



Working with the Media – Other Ways to Get Out the Message

Editorial Board Visits

Editorial board meetings need to be carefully planned and executed. An editorial board can range in number from ten editorial writers to one writer who is the paper's editor. After scheduling an editorial board, find out who from the paper will be attending and ask if they plan to write a news story from your meeting. Before attending the meeting, try to determine from local allies the political biases and issue interests of the individuals you will be meeting with.

The individuals you recruit for your editorial board meeting should be credible, well-versed and able to succinctly speak about the issue of concern and why it is so important. Local facts, figures or examples should be used to provide "punch" to your arguments. Stress only three or four important points. Have your spokespeople clearly state what they believe, why they believe it, and the effect it will have on their community.

Find out the paper's editorial position before the visit. This can be obtained from the paper's past editorials, or from relevant interest group allies. Be prepared to counter the opposition's view as the editorial board may play devil's advocate, but of course, never let the environment become hostile.

If a news story or editorial resulting from the meeting is negative or does not adequately reflect the views presented, have an ally write a letter to the editor reiterating the points made in the meeting. The letter should clearly state why the writer disagrees with the editorial/story, without being in a hostile tone. If a positive story or editorial is written following the meeting, have someone write a letter thanking the paper for "doing the right thing."

Local Talk Radio

Try to schedule yourself or a member of your organization as guests on local talk radio shows. This is a great way to get your message out there without being edited. Even if the talk radio in your area does not seem to be on your political wavelength, you may still be able to be a guest. (They like the challenge of having a guest with an opposing view. Remember, conflict sells).

Call the producer or the host and pitch your idea (see "Pitching a Story"). Have a specific piece of legislation or an agenda and pitch yourself in such a way to make the show seem interesting to the host.

The best way to get rid of pre-show jitters or anxiety is to know the issue as well as you can. Tell the truth and stick to your script. Practice "taking calls" from listeners with members of your organization. Be prepared to be challenged and have your arguments ready. Keep your cool and



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never get angry or abusive with a caller or the host. Identify two or three key points of priority that you can be sure to make during the course of the show.

You can also establish a cadre of callers that will listen to certain shows and call-in with questions about your issue. Provided your callers with times of shows, hosts' political leanings, call-in numbers, and talking points. Several callers that voice the same opinion on one show can be an equally powerful display of support for your UN issue.

Flyers

Flyers are inexpensive ways to directly communicate your message to the public. Most include a simple design or graphic, a simple message and a call for action. Example: "Please Call Congressman X at 555-1234 and tell him to vote against H.R. X because it does not adequately fund UN program X."

Hand out flyers at fairs, public meetings, rallies, parades, booths at large events, town hall meetings, grocery stores, outside of post offices, etc. Always ask permission to hand out flyers from the event organizer or building manager. Recruit volunteers to hand out the flyers and always brief them beforehand on the issues you are promoting.

Paid Print, Radio or Television Commercials

Most small non-profit organizations usually do not have the budget to pay for advertising their message. But on occasion, a well-placed ad can bring immense credibility to your organization and your issue. Shop around for the best deals and the best rates. Your group may be eligible for a non-profit advertising rate.

Radio and television ads are sold by a points system. 100 points means the average listener will hear your ad once during the week. 1000 points means your ad will be heard 10 times during the week by an average listener. Buy the time slots you want, if available, not what the person selling you the slots wants.

Most radio stations will help you produce your ads, as will most television stations. Production may include help with your script, a professional voice for the ad, music and final editing for your ad. But if you want top quality, be prepared to pay more for it and hire a professional media firm. Radio and television ads are expensive, so know what you want before you buy and don't accept anything you don't like.

Newspaper ads are sold by the column inch. Layout of your ad is often included in the price of the ad itself. It is best to have a professional lay out your ad according to the specifics of the newspaper, unless you are proficient at layout yourself in Quark Express or a comparable computer graphics program. Be sure to ask the newspaper if they need the artwork on disk or



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hard copy.

Public Service Announcements

Most radio stations are willing to do public service announcements (PSAs) to publicize an upcoming event or to spread a message about a good cause. Call individual stations to get their conditions/requirements for PSAs. Keep in mind that this method should only be a secondary way of getting your message out, because there is no way of ensuring when and how often a PSA will be broadcast.

The Internet

The internet is becoming increasingly popular as a way to stay in touch with each other and to research particular topics of interest. E-mail is an effective way to communicate with members of your organization who have access to a computer and the internet.

Anyone who has used the internet for e-mail knows that like your mail box at home, the your e-mail inbox gets full of unwanted junk mail messages. Keep your messages to a minimum and don't include anything that you consider confidential.

The internet is a great way to build a crowd for an event to inexpensively send important information (like a newsletter or issue updates) to your members and partners. Keep in mind that not everyone has access to the internet, but encourage members of your organization to use it. You can also set up a homepage where members of your local chapter can go for information about upcoming events or other news.