

Media Releases

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SLIDE 1: Cover

I first started a career in communications working for nonprofit organizations. We didn't have much money to work with, but we could sure pour out the words – in news media, public events, government hearings ... And all of that for free.

SLIDE 2: Unit Overview

So let's give some consideration to seeking free publicity through media releases and media relations. The topic is so important, we will devote two videos to it ... this one on how to prepare a media release, and the next on how to pitch your release to the media.

How to win free media coverage is especially useful to you if you are a start-up business or a small company with a limited advertising budget.

Free media coverage is not so hard to get if you are clever about how you approach it and frame your story well. It all starts with a media release ... a good news hook, and a professionally formatted submission.

And we'll wrap it up with free resources to find lots of advice from professionals who do this for a living, and they have some useful tips to share.

SLIDE 3: Pros & Cons

First let's consider some of the pros and cons of working with the news media.

> On the upside, > a story in a reputable news outlet gives credibility to your message ... an implied editorial endorsement. Your story coming from a news source they trust will boost your believability. > It also lets you reach 1000s or even millions of people if you get wide media play, and > especially on television, radio and online media, your story can spread in an instant. > And – most importantly – all this coverage can be for free.

> On the downside, unlike paid advertising, > once your message is in the hands of reporters and editors, you lose control of the message. > You cannot dictate when or even if the story runs, and > there is no control over where the story might run in a publication or broadcast report, or if you will connect with the target audience you especially want to reach.

SLIDE 4: Think like a Reporter

As you are framing your story for a media release, try to put yourself in the mind of a reporter or editor. What would be interesting to you? More importantly, put yourself in the mindset of the audience that reporter or editor serves? What gets them interested?

Remember the five Ws they teach in journalism school: Who, What, Where, When – and, most importantly -- don't forget to answer the essential Why Anyone Should Care question.

And also keep in mind the news hooks that especially catch a reporter's eye and ear:

- > Immediacy – or breaking news happening *right now* like a street demonstration or a heroic life-saving action.
- > Proximity -- meaning that this is happening in our own local community.
- > Consequence on how the story might impact hundreds or thousands of people.
- > Conflict that pits east against the west, right against the left, good against bad.
- > Oddity – things that are just unusual, like a two-headed cow
- > Sex always sells – that's why the latest sex scandal gets such prominent media play
- > Emotional tugs of a family reunited, a kitten saved, a child cured.
- > The prominence of a newsworthy celebrity or official can grab a headline.
- > The suspense of victory or defeat, life or death – we all love a mystery.
- > And progress – the world moving in a better direction with innovations in technology, science, health care – those are great story angles.

SLIDE 5: Format

As you begin to format your media release, you can find a template suggestion here. Feel free to use your own style, but keep in mind that editors may see hundreds of 100s of releases daily.

[Date]

Project Moscow Medicine

US Physicians Bring Life-Saving Expertise & Equipment to Russia

A team of California doctors and medical technicians is taking medical supplies, a dialysis machine and expertise to Russia in a people-to-people humanitarian exchange ... it's a matter of life and death.

(Santa Maria, California) A five-person team of American doctors, nurses and medical experts in diabetes are taking their know-how, supplies and equipment to Russia this week in a grassroots drive by Project Moscow Medicine that could help save thousands of lives. The team will hold training sessions over five days for some 200 physicians from throughout the Moscow region, and will help to establish a diabetic education program.

Among the medical supplies and equipment brought for the Russians will be the first of many dialysis machines the project will be delivering over the next several months. Stanford University Medical Center has donated 21 surplus dialysis machines to the project, to help alleviate the dire shortage of such equipment in Russian medical facilities.

"Though they are very advanced in their medical techniques, the shortage of this type of equipment is causing an unfortunate and unnecessary loss of life," said Dr. Bill Okerblom, founder of Project Moscow Medicine.

Among some of the supplies already delivered by Project Moscow Medicine include ventilators, hospital beds, cardiac monitors, a complete neurosurgical instrument tray, a chem panel analyzer, a spirometer, plus 5000 doses of intravenous antibiotics, a thousand pairs of surgical gloves, and more than 300 endotracheal tubes.

Project Moscow Medicine receives no government funds, and is launching a fund drive to help raise the \$15,000 necessary to ship the remaining dialysis machines, and set up and maintain a dialysis unit in a Russian hospital for the first year.

The project was founded in 1993, and has made six prior trips to Russia. The training team will be in Russia from April 22 until April 29.

For more information on Project Moscow Medicine, call Steven R. Van Hook at Worldwide Media Relations: [S \(805\) 966-3404](tel:8059663404).

> You have to pass their 5-second test ... or you may be promptly deleted, wadded up and tossed away.

- > Consider you might have 2 seconds to make your overall first impression. Do not fail this test – have an attractive professional layout; an easily scanned text, and certainly no glaring typos.
- > Let them spend just 1 second scanning the essential detail of date, name and succinct yet expressive headline.
- > And then for a quick 2 second scan – have your teaser summary sentence give a brief overview of what your story is all about. You could spend as much time on preparing just these opening elements as the rest of the document combined.
- > Finally, you might want to put your contact information bottom rather than the top, unless there is something familiar or prestigious about who you are – why waste a precious second with detail that can wait?

SLIDE 6: Tips from the Pros

You'll find lots of other tips and resources from media relations professionals. A few of especially worth noting:

- > Get a book on Associated Press writing style and try to use it. It shows you understand the format many journalists use, and that might earn you a few points of respect.
- > Tell your story *as* a story. Most everyone loves to hear a good story with challenges overcome and even a happy ending.
- > Don't put too much information in your story. Remember just a handful of talking points you want to relay, and stick to them.
- > But still, have plenty of background and back-up data available in an instant if a reporter should request it.
- > And if you can't think of any reason to send out a media release, check out the reading this unit that provides 55 ideas on what might be a newsworthy topic.

SLIDE 6: Conclusion

So here are some resources that offer more on media releases and relations. You can find some in-depth articles written by communication professionals at the links posted here ... they're all free. And you may also find your way to my course pages and the materials I provide my students through universities in California.

For now, good luck with your media outreach efforts, and we'll see you next time.