only provides for evaluating and correcting itself, but can check the messages it sends against program realities, help recruit and keep members, attract funders and build coalitions. It can do so because it sustains itself on sound news principles, reliable facts and a reputation for delivering what is promised.

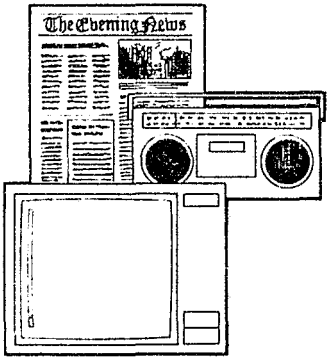
Success tends to breed success. If your program is recognized as one which makes a positive contribution to the vitality and safety of the community, newspapers and radio and television stations will see it as newsworthy and will want to be associated with you in community service efforts. Building that success is the task of the program. Documenting it and making it known is the task of getting ink and airtime to deliver your news.

It's a task that you, having studied this book, are equipped to start on. Remember that it can also be fun and highly rewarding.



Look toward the future . . .

GLOSSARY



actuality: a tape recording usually used in radio, of the voice of the newsmaker or spokesperson rather than a reporter. Frequently will be used in conjunction with the news announcer's own comments as part of interview.

advance: giving a story to a reporter or a group of reporters before the majority are given it, or before the event takes place.

all-hands distribution: sending releases and advisories to every media contact on the press list (contrast with selective distribution and exclusives)

AM: Amplitude Modulation, one of two major types of broadcast radio signals. AM stations broadcast on frequencies ranging from 530 to 1600 megahertz. Some are restricted to broadcasting from dawn to dusk only or using highly restricted power output after dusk.

angle: the perspective, slant or viewpoint from which the writer or reporter approaches the topic or story idea; the aspect which makes a story stand out as being of interest.

assignment editor: the manager, usually in a television or radio news room, who determines what reporters will cover what stories and where camera crews will be sent.

audience: the listeners, readers or viewers to whom the station or print medium directs its broadcasts or publications.

availability: an informal alternative to a news conference; reporters are able to "drop in" during a specified period of time when a spokesman or newsmaker will be available for interviews about a specific announcement, development or topic which is newsworthy.

background: information about the event, organization or individual which helps to put a current situation into sharper focus. It can include reports, biographies, previous news stories and other materials.

beat: the subject area(s), agency(ies), organization(s) with which a reporter is expected to stay in regular contact to be able to report promptly on any news arising from those sources.

Business section: portion of the newspaper (and sometimes of radio or television news) which reports on the local and national economy and business scene.

byline: the author's name specified for a particular story. The term is most often used in print media, but can refer to a TV or radio reporter's identification of self ("This is X Y reporting from Bogtown.")

cable: form of television transmission which requires a physical connection, contrasted with the more traditional broadcast television in which transmissions can be picked up by any set within range.

chain: a group of newspapers, televison stations or radio stations owned or controlled by the same group or individual.

city editor: the person on a newspaper (occasionally other media) who is in charge of news about local events and persons, the city editor assigns reporters, determines whether stories should be printed and how long those stories should be.

column: the vertical division of a newspaper into four, five, six or seven equal segments. Type is set to the width of a column and the paper is then laid out (stories and headlines placed on particular pages and in particular positions within a page.)

column inch: the area covered by one vertical inch times the width of a column for that magazine or newspaper. Story length is sometimes referred to as being "x column inches."

community affairs: the department, division or office which assists the newspaper or station in identifying and working to help address community needs and problems.

contact: the person within the agency or group whom the media can go to for further information on a particular story or subject.

content edit: a review which addresses the substance of the story, article or release. It examines whether all the key ideas and facts are appropriately presented.

cool medium: a communications medium with which the target (audience) does not have to actively engage; television, radio.

copy: the text of a report or story, as opposed to the photos or other illustrative material.

copy edit: to review a story or article for accuracy, grammar, spelling, and basic clarity.

cue: a signal used in radio or television to indicate timing, start or finish.

cued tape, record: a tape or record which is in place to play the proper segment the instant the machine is started.

daily: a newspaper published at least five mornings or evenings a week; a broadcast which takes place at the same time at least on weekdays.

deadline: the time beyond which information cannot be added to (or removed from) a publication or news broadcast. Times vary depending on a number of circumstances.

drive time: the morning and evening rush hours, varying from city to city but generally 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Time when greatest numbers of people are listening to radio, thus the most highly prized for radio airing of your news.

editor: the person at a station or a newspaper who supervises a group of reporters. Editors usually have specific subjects assigned to them, such as sports, local news, features, business/economics, national news. They assign reporters and review and pass on their stories.

editor, letters to: section of the newspaper, usually with the editorials, in which readers write comments about stories, express opinions about current events, or critique or respond to positions taken by the newspaper in its editorials.

editorial: in newspapers, a statement not generally signed but appearing under the newspaper's masthead, expressing the position of the newspaper on a subject. In radio and television, a statement delivered by a management representative expressing the station's position on a topic. The subject can be any national, international, local, regional event or development.

editorial board: a group of editors and sometimes other management and reporting personnel who discuss and recommend or determine positions the newspaper or station should take on a particular topic of public concern in its editorials.

editorial reply: the broadcast version of letters to the editor, these are usually expected to be responsive to the station's announced position, where letters to the editor in the newspaper may be on topics the newspaper has not commented upon.

embargo: a ban on the publication or broadcast of a story before a certain time and/or date. Usually linked with the timing of some particular event, such as a general announcement or speech of major importance.

exclusive: a story or interview on a subject given to one reporter only.

feature: a news subject which is not about an immediate event or issue but which addresses an area of wide interest. Usual feature subjects include how-tos, human interest stories, background and educational items, and interesting new slants on old issues.

filler: material which is *not* time-sensitive, which is generally brief in format, and which can be used to finish out a page in print or a minute or two of broadcast time which is not taken up by current news and features.

FM: Frequency Modulation, one of two major types of broadcast radio waves. FM stations broadcast on channels from 88 to 106 megahertz. The lower third of the FM band is reserved for educational and public broadcasting stations.

hard news: stories about current events, actions or developments which have just happened or are just about to happen. Contrast with features.

hold: same as embargo. Preferred by some as a friendlier type of direction to reporters and editors than embargo.

independent: a television or radio station which is not part of a network; a newspaper which is not part of a chain.

inverted pyramid: the concept which drives the structure of most news stories. The story builds down, rather than up, from the lead, or first sentence(s). The story is not driven by chronology. The most important facts are at the head of the story, even though they may represent the conclusion.

layout: the placement of stories and advertisements on a particular page or pages; the overall design of a printed page or printed document.

lead: the first sentence(s) or paragraph(s), which give the essence of the story by describing the most important who-what-when-where-why and how.

live: an interview or story which is presented as it happens, rather than described after it happens or aired from a recorded tape.

magazine: a periodical which is published weekly, monthly or less often containing a variety of articles, which may include regular features as well as subject-directed articles.

make-up: in television, usually a light powder or some minor cosmetic emphasis to enhance the individual's appearance on camera.

mass medium (plural-media): a print or electronic communication system which reaches large numbers of people with the same messages or information.

metro editor: equivalent of city editor; the term is used commonly in areas where a central city surrounded by suburbs (a metropolitan area) is considered the local market area for news.

microphone/mike: the device used by television and radio for picking up sounds. Mikes may be clipped on (lavaliere), suspended (boom), or freestanding (floor or table).

network: a group of television or radio stations which are regionally or nationally affiliated and which broadcast certain news, sports or entertainment programs simultaneously.

news conference: see press conference

newshole: the portion of newsprint to be filled with news rather than advertising; the amount of space available in a newspaper or time in a broadcast for news.

newsworthy: the quality which makes a story of general interest to a substantial component of the audience of a mass communication medium.

off the record: the *non-normal* condition, agreed upon *in advance*, under which the interviewee's comments are not to be quoted or attributed.

on the record: the *normal* condition in which any remarks to a reporter are considered fully quotable.

op ed: the "opposite-the-editorial-page" page of a newspaper; traditionally, the location in which signed opinion and advocacy columns and essays are printed.

pay TV: television for which subscribers pay to receive a signal. Signals are usually encoded with the decoder at the subscriber's television set. Payment is made either on a general access rate or a per show basis. Cable TV need not be pay TV; pay TV need not be cable.

photo opportunity: a situation, event or meeting involving a potentially pleasing or newsworthy photograph. Normally a public figure (televison or film star or political figure or other celebrity) is one of the parties, and/or there is an attractive human interest angle.

press: originally, the machine upon which a newspaper or magazine was printed. Corrupted subsequently to refer to the people who investigate and report news for newspapers and other print media. Frequently extended to include television news reporters as well, though this extension may be frowned upon regionally.

press conference: (also news conference) a gathering held to announce a major news development to representatives of all types of media at one time and location. Generally includes an open question-and-answer session at which reporters in a group ask for further information or clarification.

press list: the names, addresses, phone numbers and other relevant data about newspaper, magazine, television, radio and other mass media contacts, arranged in accessible order.

press party: an event usually involving the unveiling of a new product or concept, marked by a festive attitude, in which the formal announcement is brief and the social quality of the event is seen as nearly equal to the news weight. Generally not a technique used by governments and nonprofits.

prime time: term for the television hours in the evening when the most people are watching shows. Usually runs from 7:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. A most desirable time to have public service announcements appear for maximum exposure.

profile: a description of the basics of the organization and operation of a media outlet; also, an in-depth story about an individual or group which describes the subject's history, characteristics, and positions in detail.

PSA: public service announcement, advertisement. Can be print, radio, television, transit card, outdoor advertising. Key features are that space/time is donated, that message does not solicit purchase of a commercial good or service, that message has information or urges action of value to substantial number of people.

public service director: also community affairs director, community service liaison, and a host of other titles. Heads the community affairs office and/or the office which selects public service announcements for on-air use or in-print use.

release: an announcement or statement of a newsworthy story or event, providing the necessary and important descriptive details to reporters and editors.

reporter: an individual who describes for readers or viewers events which are deemed to be newsworthy. Reporters also investigate, analyze, and interview in order to develop the story(ies) to which they are assigned.

retraction: the public announcement by a newspaper or radio or television station that it erred in reporting news. Usually applies when the error is not a simple factual misstatement but a more substantive or interpretive error.

script: the typewritten text from which broadcasters read to report the news.

selective distribution: the delivery of news releases to some but not all of those who are on the press list. The selection may be based on whether the release is about a subject or location of interest to the particular medium.

shopper: generally a newspaper which is given away rather than sold. It is paid for by advertising revenues.

sound check: a test by the audio technicians in radio or television to calibrate the speaker's normal voice level against the sensitivity and position of the microphone. Sometimes called a "voice level" or "level check" or "level."

slow day: a day, usually confined to one of the weekdays, when less regularly happens to generate news and therefore stations and newspapers are more likely able to report on your event. (Weekends are generally regarded by definition as slow).

sports: everything from stock car racing to boxing to football to soccer to gymnastics to baseball to fencing to ice skating — and beyond. Any athletic event which involves a skill demonstration or a competition.

stringer: someone who works on an on-call basis for a media outlet. Usually someone who lives or works in a smaller town than would warrant a full-time representative. The stringer could work for a magazine, newspaper, or radio or TV station.

syndicate: a form of partnership or alliance among several media outlets in which certain shows or stories or reports or columns originating from one are shared regularly with the other members and sold to others for their use.

talking heads: video taped or studio interview in which there is no action except for the interviewer and interviewee speaking to each other.

Teleprompter™: a mechanical device which scrolls a script for the person broadcasting so that the material may be read without resort to written notes. The machine is attached above the camera, usually.

tie-in: a story or incident you can link to a current news event. For example, release of a new national crime prevention ad might give rise to a local tie-in in which McGruff in costume delivers a copy to the Mayor, or in which the success of local crime-fighting citizens' groups is announced.

warm medium: newspapers, magazines, and other print media force the audience (readers) to become *actively* engaged and to interact directly with the physical device (printed word) for communication to take place. Contrast with television or radio, where the audience engagement is predominantly passive.

weekly: a newspaper or magazine which is published on a regular schedule every seven days. The weekly newspaper is a mainstay of many communities which rely on it for local and regional news while getting day-to-day news from television and radio and from some nearby large city newspaper.

wire service: Reuters, the Associated Press and United Press International are the three major wire services. These are independent news gathering organizations which sell their gathering and reporting services to a variety of client newspaper and broadcast outlets around the country. They have reporters assigned to key subject areas and locations and rely on stringers (on-call freelance reporters) to provide coverage of locations and topics which do not justify the expense of a full-time bureau or reporter.

UHF: ultra-high frequency. On television, channels 14 and beyond.

VHF: very high frequency. On television, channels 2 through 13.

voiceover: a film/tape technique in which an unseen announcer comments upon or narrates the scene being displayed.

5Ws and H: who, what, when, where, why and how. The critical pieces of information in any news story. They must be reflected in the lead and the next paragraph of any good news release.