

## **Public Relations and the Electronic Media**

### **Are You Overlooking Radio, TV and The Internet**

From...

#### ***The Public Relations Practitioner's Playbook***

*A Synergized\* Approach to Effective Two-Way Communication*

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**\* (The whole works better than any one of its parts)**

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### **Be an Advance Person**

### **Get to know the local stations**

#### **Advantages of Radio**

- **It's immediate**
- **It's comfortable**
- **It's focused**
- **It's captive**

#### **Advantages Of Television**

- **Nearly as immediate as radio**
- **Audience**
- **Comfort**
- **Captive**

#### **Advantages Of Cable**

More than 75 million American homes are now wired for cable.

Demographically, cable can reach just about every audience segment. In addition to carrying commercial stations, the same ones that can be received

with an outdoor or indoor antenna, cable provides hundreds of specialized programs on hundreds, approaching thousands, of channels with very specific target audiences. Many cable operators offer excellent opportunities for local origination programming. Potential programming opportunities abound for such professionals as physicians, dentists, attorneys, other professional experts, non-profit organizations, school districts and hospitals .

Depending on financial resources and expertise, programs may be professionally produced at a substantial cost while others are obviously “low-budget.” However, low budget does not necessarily mean poor quality. Cable staff or community volunteers may be willing to assist with a production. Take advantage of offers. Profit making organizations, or professionals, may have to pay production costs, but the key word here is may. Because the professional is providing a service-type program to the cable operator, barter could be negotiated to cover production costs.

### **Advantages of the Internet**

- It already reaches the millions of consumers who have access to computers at home, at work, in libraries, cyber cafes, etc.
- Relative ease of using e-mail
- Rapidly expanding use of Web pages
- Discussion groups and message boards
- Web pages that offer links to immediate information from your company or organization

Because of its “newness,” there are some **disadvantages**:

- Available *only* to individuals who have computer access
- Driving audiences to the Web site
- Looks unprofessional
- Frustration by some who have trouble accessing your information
- Keeping information current (one person or a small team of individuals should be assigned the task)
- Security
- Has a link that doesn't work
- Is sometimes unexpectedly unavailable
- Has typographical errors
- Failure to include contact information
- Failure to provide quick responses to customer service questions

### **PR Play 8-1**

#### **PR Opportunities in Radio and TV and (eventually) the Web**

- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Newscasts

- Discussion programs
- Talk (Call-in) Shows
- Protest demonstrations
- News releases and story proposals to news departments
- Editorials
- Community Calendars
- Actualities or sound bites
- Videotapes for news programs or mini Video News Releases (VNRs)
- General-interest films or videos.
- Silent Publicity

### **Types of Vehicles**

- **Public Service (spot) Announcements**
- **Newscasts**
- **Discussion programs**
- **Talk or interview shows**
- **News releases** (printed and video) and **story pitches** to local and network news directors.
- **General-interest or video films**
- **Creative programming**
- **Silent Publicity**

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### **PR Play 8-2**

### **Getting On The Air**

**The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) suggests that if your appeal is to be effective, you should have the answer to some key questions before contacting local stations: (Some refer to it as the MAC Triad - message, audience, channel.)**

- What is your message? [message] Are you sure of the basic idea you want to communicate?
- Who should receive your message? [audience] Is it of general interest to a large segment of the audience? Can it be tailored to reach a specific audience?
- How can you best put your message across? [channel] Does it have enough general interest for a special program? Would a PSA serve just as well?

Your answers to these questions should help you determine in advance if your pitch will work.

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### **PR Play 8-3**

#### **Example – Radio Public Service Announcement**

Radio Spot

Washington Township Jaycees

**FADE IN MUSIC**

**Panel Moderator...**

And now ladies and gentlemen, four concerned parents will tell us all they've done

**(MUSIC FADE OUT)**

in the last year to make their community a better place to live.

**Parents.....**

**(SILENCE)**

**Panel Moderator...**

Thank you parents.

**FADE IN MUSIC...UP AND OUT**

**COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER...**  
Make

What have you done lately for your town?

your community a better place

because you live there. Fight drugs.

The preceding announcement brought to you by

(ORGANIZATION) and this radio station.

**:30**

**Washington Twp. Jaycees**  
**Clyde Cool, 856-555-1212**  
**Run thru: 12/31**

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### **PR Play 8-4**

**Keys to keep in mind when trying to get your  
message on radio and television**

- Responsibility
- Contacts

- First meeting
- Timely and relevant
- Be brief
- Controversy
- Teamwork
- Suggestions and criticism
- Limitations
- Make appointments
- Write for the ear
- Plan ahead
- Be on time
- Accept suggestions
- News releases
- Feedback
- Relate your image, not sell it
- Thank you letters

### **Ten Tips For the Use of Television by Public Relations Practitioners**

1. Be simple. Messages can be highlighted and the best camera work done when backgrounds are plain, participants are few and movement is minimal. Quick or sudden movements can be distracting and may draw the viewers' attention away from the focal point.

2. Check with the program or public affairs director on the use of slides, films, videotapes and photographs that can be used to help communicate a message. (Many stations would prefer shooting their own video – using a format that is compatible with their equipment.)
3. Make sure the text (copy) written to accompany visual aids fits. In other words, if a video or film runs 30 seconds, the text should contain about 60 words. A one-minute video should about 125 words of text.
4. Keep in mind that slides are preferred over photographs in most cases. They can be made professionally at a minimum cost. When photographs are used, matte or dull-surfaced prints are preferable since glossy prints reflect studio lights.
5. Provide one slide or photograph for each 10-second spot; two for a 20-second spot and so on.
6. When discussing such statistical topics as budgets or surveys, use charts. Be sure they are large enough to be read easily and don't forget to use vivid colors on bar graphs and pie charts. Don't use line graphs.
7. Ask that visuals be returned immediately after use. Otherwise, they may be discarded.
8. When your representatives go on the air, they will want to look and sound their best. TV personnel will give participants helpful suggestions and appreciate cooperation in return. During the appearance, the director and floor managers will need additional cooperation. They may find it necessary to give hand signals during the show to control the speed of the presentation.



Your representatives should ask the director any questions about the show before the show goes on the air.

9. Participants should not worry about the role they are playing. They are appearing on the program not as an actor or actress but rather as an interesting person, representing your firm or organization.
10. For both TV and radio, be on time. In producing a TV program, many things must be accomplished in a short period of time and every minute is important.

## **Writing for Electronic Media**

When writing for radio, television or non-broadcast video, the text or scripts must be tailored to listeners or viewers who might not be paying full attention (passive listeners or viewers).

## **The Video News Release**

### **Getting Your Video News Release on TV**

A number of recommendations have been made by news directors and producers over the years to help PR practitioners get their VNRs aired. Among them are:

- **Timely** – VNRs cannot become outdated too quickly. While they don't have to be evergreens, they do need a moderate shelf life.

- **Newsworthy** – not necessarily spot or “hot” news (a breaking story, but wouldn’t that be nice), but certainly it should be of current interest.
- **Local in nature** – sometimes difficult to accomplish, but using an earlier example, tamperproof caps of medicine bottles or safety devices on hedge trimmers. Those subjects are local almost anywhere. The video should show how the subject affects the average viewer.
- **Sexy** – In the news sense, the topic should be a grabber with a hook – something to pique the “gatekeeper’s” attention. News people refer to those topics as “sexy” because, like sex, your message should sell as it relates your organization’s image. In this instance, though, it is just a newsroom term.
- **Excellent quality** – tape sent to commercial TV stations must meet the same professional standards as programs produced by those stations or networks.
- **Visuals** – Television is a visual medium. The video and graphics should be interesting and eye-catching.
- **Real people** – those newsmakers you are providing as “bites” or “talking heads” must relate to the viewer. In other words, the company spokesperson who is telling the story should be a “real person.”
- **Commercialism** – avoid it. Your VNR is not a commercial because you are not paying to have it aired. Limit corporate identification to the silent publicity that will be communicated through the message.

- **Brief** – keep the wrap or package to 45 to 90 seconds.
- **“B roll”** – include extra “B” (background) roll.
- **Extra cuts** – include extra sound bites (voice cuts or actualities with identification).
- **Names and titles** – include super-imposed names and titles. To avoid errors, in addition to listing each name and title on separate frames, consider including a brief still shot on the video. This will assure the proper name goes under the newsmaker it is intended for especially, if your VNR contains more than one male or female newsmaker. Many times, stations will use their particular logotype or typeface to superimpose names and titles under a sound bite so that it appears they have actually conducted the interview and it is their tape.
- **Script** – include hard copy of the package’s script and other contents. This will greatly assist the news producer with editing and preparation especially if the station chooses to carry the package on one program and the story as a “wild” on another.
- **Experienced professionals** – For the very best results, hire proven professionals to assist with the production and distribution. While it might appear expensive on the surface, their experience in this area will probably be cost effective.
- **Truth** – Above all, tell the truth. It is your production, so “gatekeepers” fully accept that the contents will be subjective and one-sided. However, it is still your obligation to be factual, provide attribution and

to use disclaimers if any of the video is a simulation and not an actual portrayal.

### **PR Play 8-5**

#### **The First Step**

Experts suggest answering three questions before proceeding with a **VNR**: purpose; message; vehicle? In this instance, the decision (about the vehicle) has been made. A video news release it is. What's next?

- Determine your **goal**. What do you want to communicate to the audience?
- Once you determine the goal, write down exactly what you want to say to reach the goal (**message**).
- Gather your thoughts leading to your goal. You might want to use focus groups to be sure you are developing background information and facts.
- Focus panel members might serve to provide the types of questions needed to help you reach your goal.
- As you write down the supporting points that will lead to your goal, continually refine the facts to short sentences.

Any one or more of the following could help you reach your goal as a script is being written (each has its own hook):

- controversy
- conflict
- competition
- consequence
- familiar persons
- humor
- heartstrings/emotion
- problems
- progress
- success
- unknown
- unusual
- wants/needs

### **Tips for Talking to the Electronic Media**

1. Be prepared.
2. Anticipate sensitive questions.
3. Be open and honest.
4. Never say “NO COMMENT.”
5. Try to avoid OFF THE RECORD statements. The operative word is try. (See Media Relations – Chapter 7.)
6. Think before you speak.
7. Never lose your temper.
8. Don’t let a reporter put words in your mouth.
9. Don’t use jargon.
10. Emphasize the benefits of your project to the community.
11. When dealing with television:
  - a) Talk in “sound bites” (20 to 30 second responses)

b) Think visually

c) Dress conservatively

- Wear suits or dresses of soft, medium colors. Avoid sharply contrasting patterns and colors. Men should consider wearing blue dress shirts although, thanks to technology, white is no longer considered a negative. Solid or striped ties are preferred.
- Jewelry should be simple and uncluttered. Pearls and dull-finished metals reflect less light than sparkling and highly polished jewelry.
- Don't worry about glasses. The studio crew will arrange lighting to avoid glare.
- The program's director or floor manager will discuss makeup. Pancake makeup is advisable for men with heavy beards. Women should avoid heavy makeup or overuse of lipstick.

d) Be natural

e) Forget about the camera (it will follow you)

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## **PR Play 8-6**

### **FOR THE ON-CAMERA INTERVIEW**

#### **DO**

- Use first names
- Speak to the interviewer and not to the camera
- Stand up for your rights
- Deliver your message early
- Be prepared from the time you leave your office/home
- Couch your position as necessary
- Speak only the truth; be ready with facts
- Be aware of and sensitive to time
- Know what the interviewer wants
- Be big enough to learn from your mistakes
- Thank the interviewer and crew for their time

#### **DON'T**

- Let the topic/subject drift
- Assume anything
- Be afraid to take a compliment (but keep your guard up)
- Consider the interviewer a friend...or an enemy
- Gossip, criticize or speculate
- Use **YES** and **NO** answers
- Put the interviewer on defensive without good cause
- Forget the importance of body language
- Speak too fast or too slow
- Go into any situation without preparation
- Be too hard on yourself
- Ever say "**NO COMMENT**"

- Ask for a copy of the final interview



## **PR Play 8-7**

### **In Front Of The Camera**

Unless you are an expert in front of the camera, DO NOT look directly into the camera. Look at the interviewer or if the interviewer is remote, pick a spot that is slightly off-camera.

If there is a TV monitor within view, ask that it be removed out of view. If that cannot be done, DO NOT look at the monitor at all.

If you must look into the lens of the camera, pretend that the person who you most want to convince is behind that lens. If that makes you uncomfortable, then pretend that your mother, best friend, daughter or son, or anyone else you feel comfortable with is behind that lens.