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How to Write a Media Plan

This outline walks you through some suggestions and ideas for conducting outreach to local media outlets and how to design/structure a comprehensive Media Plan. It is intended to be a definitive blueprint for you to follow, by highlighting important topics and ideas that can help shape an effective media plan. Your actual plan may differ to better suit your organization's actual needs.

The key advice here is that you work from a plan and think creatively. Working effectively with the media does not come from a one-size-fits-all solution or from vague concepts. Outreach to the media is not hard, but to get the best results - a story that carries your key messages — you must be able to provide the media with the right information at the right time and know how that information advances your mission.

Below is an outline of a media plan. We have provided you with a brief description for each section as well as real-world examples for a fictitious Summer Reading Program. In this way, we hope to bring the plan to life and make it more applicable to your own situation and needs. The Plan should reflect traditional print mediums as well as social media and relevant industry bloggers, where appropriate.

Media Plan Outline

I. State Your Goals

By conducting outreach to the media, what are you trying to accomplish? Are your goals long-term (over a few years) or short-term (next month)? Ideally, your goals should be results-oriented and concrete so you can assess whether you achieve them and measure your success. Remember that ultimately you are trying to reach key audiences through the media. Examples of your goals may include:

- Increase awareness in the community about the 2006 Summer Reading Program and schedule.
- Increase participation in the program.

- Increase enrollment of low-income or minority youth.
- Encourage more volunteers to become involved in the program.

II. Define your audiences

Your audiences will be defined largely by your goals. Start by identifying the people you currently reach and those you are trying to reach to achieve your goals. For example, the audiences for summer reading programs might include:

- Teachers.
- Parents.
- Potential donors/sponsors.
- People who have influence in your library and others.

III. Messages

Based on your goals, determine what key points you want to communicate to the media. Ask: What makes your program unique or different?, What does your audience need to know?, So what? and Why now?

Choose only three to four key messages to answer these questions in a concise yet personal and compelling way. Design your messages to be consistent with your mission and values, and make them easy to remember. Make sure that your messages effectively speak to your audience. Also remember that, while your messages should remain consistent, they can also be customized to speak directly to different audiences, reporters and outlets.

Some sample messages for the fictional Summer Reading Program include:

- The Summer Reading Program targets children ages 3 and above. Studies show that the younger we can get kids interested and eager to read, the better their academic development.
- One of the primary objectives of the library is to give back to the community and children are the library's largest group of patrons. Last year, children ages 5 to 15 checked out more than 40 percent of the materials that circulated through our library system. The Summer Reading Program is the library's most popular program for these children.
- All children who are signed up for the Summer Reading Program by May 25th will receive a special book bag designed to carry books to and from the library. The retail value of the bag is \$35 and it includes a \$25 gift certificate provided by Barnes & Noble.

IV. Media List

In order to be effective in your outreach, you must not only be able to identify all of the media outlets in your area but you must also know which reporters or departments cover the topics relevant to your story.

For example, if you want to place a story about the exciting new theme, authors and schedule of your 2006 Summer Reading Program, you probably don't want to be conducting outreach to the business reporter at the local paper (unless that person is a demonstrated supporter of the program). However, if you are hoping to place a story about the importance of support from the business community (i.e., potential sponsorship – the business reporter is exactly the person you want to contact).

V. Media Tools

Information is included in the Tools section of this binder that provides guidelines on how to develop a media alert, press release and pitch letter for the media.

VI. Timeline / Work Plan

As with any project, the creation of a timeline is a critical part of the process helping you to track what needs to be done, whether it's happened and what the outcome was. The below timeline/work plan highlights the media outreach that might take place in preparation for our fictitious 2006 Summer Reading Program kick-off.

DATE	ACTIVITIES	STATUS/COMMENTS
4/1	Finalize media plan	On schedule.
4/22	Finalize media list	Awaiting list of resources from our Media Research Dept.
4/22	Finalize media materials (release & calendar alert)	Awaiting approval of design concepts from Creative Director.
May 29	Distribute calendar alert (typically newspapers require calendar alerts to be submitted 2 weeks before an event. This alert will help you get information into community calendars.)	
June 7	Distribute release	
June 8	Begin pitching	
June 19	Event Advisory (if you have an event that you wish reporters to attend, you can	

	send a second media alert that serves as a reminder to reporters)	
June 21	Summer Reading program begins.	