

HOW TO CONSTRUCT A MEDIA RELEASE

Free publicity is better than advertising.

When preparing a Media Release ensure the story is an interesting story. The media is a business – they want to create an interest. The agenda of the media is a “good story” which means selling newspapers, magazines, etc.

A “good story” must be:-

Controversial
Topical
Relevant
News

and it must work.

Before writing an article, determine who will read and be interested in the story. Who is the target audience? What will they be interested in? Find the paper / magazines that will suit the article or the news.

Who will write the story? Ensure that person has correct information and is aware of the message the article needs to give.

Contact the newspapers of your choice and find the most relevant person to talk to. It may be the “educational” journalist. This is your media liaison and you need to build a relationship with that person. Find out from each media liaison how they would like to receive any media releases and when is a good time to contact them.

Build a data base of media contacts including their name, phone number, fax number and email address. Check websites, libraries, local knowledge, contacts. Keep a base of about 20 – 30 contacts to see what publications suit best.

Plan a formula and strategy for the media release.

Who?

What?

When?

Why?

Where?

And, the **WOW** factor.

The WOW component is the unique selling point (USP) which will get your story published. The story must have something interesting to say. Sum up the article in a couple of sentences and put those at the top of the media release. This will grab the attention of the reader (AND the editor/media liaison of that paper).

The USP must be early in the article. The USP could also be the Unique Selling PERSON.

The emotional selling point (ESP) is also important. What is the ESP of each article?

The “headline” needs to be a short and punchy phrase. Alliterations work well.

Use memorable quotes from important people to emphasize the message of the story.

Avoid any “in” terms or Montessori jargon (such as AMI) that others may not understand.

Keep the article THIN, that is, Timely, Honest, Informative (with interesting facts) and Newsworthy. At the conclusion of the article, add a “boilerplate” to advertise what the article is about – what it represents.

When contacting a newspaper with an article via fax or email, title it "Media Release" and include the date. Include at the bottom of the sheet your name, your contact details (land line and mobile phone) including an after hours contact and website details of the organization you are representing. Use letterhead and keep the content of the article to one page.

If sending articles via email, do NOT send them as an attachment but rather as part of the main email.

Once the media release has been sent, follow up soon after with that media liaison. BE PROACTIVE. Communicate with that person in short sharp sentences as they are busy people.

For example,

"Did you receive my media release on?"

"Is there anything else I can help you with?"

"Do you need anything else?"

Be prepared to talk to that person about the article as they may not have read it before you contact them. KEEP IN TOUCH. BUILD A RELATIONSHIP.

Send media releases about a specific event, 10 – 14 days in advance so that it is in the diary of your media liaison. The media decide early in the morning, which news items they will follow up. The morning of the event call the media liaison and remind them of the event.

The media actually need stories and information. Keep at them, keep sending information and articles. Keep them in the loop and get to know them.

Photos enhance a written article. Photos can be taken before an event to add to the media release. Use different photos for different publications.

Offer your media liaison the opportunity for photo shoots. Photographers like colour and action so consider the visual images you want taken. Photographers like gimmicks also. If wanting photos for a magazine, they need to be set up and arranged much earlier than for a newspaper.

INTERVIEWS FOR RADIO OR TV

If partaking in an interview, be prepared. If anxious about being interviewed, practice practice, practice. Go through possible questions with family and friends. Have them ask you questions. The media are not out to give you a hard time, they are there to help. Know the message and keep to about 3 main points. Answer in short catchy answers.

Before an interview, watch or listen to the shows and see how they work. There are three things to consider in an interview. Technique, Content and Delivery.

Keep to the **content**. What are the key messages? Get the key messages across. Why are you being interviewed? If necessary, keep the key messages on small pieces of paper to remind you of what they are. Do not use Montessori jargon that others may not understand. Be prepared and do the research.

Work on the **delivery**. Be slightly larger than life. Be animated, bright and buoyant. Be clear and concise. Body language is important as is eye contact with the interviewer. Use the interviewer's name throughout the interview. Keep the talk to a minimum. If unsure of an answer, be honest. Inform the interviewer that you will find out the answer and ensure that you follow through with that.

*Notes taken at Media Training Workshop for the Australian AMI Alumni Association
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Workshop given by Sue Currie, Shine Communications Consultancy

Check the website <http://www.shinecomms.com.au> for additional resources.