

The Sources *Hot*Link

Tips and Practical Ideas to Get Positive News Coverage

Number Four, Summer 1997

Media Exposure

BY JEAN COBURN

Flexibility and imagination are among the best friends of the organization seeking media exposure. That was the main theme of the "Promotions on a Shoestring" seminar hosted by the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association. One of the presenters at the June 3rd seminar was Sandra Shaul, the Executive Editor of *Rotunda* magazine. Ms. Shaul discussed three main points on how to get media exposure. Although Ms. Shaul focused on how to get your magazine covered by the media, much of the information she presented is relevant for those promoting a new company, department, campaign, product or publication. Here are highlights of her presentation:

1. What Can be Promoted Through the Media?

- The magazine as an entity
- A specific article
- The magazine's niche or position as an authoritative voice
- When relevant, the position of the association that publishes the magazine as an authoritative voice

Be clear on what you are after when you contact the media. Be prepared to change gears if you see another opportunity when contact is made!

2. What Tools are Needed for Promotion?

- A copy of the magazine
- A press release on magazine letterhead, clipped to the magazine, with a summary that includes the magazine's mandate, circulation, price, and gives the name of a contact with phone and fax numbers. Follow with a clear, brief outline or special opening line and a teaser/sell explaining why it is unique
- Media list with names, addresses, phone and fax numbers, highlighting your most

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Networking for Success

Improve Your Publicity Awareness

BY BARRY SISKIND

Most of us are used to certain comfortable patterns in our business lives. However, working a room at a conference or networking event stretches this comfort zone to encompass new skills and techniques. To win in today's marketplace we have to be constantly looking for business and taking advantage of opportunities whenever they occur.

Before the Event

- Plan ahead. Learn about the event and who will be there.
- Set your goals. What do you want to accomplish at the event both personally and professionally?
- Prepare yourself with positive self talk. To overcome any anxiety, ask yourself "What is the worst thing that can happen and can I handle it?"
- Prepare your self introduction. Plan a sentence or two to give people a positive experience of you.

At the Event

- Your entrance. Take a deep breath, stand tall and move into the room with confidence.
- The buddy system. Use a colleague to introduce one another around and develop a rescue system.
- Name tags. Place your name tag on your right side.
- Business cards. Remember your business cards but hand them out discriminately after you have established rapport.

- Opening lines. Plan an opening line in the form of an upbeat observation, or an open ended question.
- Breaking and entering. Approach groups of three or more. When you feel yourself included through verbal acknowledgment or eye contact, join the conversation.
- Disengaging. Remember you are supposed to circulate. You should spend no more than 5-6 minutes with one person.

After the Event

- Follow up within 7 days of the event.
- Send a handwritten note acknowledging your meeting.
- Provide feedback on actions you have taken as a result of your interaction.
- Continue to look for opportunities to develop new contacts and manage old ones.



Barry Siskind is President of International Training and Management, a training company specializing in exhibitor training and business networking. He is the author of Making

Contact and The Successful Exhibitor. ITM's listing is on page 269 of the Summer 1997 edition of Sources and on the Sources World Wide Web site (<http://www.sources.com>). E-mail itm@ican.net or call 1-800-358-6079.

likely prospects (i.e. those who regularly cover your subject and/or cover magazines)

- Familiarity with the format used by your contacts. If you expect them to take an interest in you, show them that you have an interest in them
- Chutzpa and imagination

3. How to Make Contact

- By mail for general coverage
- By fax or telephone for very timely stories or for follow-up
- By phone to bounce around ideas, to get an idea of what is most desirable, to discuss ongoing coverage

When the media express interest, be accessible. Supply them with information quickly, briefly, and accurately.

A simple thank you for coverage never hurts!



Sandra Shaul is Executive Editor of *Rotunda* magazine and head of the Publications Department at the Royal Ontario Museum. The Royal Ontario Museum's Listing is on page 307 of the Summer 1997 edition of *Sources*

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How to Lobby Like A Pro

BY KATE MACDOUGALL

Professional lobbyists will tell you: as important as what they say is how they say it – and to whom. Whether you want an empty lot turned into a neighbourhood playground or an amendment to federal tobacco advertising legislation, you need to lobby like a pro.

Think of your issue as a marketing challenge. Get to know your “market” and your “product.” Research and use focus groups to find out what the public thinks. What are your objectives and expectations? Who are your opponents? Who have they called on for support? Why are they opposing? What would make them change their minds? How can you best approach them? Who is on your side? How can you use their support most effectively?

Identifying the precise legislation and level of government you should approach is essential. Even the smallest of issues is governed by multiple tiers of legislation. Find out what levels of government have jurisdiction over the various dimensions of your issue. Once you've determined which departments and ministries are involved identify which specific laws affect your issue and finally who the key decision-makers are. A copy of *Parliamentary Names & Numbers* is an invaluable reference tool at this stage.

Choose one or more spokespersons to represent your group. They can be members of your group, lawyers, public figures, or even members of an agency that sympathizes with your cause.

In choosing your advocates ask yourself: Is this advocate the best spokesperson for my cause? Does the advocate know the history and purposes behind the issues? Can the advocate present my group's viewpoint in a logical and convincing manner? Is the advocate sincerely interested in the issue or simply promoting his or her personal interest?

It is crucial for you to understand the process involved with your targeted piece of legislation as it moves through Parliament or any legislative body.

Once you understand the process you'll see when and how to intervene. At this point you have several options. Many organizations opt for postcards and petitions to legislators. The sheer

volume required to attract any serious attention, however, can be an obstacle for smaller groups. Well-placed and well-written personal letters can have more impact. Above all, encourage citizens outside your group to write letters of their own.

The more letters, phone calls, and faxes a politician receives, the more seriously s/he will take them.

Some very important tips to keep you lobbying like a pro:

- 1) **Use the Media.** Whatever message you're sending to legislators, send it to the media as well. Legislators are highly sensitive to comments by the media. Let the media know what you're up to through press releases, letters to the editor, and phone calls. Maintain your listing in *Sources*. Make your spokespersons accessible to the media. Responding quickly and openly to requests for information and interviews will ensure that they take you seriously.
- 2) **Use the Opposition.** Never underestimate the power of the opposition parties. For a well-rounded lobbying campaign you must brief the opposition parties. They welcome input on new legislation. Information you have will help them prepare their questions and statements in the legislature.
- 3) **Use the “Public Interest.”** Governments see themselves as making legislative decisions based on what they view as the public interest. Emphasize that your group's concerns are consistent with the public interest and that the alternatives are not.

Lobbying plays an important part in Canada's democracy. It influences governments to take account of a diverse range of interests. Whether it's a large corporation with a paid in-house government consultant or a small special interest group starting a basement letter-writing campaign, lobbying provides avenues for Canadians to voice their concerns. Lobby effectively to ensure that your voice is heard.

Kate MacDougall is Circulation Manager for *Parliamentary Names & Numbers*, *Sources* and *Sources HotLink*.

Don't Forget to Write

BY ULLI DIEMER

Writing letters to the editor is an effective and inexpensive way of getting publicity for your point of view and your organization.

Letters to the editor are published by almost all publications, from newspapers and magazines with a national circulation, such as the *Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's*, to community newspapers, special-interest magazines, trade publications, and newsletters.

A letter to the editor may not have the glamour of splashier forms of media exposure, but the letters pages are among the most widely read sections of almost all periodicals.

Guidelines for writing a letter to the editor:

- Make it brief. 100 to 150 words should be the maximum, fewer if possible.
- Confine yourself to one subject. Make one point and make it clearly. You or your organization undoubtedly have views about many issues, but in a letter to the editor, you can make only one point effectively.
- To help you focus, begin by summarizing the point you want to make in a single phrase or sentence. Use this to guide you in writing the letter.
- You can and should bring in support-

ing evidence and arguments, but they should all be in support of your main point. Don't digress.

- Your main point can be specific or broad, e.g. "The proposed landfill site will pollute Otter Creek" or "Because we're overfishing, the world's oceans are becoming deserts."
- Have someone else read or edit your letter before sending it. It's hard to judge one's own writing objectively.
- If you're writing on behalf of an organization, make that clear. Be aware, however, that newspapers tend to favour letters from individuals over letters from organizations.
- Avoid personal attacks or disparaging the motives of someone with whom you disagree. Stick to the issue and the facts.
- Send your letter quickly, while the issue is fresh, preferably within 24 hours. Chances of your letter being printed diminish with each passing day.
- If possible, fax your letter, send it by E-mail, or deliver it by hand. Sending it by mail may delay its arrival by two or three crucial days.
- Remember to include your name, address, and phone number. Many publications have a policy of contacting the letter writer to confirm that s/he is truly the author.

Give Journalists a Daily Reminder!

Did you know that *Sources* cooperates with the Canadian Association of Journalists to produce *The Canadian Journalists' Calendar*, distributed to CAJ's membership? The popular calendar features 12 award-winning photographs by Canadian photojournalists and includes deadlines and events important to media professionals. Your message could be in newsrooms and offices coast-to-coast for a month, a season or a full year! Call *Sources* Display Advertising Manager Kirsten Cowan at (416) 964-7799 for details today!

Put The Spotlight on Your Listing!

Display advertising can put your organization in the spotlight every time a reader opens *Sources*. The Bank of Montreal, KPMG, Alcan Aluminum and many others use advertisements to direct journalists to their listings and also to raise awareness about their specific services like resource materials, hot-lines, media directories or World Wide Web sites. Call Display Advertising Manager Kirsten Cowan at (416) 964-7799 to find out how advertising in *Sources* can work for you!

PR Awards



Two Gold Awards were won by Janice Nathanson of Manifest Communications at the 1997 Canadian Public Relations Society (Toronto)

Awards of Excellence and Volunteer Awards. She won in the print category for "Social Marketing for Business" and in the external communications category for "Community Co-operation for Change."

Sources, as sponsor of the print category award, was particularly proud of Janice's accomplishment. Twelve recipients were honoured at an exceptionally well run awards evening.

The only other Gold Award went to Dawn McDowell of Howe & Company, CIBC Wood Gundy for "1996 Children's Miracle." Brigid O'Reilly was honoured with the Public Relations Community Service Award.

The evening's theme was "Achieving the Winning Mind Set." The topic was given substance by sports coach and guest speaker Andy Higgins. A mark of successful people, he said, is that they possess "a powerfully clear vision of what they want to achieve" and "see options in every situation." They are "very aware of what is going on," and "exercise small acts of self discipline over time." Each of us cannot win in a given competition, Higgins noted, but each of us can succeed, by improving on our own past performance.

Share the Good News

Has your organization generated media coverage recently? Share the details and a copy of the story the next time you're in the news. Fax (416) 964-8763, mail 4 Phipps St., Ste. 109, Toronto, ON M4Y 1J5, E-mail sources@sources.com.

Feedback

Do you have questions or comments about this newsletter, your listing in *Sources*, or any of the services *Sources* provides? Call us at (416) 964-7799 or E-mail us at sources@sources.com.

Communicating Effectively Through Your Association Newsletter

BY ULLI DIEMER

You are producing your newsletter because you have something important to communicate. You owe it to yourself and to your readers to make sure you communicate it *effectively*. Here are some pointers to help you achieve that:

Know Who You're Writing For

The more clearly you can define your intended audience(s), the better you can do producing a publication which suits your readers' interests and needs. Start with some general questions:

Who is your newsletter for? For the members of your own group or for the general public? For people who are already well-informed about the subject matter, or for those who are just learning about it?

Look at the subject matter, the language, the level of knowledge your publication presumes.

Are they appropriate for your readership?

If your publication deals with a particular issue, does it relate that issue to the experience of readers with different ethnic or racial backgrounds? To women? To readers with handicaps? To the young or the old?

Stay In Touch With Your Readers

The day-to-day chores involved in producing a publication sometimes cause us to lose touch with our readers and what they want. Solicit their feedback regularly. Invite letters and comments. Consider sending out a questionnaire. Ask readers what they think of the newsletter whenever you have a chance to speak to them personally. Always keep the reader in mind in everything you do.

Write Clearly And Directly

Don't expect your readers to read the publication out of a sense of duty. Make the writing as lively, interesting, and clear as you possibly can.

As you write, or edit someone else's

writing, imagine the reader looking over your shoulder. When the reader would interrupt with: "Why did you say that?" or "What do you mean?" or "Who cares?" make sure that the article answers the reader's questions.

Be sure that all articles — even the editor's — are read by someone else before being printed. Even the best writers find it difficult to be objective about their own writing.

Produce A Publication That Looks Good

Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking our subject matter is so important we don't have to "dress it up."

Such an attitude may work against you. Even readers who are committed to a cause or interested in a subject are more likely to read an attractive, visually interesting publication.

The strategic use of photographs and drawings, white space, borders, bold headlines and other elements of effective design help to involve readers and to keep them reading.

Publish Material That Is Informative And Interesting

Don't let your newsletter be repetitive, predictable, and dull! Work with your contributors to help them produce top-quality material. Give them constructive feedback. Set the goal of producing a publication readers look forward to receiving — a publication containing genuinely useful information, and intelligently presented ideas and opinions. Infect everyone with your enthusiasm for excellence.

Include A Mix Of Articles

A publication offering an unrelenting diet of long serious articles can tax the enthusiasm of even the most committed

reader. Strive for variety. Include some shorter, lighter pieces. Look for cartoons or illustrations that relate to your subject. If possible, include personal experiences and first-person accounts from a variety of perspectives.

Include Distribution In Your Planning

Distribution — especially if you use the mail — should be considered as you plan your publication. For example, adding a single extra page can add 45 cents per item to your mailing costs if it takes you into the next weight category. This can translate into an additional expenditure of hundreds of dollars per issue even for a newsletter with fewer than 1,000 subscribers. The size of the envelope used can have a similar effect. It can be very worthwhile to get expert advice on these questions.

Don't Try To Do It All Yourself

There are those who can single-handedly handle every aspect of producing a publication, from writing and editing through design, production, and distribution. For most of us, however, it makes sense to concentrate on those aspects we are best at, and find others to handle those tasks which are particularly time-consuming or which require specialized skills or equipment, such as desktop publishing. Trying to do everything can result in expensive mistakes or burned-out staff or volunteers.

Allow Enough Time

A publication takes time to produce. Trying to skip on that time can result in shortcuts in quality, avoidable mistakes, increased costs, and frayed tempers. Develop a schedule for your newsletter. Plan when you want to have it appear, and calculate backwards from there. Allow time for unforeseen problems. Change the schedule for subsequent issues if it seems unrealistic.

Ulli Diemer is General Manager of Sources.

