

An introduction to
Media and
Public Relations

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An Introduction to Media and Public Relations

This guide offers a general introduction to media and public relations to support any organisation or artist working in the arts. It presents an overview of the key principles associated with media and public relations including writing a press release, working with journalists, and a practical approach to developing and delivering media and public relations campaigns.

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What is media relations?

What is public relations?

Media relations is the process of managing your organisation's relationship with the media (newspapers, radio, television, etc) to establish a positive understanding of your role and promote your work, with the aim of obtaining editorial coverage as part of a publicity campaign.

Public relations, similarly, is the process of managing your organisation's relationship with its public, or more specifically, its stakeholders (funders, customers, suppliers, potential customers, etc). Public relations, generally, also supports the success of marketing and publicity campaigns.

Media relations and public relations are not the same thing although you may use media relations as part of your public relations strategy.

Media Relations

The media communicate with the public on a daily basis. Managing your organisation's relationship with the media can therefore bring valuable benefits to your organisation and, most immediately, free editorial coverage that develops the awareness of your role or publicises specific events or activities.

Media coverage can include event listings, reviews, features and news coverage. Event listings can benefit your publicity campaigns and reviews can promote sales or provide valuable quotes for future publicity. This guide concentrates on managing news and features coverage.

Broadly, therefore, to generate media coverage you need a newsworthy story (something topical and relevant to the audience) otherwise the news media will not cover it. Features also need to be topical and relevant to the media outlet and its audience.

The media includes local, regional and national newspapers, general interest and specialist publications, local and national radio and television, and general interest and specialist websites.

Media Relations Planning

Objectives - what do you want to achieve?

If you want to communicate with or influence a specific group of people - local residents near your museum site, local history enthusiasts in Wales, drama attenders in North West Wales - you need to be clear if using the media is the right choice and if so which media to use. The media can be used to reach all of these groups but you need to be sure it is the most cost and time effective route. While media relations should form part of a larger publicity campaign, you may find more direct and effective ways of communicating with your target audience, some of which will be discussed later under Public Relations.

Who wants to know - your audience?

You therefore need to understand your target audience, which media could be used to reach them and how best to communicate with them. You should also adapt your press release or re-write it to suit each audience and each media outlet. For example, a national story can become more relevant and newsworthy if it is adapted to suit a local or regional audience.

Newsworthy - is there a story?

To use the media effectively you need a newsworthy story; something topical and relevant to the media outlet's audience. Unfortunately, the fact that your company is staging a new production is not necessarily newsworthy and will not necessarily generate news coverage. You can identify a specific newsworthy story that communicates the production by concentrating on what will be of interest to the audience. Similarly, the work of some companies, rather than the specific production itself, can be seen as newsworthy but this is often the result of a strong reputation and the benefit of successful long term public relations.

Method - is a press release the best method?

The press release is often the best starting point and will be looked at further in this guide but it isn't always needed. If you have developed a good relationship with your target media outlet or journalist you may be able to pick up the phone or arrange a meeting to discuss your story. This can be an effective way of developing and managing your relationships with the media if you can maintain that relationship and have something to offer the journalist on a regular basis. In most cases, for most people, a press release is the best starting point.

How to write a Press Release

- Start with a clearly defined news story, something topical and relevant to your target audience and the audience of the media outlet (newspaper, etc).
- Summarise the story in one line - your headline.
- Detail the story, answering the questions 'who, what, when and where', in the first paragraph
- Expand the story into a second paragraph bringing in more detail
- In the third and maybe fourth paragraphs bring in more detail or background information to put your story into context; for example, the history of the production or company's work.

Tips

Ensure you write in a style (tone, language, etc) that suits the media you are targeting as they will have their own house style. Always write in the third person, as a journalist would (the 'organisation' or 'they', etc, never 'I' or 'we').

A quote from a relevant and respected source can be useful as it can add additional information and can be written in the first person ('I am very excited by this initiative', etc).

Remember, the average news story is around 250 words long. If your press release is long it may be cut from the bottom upwards, so keep it short and ensure that you present the whole story (the who, what, when, where) in the first paragraph.

Presentation and layout is very important. Journalists are busy people and will scan your press release. They need to understand the story very quickly. See the following layout as an example of how to present an effective press release.

Press Release example

PRESS RELEASE

YOUR LOGO

DATE

TITLE - a short summary of your story

First paragraph - a summary of the who, what, when, where of your story.
No more than two or three sentences, double spaced.

Second paragraph - expand on your story adding detail to the who, what, when, where of your story. No more than three or four sentences, double spaced.

Third paragraph - a quote from a senior, respected source to support the story.

Fourth paragraph - background information to expand the story. No more than three or four sentences, double spaced.

END

For further information, contact:

Your name and title

Contact phone numbers and email address

Press Release example

PRESS RELEASE

Date



[The full story in one line]

New arts marketing training guides from Audiences Wales

[The 'who, what, when, where' of the story]

Audiences Wales has published two new 'Learning On Demand' arts marketing training guides; an introduction to Marketing and Publicity and Design and Print. Both guides are available free of charge and can be downloaded from the Audiences Wales website www.audienceswales.co.uk.

[Further information to support the story]

The new Learning On Demand training guides are aimed at people new to arts marketing who want to learn at their own pace or need something on hand when working on marketing projects. Both guides offer an overview of each key area with major theories explained, a glossary of terms, and practical tips to support learning and skills development.

[A quote to support the story]

Audiences Wales' Chief Executive, Nick Beasley, said:

"Audiences Wales is committed to providing expert marketing support and learning opportunities for all organisations and individuals working in the arts.

"We recognise that it is not always possible to attend a course and sometimes we need the information to hand when working on a particular project. Our new Learning On Demand resources are designed to help you get to grips with a particular subject at your own pace."

[A bit of background]

The Learning On Demand training guides have been produced by Audiences Wales with funding from the Arts Council of Wales. Both guides are available free of charge and can be downloaded from the Audiences Wales website www.audienceswales.co.uk. More Learning On Demand resources will be available later in the year.

ENDS

For further information, contact:

Nick Beasley, Audiences Wales 029 20373736 nick@audienceswales.co.uk

www.audienceswales.co.uk

Summary

Headline - define your story, grab interest and attention

Content - answer the WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE?

Keep it simple - easy to understand, snappy, short and straight to the point, ideally one side of A4.

Spacing - double-spaced print will allow space for the journalist to make notes or alterations

Facts - stick to the facts and write it as if you were the journalist (3rd person)

Font - use a plain font and limit the use of bold or italics to the headline only; never use capital letters or exclamation marks

Relevant - know your audience and tailor your message

Quotes - use quotes to add opinion and depth to your story

Visual - provide a good quality / high resolution photograph to illustrate your story and increase your chances of more coverage

Date - ensure the date on the release is clear

End - at the bottom of the release add 'END' before your contact details or any background notes

Background - you can supply some background notes if you think they are necessary but keep them short and to the point

Contacts - include contact details to show you are helpful, available and professional

When to send a Press Release

Timing your press campaign and when to send out your press releases is crucial. Every type of media outlet will have different deadline dates. As a guide:

- Features - 3-6 weeks ahead of publication date
- Reviews - 3-4 weeks ahead of publication date.
- Monthly Magazines - 3-4 months ahead of publication date
- Photo stories - 2-3 weeks ahead of publication date.
- Listings - 2 weeks ahead of publication date.

Pros and cons of using a Press Release

Pros:

- Apart from the time need to create it, it's free
- A clear story can be presented with a photo included and emailed to journalists
- Your story can be adapted to suit different audiences easily
- You can reach a specific audience through specialist media outlets
- Coverage can be monitored and evaluated

Cons:

- Newspapers will receive a lot of press releases. If they are not newsworthy, written and presented properly they will not be used.
- Press coverage cannot be guaranteed, even with a good press release
- Timing is critical and space in any publication is limited

Use of photography

- Photos are much more eye-catching than words and more people will notice them - they can help bring your press release alive.
- Invite the press to a photo call. If you have a major event, give them as much notice as possible and check the day before if they've said they will attend.
- A photo journalist will probably have ideas of their own, but remember it is your photo call and you can direct proceedings, so think about what will make an interesting shot, and who needs to be in the picture.
- Take your own good quality photos (preferably digital photos that can also be emailed) and send them with a press release.
- Images must be labelled with names, titles, places, ages of children if applicable and a credit for the photographer. Get parental permission if you are using images of children.

Working with the media

Media relations can be an effective part of your marketing or communications plan. It is important that it fits within your plan, benefits the activity or organisation you are promoting, and that you are able to deliver it.

Your media relations plan should clearly link together your target audiences with suitable media outlets. You should understand the needs of journalists and the deadlines used by your choice of media. You should also be prepared when working with journalists - have a press pack (information about your event or organisation) ready so you can email it out as soon as it is requested, and have a list of spokespeople ready and available so you can respond to any interest you generate.

Tips

Do

- Get to know your local journalists
- Read, listen, watch, monitor - understand the journalist, the media and its audience
- Use online media and reach your customers directly
- Develop a database of contacts and keep it up to date
- Send your press release to internal audiences
- Remain unbiased and factual
- Evaluate your press releases and coverage

Don't:

- Include any spelling errors
- Send a press release that isn't newsworthy
- Send or include irrelevant information
- Send biased self promotion
- Be too wordy
- Forget contact details
- Use jargon
- Use emotive or opinionated language ('delighted, exciting, innovative', etc)

Public Relations

“The function or activity that aims to establish and protect the reputation of a company or brand, and to create mutual understanding between the organisation and the segments of the public with whom it needs to communicate.”

The Chartered Institute of Marketing

“Conscious effort to improve and maintain an organisation's relationships with such publics as employees, customers, shareholders, local communities, trade unions, with a view to strengthening reputation, i.e. building corporate image”

The CIM Marketing Dictionary,
Butterworth Heinemann

Public relations is the process of managing your organisation's relationship with its public, or more specifically, its stakeholders. Public relations, generally, also supports the success of marketing and publicity campaigns and may use media relations to reach an organisation's stakeholders.

Unlike publicity, public relations is not about selling tickets or attracting people to your event. It is concerned with developing a clear and accurate understanding of what your organisation does and developing recognition of your brand (the values that underpin your work). Public relations is a long term strategy that concentrates on developing relationships with your stakeholders.

Stakeholders

The starting point for effective public relations is an understanding of your stakeholders and their needs. Every organisation has stakeholders - funders, potential funders, customers, potential customers, suppliers, politicians, Board members, staff and volunteers, for example. For your organisation to grow and be successful you need to develop an accurate and positive understanding of who you are and what you do with all of your stakeholders. This takes time and, like any relationship, needs constant maintenance but can be extremely important in the future.

Techniques

There are a number of public relations techniques that you can use depending on time, resources and the work you do. These techniques could include:

Corporate print - a brochure about your company, work and values sent to your stakeholders. This needs to present your organisation as accurately as possible and should be done to the highest standard that you can afford.

Websites - again, an opportunity to communicate who you are and what you do, and needs to be well designed.

Newsletters - regular newsletters (either print or email) can communicate the general information about your company but also have up to date news about your successes. Newsletters are often cheaper than corporate print but need to be designed to communicate your organisation well.

Events - there are a number of events that can be established to reach your stakeholders; for example, a launch of a new initiative or season or work, invitations to see your event, or a private view. These events need to be managed to present your organisation in the best light. You may want senior managers or Board members to be present to entertain your guests, and you may want to provide food or drink to add to the event. You will therefore need to consider the costs of running an event and build it into your budget.

Meetings - often something that is taken for granted, but a series of meetings between senior members of your organisation and key stakeholders can be very effective in communicating your organisation, its work and values.

Media - in the context of public relations, using the media can be a very effective way of raising awareness and reinforcing recognition of your brand. In many ways, all the media work you undertake contributes to your public relations objectives, but media relations can be used specifically to reach specific stakeholders and communicate corporate messages about your organisation.

Public Relations / Stakeholder planning

To develop your public relations approach and to maximise its effectiveness, a public relations or stakeholder plan should be developed. The benefits of developing a plan are that it enables you to:

- Consult and communicate with colleagues
- Review, evaluate and develop your work
- Co-ordinate several colleagues or departments
- Create effective 'joined up' communications between marketing, media and public relations planning

To develop a plan you need to define specific measurable objectives - what do you want to achieve? These could be recognition of the results of your work with your funders, or an illustration of the benefits of public funding, for example. In many ways your objectives should create a positive environment within which your marketing, sales, or fundraising campaigns can benefit.

Once you have your objectives, you need to define key messages - what do you want to say? These need to be relevant to your key audiences or stakeholders, be truthful and backed up by evidence.

You then need to develop a list of your stakeholders. This can often be achieved through consultation with colleagues to ensure that all key relationships from around your organisation are included. You may be able to group stakeholders together (suppliers or staff for example) or you may need to address stakeholders individually (a specific funder, for example). Also, you may define your lead funder, for example, as one stakeholder, but you will find it more effective if you identify specific relevant individuals within the organisation as you will have a different relationship with each and they may need different messages or approaches.

Public Relations / Stakeholder Plan Example

Objectives:

- Increase visibility of the organisation
- Increase confidence and trust in our work
- Maximise our role and influence through communications
- Deliver the key messages effectively and efficiently

Stakeholders:

- Lead funder
- Board members
- Local authority
- Development agency
- Staff team

Key messages:

- A relevant, expert, specialist organisation
- Provides high quality work
- Provide value for money and return on investment
- Able to define and respond to needs

Adapting this planning approach to suit you and your organisation will help you identify your stakeholders and define what you need to say to them and how you need to do it. You will then have a clear plan of how you will manage your stakeholders and will be able to gain support from colleagues.

Key Messages	A relevant, expert, specialist organisation	Provides high quality work	Provide value for money and return on investment	Able to define and respond to needs
Delivery Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate website ● Corporate publication ● Annual Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate website ● Events programme (invitations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual report and evaluation ● Regular meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular meetings ● Consultation process ● Partnership programme
Stakeholders				
Lead funder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate publication ● Annual Report ● Corporate website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate website ● Events programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual report and evaluation ● Regular meetings with CEO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular meetings ● Partnership programme
Board members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Events programme 		
Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate publication ● Annual Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate website ● Events programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual report and evaluation ● Regular meetings with CEO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular meetings ● Partnership programme
Development Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate publication ● Annual Report ● Corporate website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate website 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consultation process ● Partnership programme
Staff team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate website ● Events programme 		

The plan can then be integrated into your work plans to identify when you need to do specific activities and how much you need to allocate in your budget.

What if things go wrong?

There is a common saying that there is 'no such thing as bad PR'; the idea being that even if the story is bad, at least you are in the press and can respond to it. There are too many situations where this has been proved not to be the case, where the damage to an organisation's reputation has never been recovered.

If the 'bad PR' has come through the media, you should be able to respond to it. This needs to be done through a well briefed, senior representative of the organisation who can address the situation accurately and honestly. If the claim against you is not true, they can put your side of the story. If your organisation is at fault, they can explain the reasoning, apologise and detail what they will do to correct the situation or ensure it never happens again.

This situation, if it arose, would require a revised stakeholder plan to address the problem with key messages that illustrate a new approach and strengthen your brand values. This would need to be a long term investment and to be managed carefully.

More generally, if you believe that your organisation has a 'bad reputation' or that the perception of your stakeholders is not accurate, your key messages and stakeholder plan need to address this. In support of your planning work it would be useful if you could talk to some of your stakeholders to fully understand their perceptions and how they came about. You would then be equipped to develop a plan that supports your organisation.

There is a common saying that there is 'no such thing as bad PR'; the idea being that even if the story is bad, at least you are in the press and can respond to it. There are too many situations where this has been proved not to be the case, where the damage to an organisation's reputation has never been recovered.

Further Information

[Audiences Wales \(www.audienceswales.co.uk\)](http://www.audienceswales.co.uk)

Wales' arts marketing and audience development agency.

[Arts Council of Wales \(www.artswales.org.uk\)](http://www.artswales.org.uk)

Website includes useful contacts and research information.

[Arts Marketing Association \(www.a-m-a.org.uk\)](http://www.a-m-a.org.uk)

The professional body for arts marketing.

[Chartered Institute of Marketing \(www.cim.co.uk\)](http://www.cim.co.uk)

The leading marketing training provider with lots of useful resources on the website.

[Voluntary Arts Wales \(www.vaw.org.uk\)](http://www.vaw.org.uk)

Website contains useful resources to support community based organisations.

[Disability Arts Cymru \(www.dacymru.com\)](http://www.dacymru.com)

Wales' agency for disabled artists and audiences with useful information to support your organisation.

An Introduction to Media and Public Relations

Audiences Wales is the arts marketing and audience development agency for Wales. This guide has been produced by Audiences Wales with specific support from the Arts Council of Wales.

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