



PROMOTING YOUR SERVICE PROJECT THROUGH MEDIA

MEDIA RELATIONS CHECKLIST

1. Customize the media advisory. We've provided you with a shell of an advisory in the toolbox at serve.msu.edu. Now, you just need to complete the advisory with your information (community facts, what you're doing for an event, your contact information, etc.). Remember, the more local the story, the more appealing it will be to the media.
2. Distribute your customized media advisory to your media list through email. Copy and paste the press release into the body of the email and include any additional information as an attachment. Be brief and emphasize the local angle.
3. After you've sent your media materials, call your media contacts to pitch the story. You can begin to call the very next day after emailing. Try to keep the conversation brief. The best time to reach print reporters is usually before 3 p.m. Television reporters and assignment editors are usually available between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
4. Meet deadlines. Be aware that your contacts may require additional information, such as photos or videos, or want to interview you for a longer story. Always return phone calls and requests for information in a timely manner. Most publications have deadlines that cannot be extended.
5. If the media respond, be ready. Read and review your message points. And remember, media relations is a lot like sales — you may have to talk to many people, but it's worth it. One local story gives thousands of people an opportunity to learn more about MSU!

BUILDING A MEDIA LIST

1. Think for a minute about who you know. Are any local media professionals MSU alumni? Do you have any contacts on staff at your hometown newspaper or TV/radio stations? Do you know anyone else who might? If so, those contacts might help you get your foot in the door.
2. Identify the media outlets that might be interested in your story. Think about the following types of media that are in your town or within a radius of about 30 miles.
 - Print (magazines and newspapers): What is the biggest newspaper in town? Does your community/neighborhood have a smaller newspaper as well? How about a city or regional magazine that focuses on what people are doing in your community?
 - TV: What are the major TV stations in town? Do they have morning or midday shows that feature interesting events or organizations in your community? Do any TV news anchors specialize in philanthropy or service, and for that reason have a natural interest in your story?
 - Radio: Think about the most popular radio hosts in your town. Would they be a good fit for a philanthropy or service story? Be cautious about approaching "shock jock" stations that may not handle your news in a tasteful manner.
3. Once you've identified media outlets, find out who to contact by going online. Your contacts will have different titles based on media type. If you aren't sure who to contact, ask the receptionist or newsroom contact for the correct person to approach regarding philanthropy or service.

- Print (magazines and newspapers): Regional magazine editors, newspaper volunteer section or philanthropy section editors. At smaller newspapers, ask for the name, phone number and email address of the managing editor or special sections editor.
 - TV: News assignment editor, as well as the producers of the station's morning, midday and/or talk shows.
 - Radio: News director, producer of the station's morning and/or talk shows.
 - Online: If the website is run by one individual, you only have one option. If you are targeting an online news site, look for someone who covers community news.
4. Understand how much time ("lead time") various media outlets need when you distribute press materials to the people on your list.
- Online sources, local television and news assignment editors require a few days to one week's notice.
 - Daily and weekly newspapers, radio stations, and television talk shows usually require about two to three weeks' notice.
 - Magazines may prefer a few months' notice, so don't expect to see coverage right away. Since most city magazines set their own print deadlines, call and ask how much advance notice they require on a story.

INTERVIEW TIPS

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. Get as much information as possible about the interview. Most reporters will share what they hope the article will discuss and what they hope you will bring to the story.
2. Know your key messages. The better acquainted you are with the messages you want to deliver, the more easily your story will flow. Practice answering questions in a quiet space at home, or even in front of a mirror. The more you speak your key messages out loud beforehand, the more comfortable you will be for the interview.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

1. Pace yourself, but remember that short answers are better than long ones. Stop talking when you're done making your point.
2. Think of the interview as a conversation, but don't share anything you don't want to be public. Remember, there is no such thing as "off the record." With that said, the reporter isn't an enemy. He or she knows you are a volunteer.
3. Weave key messages into your story in an easy to understand way. Avoid acronyms and jargon.
4. Plan what to say if asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to say?" You should recap each of your message points as a response.
5. Body language is important for television interviews, so stand tall and be confident. People will remember how they felt about you more than they'll remember what you said.
6. Relax and be yourself. You can make your points most effectively when you include your personal experiences as examples. Also, you don't need to pretend to have information or expertise that you really don't. If you don't know an answer, just say so.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

1. Ask the reporter whether there is other information he or she will need to complete the story. Remind them of your contact information and the serve.msu.edu website.
2. Find out when the story will run, or for the reporter's estimation.
3. Reward yourself for a job well done!