



*A Guide to the*

# *Media Process*

*Center for Environmental Study*



## *A Guide to the Media Process*

*This guide is intended to help you identify and answer important questions about acquiring media time or space for your public education campaign. It is designed to complement the booklet “Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns.” Some of the information here overlaps material in that booklet, but comparing the two may make it easier for you to complete the process of planning your stormwater education campaign.*



## *Table of Contents*

<i>Section 1: Getting Started .....</i>	<i>2-3</i>
<i>Section 2: Creating Your Media Plan .....</i>	<i>4-7</i>
<i>Section 3: Considering Media .....</i>	<i>8-13</i>
<i>Section 4: Public Relations—Building Community Support .....</i>	<i>14-19</i>
<i>Tip Sheets .....</i>	<i>20-21</i>
<i>Glossary .....</i>	<i>22-23</i>

# *The Media Process*

# Section 1

## Section 1: Getting Started

### Starting Questions

When creating a public information media plan, you need to start by answering some questions. The most important of these: **“What is the objective you’re trying to achieve?”** It may sound obvious, but it’s surprising how often people don’t focus in on what they’re really trying to achieve, or just assume that “We all know that.”

In this case, your objective is twofold: a) to educate the public about stormwater pollution; and b) to convince them to take actions to prevent it.

The second question: **“Who is your target audience?”** If you threw up your hands and said, “Everyone,” you’re right: Ideally, you want to reach everyone. However, you may want to begin by targeting one or two specific audiences. If resources permit, you can move on to the others later. Start with the most obvious audiences in your area: for instance, if your MS4 is an ISD, you may want to target the kids in the schools and the teachers who give out the information. Ask yourself: if my audience were a bell curve, where would the peak of the curve be? That’s your initial target audience.

Which leads us to question number three: **“What is your target area?”** The target area should be defined in your National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. It may be only your township or local governmental unit, but if you are working in partnership with other units or a larger organization, it could encompass a much wider area.

The size and location of the target area are important factors in planning the media campaign. If your target area is a small township 30 miles from the nearest large city, you probably wouldn’t want to spend money on an ad in that city’s newspaper, even if your audience reads it. That just wouldn’t be cost-effective (unless the paper puts out a local edition aimed at your immediate area). On the other hand, the local weekly shopper might be perfect — and a whole lot cheaper.

### Audience

The most important thing is that you must know your audience. Each target area is different, and you are the one who knows your area best. What do people watch? What do they listen to? What do they read? How do they get their news and find things out?

Once you know what, who and where, there are other questions to think about before you can put together your media plan. Among them are these:

- **When do you want to reach your audience?** *As soon as possible? During summer vacation? Over a long period of time?*
- **How often do you want to communicate with your audience?** *Remember, a message that reaches your audience often and is constantly reinforced becomes incorporated into their normal thinking and is more easily converted into actions. Messages that they hear only once or twice are largely wasted.*
- **How much do you have to spend?** *This is obviously a very important question. Later in this document, you will be given some suggestions for stretching your media dollars.*
- **What media will work best with your message?** *To answer this question, you must consider both your unique audience and the relative strengths and weaknesses of different media for different messages. You will find out more about those in this document.*
- **What message do you want to send?** *What are the problems in your target area? They will determine which messages you want to send. Concept mapping can be a helpful tool in the process of determining how your message should be focused. For an explanation of concept mapping, see *Getting in Step*, which is included in your kit.*

*This document will give you information to help answer the questions above, and lead you through the process of acquiring media time or space.*



*There is no substitute for research. Before you can plan, you need to find out a few things.*

- **What media outlets are available in your market?** *Don't restrict yourself to the obvious ones, like radio, TV and newspapers. Perhaps there's a company that puts signs on gas pumps in your area; maybe a local utility sends out monthly statements and would include an insert for you at little or no cost; maybe you know a skywriter who needs some practice — think creatively and consider what the people in your target area will pay attention to.*
- **How well does each of the available media cover your target area?** *We will talk about how to decide this later, along with the concepts of reach and frequency and tips on negotiating for media time or space.*
- **How much will each of the media cost?** *This can be a significant concern: a good reason to think creatively and consider collaboration with others.*

# Section 2

## Section 2: Creating Your Media Plan

To create your media plan, you must know your audience well, study the pros and cons of each medium, and then decide which media best reach that audience. In **Section 3: Considering Media** you will find a summary of the pros and cons of each media type, allowing you to take these into consideration when creating your plan.

### General Tips

- It is sometimes possible to get free time or space just by asking. It doesn't hurt to remind the media people that by carrying your messages, they are doing a community service. They are aware of the value of good public opinion.
- It is accepted practice to ask for free time or space when you are a paying customer. This type of bonus time/space is known as **added value**, and you should negotiate for it when making your purchase.
- You should also try to get other benefits when purchasing space or time, such as interviews or feature stories (preferably over a length of time) to spread your message.
- A good rule of thumb: if they offer you something, ask for more. Remember, you are helping them do a community service. For businesses that rely on public visibility and good will, that's an important benefit, so you're creating a win/win situation.
- Establish good relationships with your media representatives. They can be a great help in guiding you through the buying process. They can also alert you to opportunities you might not have been aware of, including special offers and package deals.
- Above all, don't be bashful!

There are a number of factors to consider when creating a media buying plan. These include: the media mix; reach, frequency and longevity; costs and negotiations; and scheduling.

### Media Mix

A **media mix** is just what it sounds like — the use of several different forms of media within a campaign. There are several reasons for using a media mix. The first is to extend the reach of the campaign to audience segments not exposed to a single medium. Second, a media mix equalizes the distribution frequency, since all segments of the target audience may not be exposed to all media equally.

As a general rule of thumb, each medium should be able to stand alone. Each should have enough weight before adding another form of media. Otherwise, overall media coverage is diluted and may be ineffective. Remember, not everyone is exposed to all, or the same, media.

## *Reach and Frequency*

**Reach** (how many people see or hear your message) and **frequency** (how often they see or hear it) should be at levels that are both effective and efficient. When putting together a plan, however, you want to maintain a balance between reach and frequency. For example, radio is a frequency medium and newspaper is a reach medium, therefore, they complement each other. A third consideration is **longevity** (how long your campaign will last). Campaigns designed to change people's attitudes and behaviors work best when they are implemented over time. Your campaign will be more effective if your message becomes a familiar part of people's lives — and that can't be done in a hurry.

## *Costs and Negotiations*

Typically media costs are driven by a few factors: market size, availability, and the competitive environment. The larger the market, the more it costs to advertise in it. Grand Rapids is more expensive than Traverse City, which is more expensive than Potterville.

Cost effectiveness and efficiency should also be considered for determining media schedules. By planning further out, you can take advantages of contract rates and perhaps special packages, while not paying top dollar. Often this depends on how much time or space (called inventory) is still available when you are negotiating. Like other businesses, if media have a lot of inventory still unsold, they're likely to reduce prices. Other ways of controlling costs are through good negotiations and knowing what you are purchasing. You need to be aware that some "deals" are not really deals for the advertiser but rather for the station or paper. Analyzing station audiences during the various time periods is crucial: if you're trying to reach students, for instance, late-night time slots on an easy listening station aren't as likely to be effective. You want your message to be seen or heard, so perhaps saving a few dollars a spot does not outweigh having your message air when and where you want it.

The negotiation step is very important to ensure that you receive competitive rates. Added value (giving you free airings in addition to the ones you pay for) is typically negotiated at this stage. Maintaining good media relationships and building rapport with the media representatives is important. There are several agencies and individuals who can execute the negotiations or buy for you; however, if you have done the research and understand the process as outlined here, you can keep the cost to a minimum by acting as your own agent.

# Section 2

Things to consider when negotiating:

- compare cost per point, cost per thousand and other measures of value (see glossary at the end of this document)
- contracts — is it advantageous to sign one? (For instance, does a contract commit you to a longer or more intensive use of the outlet than you really need? Does it give you the time slots you need?)
- competitive environment — how competitive are the media? How much do they want your business?
- **cherry picking** inventory — is it beneficial or necessary for what you are trying to accomplish? Cherry picking is paying more to get your ad shown at a particularly choice time: Super Bowl ads are an example of cherry picking. Not surprisingly, you usually must pay a premium rate for the premium spots. If your local news station is doing a series on water quality, however, it might be worth more to have your message air during that time.
- budgets — how much you are spending may affect the rates. This is another reason to think about collaboration with others.
- market size — larger markets cost more.
- availability — how much inventory the media outlet has available will affect the rate.
- most broadcasting companies build a limited amount of production costs into the price. Having the “ready to play” ad, either audio or video, in hand can help you negotiate a lower rate or value added.

## Scheduling

When scheduling the media, consider the timing of the campaign, how much advertising the budget allows and whether you want a continuous campaign or a flighted campaign to try to extend the campaign over a greater period of time. **Flighting** would have active and inactive weeks over the life of the campaign. With a media mix, we may flight each medium, ensuring that each week has some message exposure. Again, this depends on the media objective and budget.

## Buying

Once you have planned the campaign and decided on a schedule, you can complete the air time or space reservations. Station orders and insertion orders are issued during this stage of the media buying process

## *Post—Buy Analysis*

Post—buy analysis can be performed on broadcast schedules airing in Nielsen and Arbitron measured markets. It involves checking dates/times that spots actually aired and the ratings achieved against projected ratings. This step can only be done after the rating books for the quarter purchased have been released and broadcast invoices have been received. If the ratings for your message times were less than promised, you may receive compensation from the station (known as a makegood). The industry standard for issuing makegoods is generally plus or minus 10 percent.

## *How Do I Decide What's Best for Me?*

There isn't any standard formula for designing a media plan: each market is unique in its makeup and media availability, and each situation is different. However, you aren't starting from scratch: your campaign tool kit contains a selection of ads, templates, examples and suggestions that will be useful in your campaign. Your own analysis of the problems your target area faces, combined with your feeling for what messages will work in your target area will be the best guide to which elements you use.

Plan your media use with three basics in mind: **reach**, **frequency** and **longevity**. And keep your target audience in mind as you make choices: What do they listen to? What do they watch? What do they read? What do they respond to?

And last, look constantly for feedback. Try to find out if people are noticing your messages. If so, which ones do they seem to notice? Which segments of your target audience seem to be noticing them? You don't have to conduct scientific surveys: ask your neighbors, ask people at meetings you attend; ask people you deal with each day. With those simple methods you can determine a trend. If you find that certain messages seem to be more effective than others, or that some elements of your target audience don't seem to be getting the message, you can adjust your strategy. And don't hesitate to try something new if you think it might be effective. Trust your instincts.

## *A Final Note*

Buying media is a specialized field. Each medium has its own people to help you, and you should establish good relationships with them, but of course their main interest is in selling their own products. If you can get information and advice about your own market area from a local advertising or media specialist, it will make your task easier. If you can't, don't worry. Your campaign tool kit still has everything you need to conduct an effective education campaign. We suggest that you also carefully read "Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns" for further guidance in planning your campaign.



# Section 3

## *Section 3: Considering Media*

Below is a list of media, with things to be considered and a list of pros and cons for each. (Note: a glossary of terms appears at the end of this document.)

### *Television*

Although you may not think that you can afford television ads, by collaborating with others you can make it an effective part of your media mix.

When purchasing television, consider such things as daypart mix (audience percentage breakout for each part of the day), program content, how well the program performs for the target audience and cost effectiveness. Your budget may prevent you from being able to choose the times or shows for your ads, but you can insist that they don't run during programming that is counter to the message.

Television time is typically purchased in :30 (30 second) units, however, you can purchase :10's and :15's. Costs for these range from 50-65% of the :30 and availability is limited. Always remember to ask how many ads will be run at no cost for your campaign.

#### **Considerations:**

- audience composition
- geographic distribution
- reach and frequency potential
- environmental factors: audience attentiveness, program types, time periods
- creative applications: visual, audio

#### **Pros**

- intrusive
- high awareness
- strong impact
- most widely accepted medium
- most trusted communication vehicle
- instantaneous, immediate
- provides realistic environment
- develops full audience potential quickly
- 98% of all homes have one or more TV sets
- prestigious medium

## **Cons**

- TV audience uses remotes to click past ads
- high unit costs (remember: you might be able to collaborate with nearby MSAs to buy time)
- rapid rate increases are possible when inventory is low
- transient messages (10, 15, 30 seconds)
- cluttered — your message competes with many other ads and stations



Radio offers many competitive plans that make it easy for even small entities to purchase ad time. Also, the spots can be tracked for listenership, filling an important evaluation requirement. Consider approaching local businesses to sponsor some of the radio spots (with credits), increasing reach and frequency for your message. Again, it's a win/win situation, since they get their names connected with a community benefit.

With radio, consider how well the station performs for the demographic and what the best time periods are for listenership. By having a mix of station formats, you can extend your message reach. Most markets sell in unit rates, meaning the rate is the same whether it is a :30 or a :60 spot.

## **Considerations:**

- format selection
- time period selection
- program sponsorship

## **Pros**

- powerful personal medium, drawing on the listener's imagination to create pictures in the mind
- dynamic
- immediate
- selective, reaches narrowly defined targets
- builds message frequency affordably
- 98% of all homes have one or more radios
- 92% of all autos have a radio
- listeners are loyal to format
- provides a means to reach business audience (drive times)
- several radio ads are already available with the tool kit

## **Cons**

- little qualitative information available
- expensive to use for developing reach
- brief messages (30, 60 seconds)

# Section 3



## *Newspapers*

Newspaper ads or articles can be powerful media tools for your campaign. Large ads can be quite expensive, but research has shown that smaller, less expensive ads still can reach a significant audience. Again, partnerships with nearby target areas can cut the cost of ads. Smaller papers are more likely to publish an article that you submit: see a sample in your tool kit.

### **Considerations:**

- frequency of publication
- newspaper versus shopper
- circulation and distribution
- unit size: # columns x depth of ad (Example: 2 columns x 6" = 12" ad)
- newspaper sections can target your message
- newspaper "Food Day" or other special issues
- display ad versus preprinted insert

### **Pros**

- local medium, local identity
- involving, informative environment
- 80% of all adults read daily news
- covers broad targets efficiently
- disseminates lengthy, complex copy
- geographic targeting flexibility
- high reach potential
- broad market coverage
- sample ads and articles are in the tool kit

### **Cons**

- no demographic selectivity
- high unit costs
- expensive if used to cover large geographic area
- creatively restricting
- cluttered



## *Outdoor*

Outdoor ads, commonly called billboards, can be purchased in a variety of ways. The painted bulletins are the large 14' x 48' boards typically seen on major highways. Poster panels (typically 10'5" x 22'8") can also be seen on major highways, but are more common throughout cities and surrounding areas. Posters are typically purchased in "showings" (25, 50, 75 & 100). For example, a 50 showing is estimated to reach 50% of the metro population on a daily basis. The showings are derived from traffic counts

assigned to each board. Poster panels are typically purchased in 30 day increments, while painted bulletins are commonly purchased in 3 to 12 month increments.

While billboards of either size may be too expensive for an individual target area's campaign, their reach in terms of passing motorists may make them worth considering, particularly if several collaborate.

**Considerations:**

- poster panels
- painted bulletins
- geographic locations
- traffic counts

**Pros**

- generates high message frequency efficiently
- provides continuity
- geographic targeting flexibility
- low cost per impression

**Cons**

- short exposure time (6-8 seconds)
- high unit/monthly costs
- limited availability



Magazines are not generally good placements for localized public awareness messages, but are included because they can be effective in special circumstances. An example might be a regional or local magazine that reaches a large share of your target audience. If you have a small, locally produced magazine, develop a relationship with a reporter or editor. Submit articles from time to time or keep them informed of what you're doing, especially if it might be newsworthy.

**Considerations:**

- target audience
- circulation, distribution
- readership
- editorial content
- how often the magazine is published and when
- glossy or newsprint
- ad size
- color or black and white

# Section 3

## **Pros**

- *personal, individual*
- *involving*
- *long lasting medium*
- *provides continuity*
- *relays detailed, complex message*
- *primary reader plus pass-along potential*
- *4+ average exposures per issue*
- *high reach of selective targets*
- *demographic and geographic selectivity*

## **Cons**

- *lacks immediacy*
- *inconsistent audience information*
- *relatively expensive production (particularly for four-color)*
- *visual only*
- *cluttered environment*

## *Direct Mail*

*Direct mail may be effective to reach a targeted audience that can be easily defined and for which mailing lists can be obtained. If you can put your flyer or message in a mass mailing that's already going out, such as a water bill or a newsletter (it doesn't have to be yours), you can cut costs by sharing postage or getting a free ride.*

## **Pros**

- *selective*
- *allows measure of effectiveness*
- *personal*
- *geographic and production flexibility*
- *efficient*
- *can be an add-on to another mailing*

## **Cons**

- *expensive to reach mass audience*
- *list reliability questionable*
- *variance in delivery dates*
- *postage costs rising*



Working within limited budgets will call for some creative thinking, particularly when use of the mass media is limited. Don't be afraid to let your imagination run wild. Some options may include:

- workshops
- township/town meetings
- watershed tours
- storm drain stenciling
- telephone hot-lines
- coupon books
- ticket stub ads
- cash register receipts
- newsletters
- posters
- fact sheets
- news releases and/or articles (samples are included in your tool kit)
- letters to the editor
- internet
- calendars (see URLs for templates)
- inserts in water bills
- door hangers
- remotes
- floats in parade
- booths at special events
- cable scrolls, especially on local access cable channels
- transit
- bus interiors
- clocks
- restroom advertising (tacky but effective)
- health club or doctor/dentist office TV or radio
- restaurant placemats

# Section 3

# Section 4

## *Section 4: Public Relations—Building Community Support*

### *Public Relations versus Advertising*

Public relations is the ongoing work of building your organization's credibility and visibility. It's the means by which the public learns about your organization and its role in the community.

Advertising is mostly about selling products, whether they're things, actions or ideas. Public relations is more about the public's perception of who you are as an organization. Nonprofit organizations and government bodies generally do more public relations than advertising.

Often, public relations is conducted through the media; that is, newspapers, television, magazines, radio and others. But it can also be conducted more directly — through organizational communications, special events, public affairs and other means. When it does use the media, it generally doesn't do so through paid advertisements. Instead, it relies on news releases, articles, announcements and editorials.

The difference between public relations and advertising can be demonstrated with some examples. Look at the following list and decide which items are public relations and which are advertising. (The answers are in the next paragraph: Don't peek.)

1. Newspaper story about the Water Days Festival
2. Notice of annual meeting
3. Newspaper ads to promote water conservation
4. News release about being awarded a grant
5. Radio interview about what your organization does
6. Radio interview to promote your new recycling program
7. A campaign to get people to use more public transportation

In the examples above, numbers three, six and seven would be considered advertising: They're efforts to "sell" a specific action or attitude. The others are more about the organization itself: They won't get anyone to do anything specific, but they might influence people to listen more carefully when you do ask them to do something.

Another way to think about public relations is to think of it as your long-term relationship with your community. In that context things like having staff, board members or volunteers representing your organization on public committees, volunteering their time for public events (such as fund drives for public radio or TV) or just talking you up in their daily activities can be an important, if less obvious, part of your public relations program.



## *Public Relations and the Media*

The most visible part of public relations takes place through the media. For that reason, it's extremely important to establish long-term media relationships based on mutual respect. Those relationships may help you get your information out, but they can also provide you with opportunities to be the expert on certain issues, increasing your organization's visibility and credibility.

But what, exactly, do journalists want from you? How do you get them to pay attention to your organization? What's the magic formula for getting recognized and featured in the media?

There isn't any one answer. But the following sections should answer many of your questions and prepare you to start creating effective media relationships.

### **What Do Journalists Need?**

- *Timely, newsworthy information: Before bothering a journalist with your news, ask yourself first if that news is likely to be of interest to the general community.*
- *Credible, dependable experts as sources: Everyone has opinions, but opinions based on expertise, knowledge or experience are more credible.*
- *A quick overview of an issue: If you can sum up an issue clearly, expertly and quickly, you will probably become a regular source when that issue is in the news.*
- *Access to people who will go on the record: Journalists want names to put with their quotes; anonymous sources generally carry less credibility.*
- *Story leads: You are the expert in your field; with a little thought you may be able to come up with some story ideas of genuine interest to the general public.*

### **What Do You Have to Offer?**

- *News about your organization: Follow the media to find out what kind of news about other organizations is considered newsworthy.*
- *The other side of a hot issue: Journalists like to be seen to be presenting both sides of any issue, so if you can clearly explain one side, you may become a regular source.*
- *Clear and concise explanations: It can't be stressed too much that clarity and conciseness are important. If you're going to be talking to a journalist, organize your thoughts beforehand and practice your main points.*
- *Crisis communication: When issues suddenly become hot, journalists need people who can put the situation in perspective. If you're working with water quality issues, you might provide important insight during a major sewer overflow or chemical spill, for instance.*
- *Honest answers: Journalists value sources who will answer questions honestly.*

# Section 4



# Section 4

## **What is Newsworthy?**

- *Something new or unusual: If you have a new angle on an issue, let a journalist know about it. Keep in mind that the first question most journalists will ask is, “Why would the average reader/viewer/listener care about this?”*
- *An event that has local impact: Events like water festivals or stream cleanups, for instance, may draw large crowds or attract significant numbers of volunteers.*
- *“Good News” stories: Environmental stories are often negative or gloomy; if you know of a positive story involving local groups, schools or businesses, let someone know about it.*
- *Awards, grants or other recognition: If your organization receives recognition, you should get the word out: It’s a great way to increase your visibility and credibility. If you don’t celebrate your achievements, who will?*



## *Developing Media Relationships*

*With these questions answered, it’s time to look at establishing effective media relationships. Always remember that these are mutually beneficial arrangements. Journalists need them as much as you do; the trick is to find the area where both your needs overlap so that both parties get what they need.*

*The first step is to target your approach. Begin with audience analysis: Ask yourself who your audience is. The Getting in Step book can lead you through the basic process of analyzing your audience.*

*Once you know who your target audience is, decide which media outlets are most likely to reach those people. Then ask: within those outlets, which journalists are most likely to be receptive to your ideas and information? Look for those who already show an interest in watershed or watershed-related issues. Environmental, outdoor and science journalists are obvious possibilities for watershed issues, but with the right twist, so are lifestyle, sports, business, community or other journalists.*



## *Building Your List*

*Contact information for media people is generally easy to find. Web sites generally have a “contact us” link; newspapers have mastheads with names of editors; most publications print bylines with stories, so that you can call and ask for a particular reporter. If all else fails, call the organization’s information desk and ask who you should talk to.*

There are some valuable rules of thumb for making media contacts. They include the following.

- Before calling a journalist, it's a good idea to talk to someone at the general information number. Ask which times are best for calling the person and find out when deadlines are. At all costs, avoid calling near a deadline.
- Keep phone calls short: Explain why you're calling as concisely as possible, and be prepared to follow up by sending more information.
- If your first contact is through mail or fax, send a news release or a brief description of your story or story idea and make sure that you include your contact information in case they are interested in pursuing your idea further. If you don't hear anything in a week or two, a follow-up might be appropriate, but remember that journalists are very busy and they get a lot of mail, fax material and emails. Often, it's better to wait for the next news event or story idea and try again.
- Email is becoming more common, but it is also a nuisance to some people. Also, spam, or unwanted email, is becoming a major problem and many people's response is to ignore emails from unknown parties.

It's a good idea to keep a list of media people whom you might want to contact at some point, along with notes about the types of stories they cover. If you cultivate mutually helpful relationships with a few good contacts, it will help you greatly in getting the message about your organization out to the public.



## *When the Media Call You*

One way to increase the visibility of your organization is to be a source of information for journalists. In many cases, this involves being interviewed. Since interview requests may come on short notice, it pays to be prepared.

First, decide who is to be your spokesperson and let that person handle all requests. Prepare a key message, one that briefly describes your organization's purpose and activities, and be sure that your spokesperson is ready to deliver it at a moment's notice. If you have a number of activities or issues, you may have different spokespersons for each, but everyone should be clear about who speaks on what topics.

You might also want to initiate a process for managing media calls or interview requests. All staff members should be familiar with that process. Before agreeing to an interview, you may want to ask some questions and take notes.

- Get the reporter's name if you don't already know it, as well as the name of the publication or station.
- Find out what the story is about: Why is the person calling?

# Section 4

- *Who else is being interviewed?*
- *When is the deadline?*
- *What exactly does the person want from you?*
- *Where will it take place?*
- *If it's video, will it be taped or live?*
- *Will you be allowed or expected to provide photos, news releases, a press kit or other materials?*

*If the interview involves a volatile issue or might expose your organization to unfavorable publicity, you can always decline to be interviewed if you feel that's the best choice.*

*It's advisable to keep an eye on the news; if your issue is getting coverage, you might want to prepare a statement and review pertinent information, just in case.*

*The most common complaint among people who have been interviewed is "They didn't get it right," followed by "They misquoted me." You can avoid misunderstandings by following some simple rules.*

- *Keep your message simple and clear, stressing only two or three main points.*
- *Use simple words and avoid jargon; be ready with facts and examples.*
- *Anticipate questions and have answers ready.*
- *Repeat your message.*
- *Repeat your message.*
- *Project a confident image and take your time in answering questions.*
- *Thank reporters for their time and encourage them to contact you for future interviews (assuming that this one was a satisfactory experience).*

*You should also keep a few advisories in mind:*

- *Remember that anything you say is on the record.*
- *Don't speculate: It's better to say, "I don't know." Never say, "No comment."*
- *Don't ask to see or approve the story before it goes out.*



*News releases are the tactic of choice for many organizations. A well written news release can be a very effective tool for raising your organization's visibility. The keys to an effective news release are simplicity, clarity, accuracy and detail. The basic points to cover are who, what, where, when, why and how. One good piece of advice is to write as if you had to pay for each word you use.*

*The more professional the release looks, the better its chances of being read. Attempts to get attention by using graphics, unusual fonts, or other eye-catchers can sometimes backfire, making your release look unprofessional. A good hook in the first sentence can be very effective, however.*

*There is no excuse for factual errors in a press release. Double check dates, addresses, phone numbers and other critical information. And triple check names. Even if you're sure you know how to spell Mr. Green's name, taking the extra trouble is better than having to explain to him later why he was replaced by Mr. Greene.*

*Remember, there's no guarantee that your news release will be used; but if it is, don't expect to see it just as you wrote it. Distribute the release to your media list and post it on your organization's web site if it has one, then hope for the best. If it isn't used, don't give up. Journalists receive large numbers of releases and they can't use them all.*

*If yours never seem to be used, look at them with a critical eye. One of the major faults with press releases is that they often just aren't newsworthy. But if you're confident that your releases have genuine news value, and if you know one of your media contacts well enough, it might be worthwhile to inquire if there is a way you can improve them to make them more usable.*

*In the end, much of the success of a public awareness or education campaign can depend on the credibility and visibility of the organization conducting it. Building that credibility and visibility is what public relations is all about.*

*(Thanks to Clare Wade Communications of Grand Rapids for providing content for this section)*

# Section 4

## *Never written a news release?*

**No problem.**

**Here are some key points.**

*(adapted from the Muskegon Chronicle)*

- *Tell who, what, when, where, why and how about your news.*
- *Submit the information in a clear format, using a good-quality printer, if possible.*
- *Be brief and to the point.*
- *Be sure all dates, times, places, phone numbers and spellings of names are accurate. People especially hate to see their names spelled wrong, and we hate to spell them wrong.*
- *Include your name and phone number with the information. This allows us to verify the story and ask for more questions.*
- *Anything you can do to heighten story interest helps. So look for a “hook” — an unusual angle on an event or a special insight into a personality — and include that in your message.*
- *Don’t sweat the small stuff because we usually rewrite all news releases submitted to us (which means when you ask us to run an item unedited, we will say “no”). News releases are reviewed by editors, judged for news value and rewritten for publication. They could appear as digest items, in our numerous calendars or be used as the basis for news stories.*
- *Press releases should be addressed to the appropriate editor, if possible, such as the city editor, sports editor or feature editor. Just call our reception desk to be connected to the appropriate editor.*
- *Did we mention to be sure all dates, times, places, phone numbers and spellings of names are accurate?*

**M**

*Make sure you know news deadlines. DO NOT call a reporter on deadline, unless it's breaking news.*

**E**

*Email is not the best way to reach all editors...spam has overwhelmed them.*

**D**

*Develop a key message; deliver it consistently. What do you want people to remember?*

**I**

*Is English the best way to reach your audience? Think about your who you're trying to reach.*

**A**

*Action attracts TV coverage; radio requires interesting audio. Don't send photos to radio reporters.*

**R**

*Read, listen and watch the news. You've got to know what's going on and how it affects interest in your story.*

**E**

*Evaluate media requests before/if you respond. What's the story they're working on? When will it run/air? Why are they calling you?*

**L**

*Lead times differ with each medium: magazines, weeklies, dailies, TV and radio.*

**A**

*Ask when the story deadline is when you get a media call; be sure you meet it.*

**T**

*Take the time to know reporters and editors — and their media outlets.*

**I**

*Is your spokesperson credible, knowledgeable and comfortable answering tough questions?*

**O**

*Online sites are growing. Monitor what others say about your organization.*

**N**

*Newsworthy stories sell themselves. Make sure you have a strong story.*

**S**

*Study how your organization comes across via the media. Is your message being communicated accurately? Is your spokesperson effective?*

*(With thanks to Clare Wade Communications of Grand Rapids)*

## Glossary Of Media Terminology

### **Average Quarter Hour Rating (AQH):**

The average quarter-hour persons estimate expressed as a percentage of the appropriate estimated population.

### **Rating:**

The audience expressed as a percentage of the total population.

$$\frac{\text{Listeners/Viewers}}{\text{Population}} \times 100 = \text{Rating}$$

### **Gross Rating Points (GRPs):**

The sum of the ratings delivered by the medium in a given schedule or ad campaign. Gross rating points are expressed as a percentage of the population base.

Example:

A media schedule delivering 200 GRPs will have one message exposure to the equivalent of 200 percent of the population. In other words, 100 percent of the population will receive your message twice.

### **Cost Per Point (CPP):**

The cost of delivering one GRP (1% of a population group).

### **Cost Per Thousand (CPM):**

The cost of delivering one thousand impressions within a defined population group.

### **Share:**

The percent of the total viewing or listening audience in a specific time period tuned to a particular station, network or program.

$$\frac{\text{Rating}}{\text{HUT}} \times 100 = \text{Share}$$

HUT = Households Using Television

**Showing:**

*The level of exposure within a market that the billboards will achieve each day, stated in terms of the percentage of the market. Showings are synonymous with gross rating points generated within one day.*

**Example:**

*A 50 showing should achieve a daily circulation equivalent to 50% of the population of the market.*

**Reach:**

*The unduplicated portion of the population that has the opportunity to be exposed one or more times to your advertising message. Reach is expressed as a percentage of the target market.*

**Frequency:**

*The average number of times that your target audience will be exposed to your message. Frequency is expressed as “times” — for example, 6 times.*





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