

8. Media

Introduction
Use of the Media
Media Responsibility?
The Power of the Media
Media Strategy
Media Planning
Media Databases
Sources and Methods of Obtaining Information
Methods of Obtaining Media Coverage
13 Steps to Successful Coverage
Contacts with the Media
Targeting
Press Releases
Letters to Editors
Radio and TV
Press Conferences
Criticism
Media Difficulties
Evaluation
There is No ‘One Size Fits All’
Further Resources

Introduction

Use of the media is the most effective way of spreading the animal protection message to mass audiences. It can be harnessed to further campaign objectives, to reach potential new supporters and to build the organisation’s ‘brand’ and profile. However, in many countries, it is increasingly difficult to achieve successful media coverage. This is because of the wide variety of NGOs and the subjects they cover, and the increased exposure of animal protection issues. Media work is also becoming increasingly professional. Organisations need to establish a media strategy and media plan to meet the organisation’s objectives – both in terms of campaign/programme development and supporter recruitment and fundraising.

Use of the Media

There are two main uses of media coverage for animal protection societies: -

- **Campaigns**
Using the media to further campaigns objectives
- **Supporters/fundraising**
Using the media to attract potential new supporters and fundraise

This means that both the campaigns department and the fundraising department will have an interest in media work, and both their perspectives need to be considered when developing a media strategy. It is also important for developing the organisation’s ‘brand’ and profile more generally, which necessitates coherence of messages and image.

Media Responsibility?

In larger organisations, the Media Office (Press Office) is normally located within the Campaigns Department of organisations with a campaigns focus (or 'Communications' Department). For others, such as service delivery organisations, it may fall under the Fundraising Department. However, it will need input, guidance and advice from all sectors of the organisation, particularly fundraising and campaigns/programme areas.

The Power of the Media

The media – press, radio and television (TV) – shapes public opinion. In a movement for social change, such as the animal protection movement, it is probably the single most effective vehicle for spreading the message.

The media is able to reach a wide audience, including many new to the cause. Without the media, the movement will be largely reduced to 'preaching to the converted', and lack growth.

Television, in particular, is a powerful medium – combining the power of image with the spoken word. One picture can be worth a thousand words in portraying the suffering animals have to endure. It enables the animal protection society message to reach out and touch millions of individuals.

For these reasons, media work should be a leading priority for a campaigning organisation.

Media Strategy

It is important to establish a media strategy to enable the organisation to work the media proactively, as well as reactively. Effective forward planning can ensure that you use the media for your own mission purposes, rather than be used by media to fit their own agenda.

Proactive approaches would include: -

- Using research and investigations to encourage and cooperate with in-depth investigative programmes
- Writing and trying to place feature articles (draft key points for target media)
- Planning Press Conferences, demonstrations, events, campaign actions, photo-calls, celebrity occasions etc. specifically to attract media
- Planned attacks on government or business targets

Reactive media work can also be useful, but approach and extent still need to be planned. As with any other area of the organisation's work, priorities need to be established and resource constraints considered.

In a nutshell, what you want to achieve in campaigns terms by getting your message across in the media is to: -

- Set an agenda
- Put decision makers 'on notice'
- Get people thinking
- Soften the ground
- Stimulate debate & awareness of your issues

- Turn concern into desire to ACT

Media Planning

The following can all form useful aspects of media planning: -

- Carefully plan the time and place of media events Press Conferences and media events (such as demonstrations, events, campaign actions, photo-calls, celebrity occasions etc.).
- Include visual impacts in planning (e.g. an event of action against the backdrop of a national politician, celebrity, beauty spot or natural wonder, major building or historic location etc. will make a more interesting picture).
- Decide the extent and limits of your search for media (e.g. What is appropriate to your organisation's image and your message? Would nudity or extreme controversy be helpful or counterproductive?).
- Develop and use a celebrity strategy (there are celebrity databases that you can purchase/subscribe to in some countries).
- Include media aspects in research and investigations planning.
- Analyse target audiences & give special attention to relevant media (E.g. 'broadsheets' – national qualities – are read by those who control dominant institutions, animal/companion animal publications are read by those with an existing interest in animal issues, professionals read specialist magazines etc.).
- Prepare and maintain a media contacts list (relevant editors and journalists), include details of interests and past coverage for future reference. Here again, there are commercial databases available in some countries.
- Plan and pursue your media contacts systematically. Rank media and develop and maintain contacts with the most important.
- Plan so the media has regular, but not too persistent, approaches - with variety. Link to major world events, where possible.
- Decide on level of coverage of media, in order to react and comment on important issues.
- If seeking a high level of reactive coverage, decide which subjects will be covered and establish a system for responding to these (e.g. write organisation's policy and opinion in advance, and review each time and use).
- Use supporters as part of your media strategy – particularly to reach local media.

Media Databases

In some countries, it is possible to purchase/subscribe to media databases, which are regularly updated and allow you to: -

- Make your own targeted media selections
- Add your own contacts
- Send out Press Releases automatically (e.g. by e-mail)

Sources and Methods of Obtaining Information

- The Internet
- The newsstands
- Free newspapers
- TV reviews
- Library
- Phone directory
- Yellow pages

- Local knowledge
- Listen, read and watch
- Phone and ask

Methods of Obtaining Media Coverage

There are various ways of seeking media coverage, including the following: -

- Press releases
- Press conferences
- Media packs
- Letters to editors
- Writing articles
- Keeping and publicising photo and/or video library
- Media worthy demonstrations, events and photo-calls
- Use of celebrities
- Agreeing to be featured on topical issues
- Making footage and photographs available
- Advertising
- Persuading 'soaps' to take up your cause/campaign

What we want to say is not necessarily what the media and its audiences want to hear. When dealing with the media, we always have to get over the "so what" factor. It may be worth remembering that the media formula is fairly limited. These are the type of stories that tend make it in to the media: -

- 'We name the guilty'
- 'We reveal the startling facts'
- 'The powerless will fight'
- 'Underdogs win'
- 'Shock statement'
- 'Incredible facts'
- 'Cuddly pets' (the ah factor)

13 Steps to Successful Coverage

1. Keep it short

Strip your message to the bare bones. Remember people hardly have time to read these days. Put any detailed information in a 'fact page' at the end.

2. Think headlines

If the crux of your message cannot be expressed in a few words (maybe a sentence) it's unlikely to be successful.

3. Use consistent slogans/'sound bites'

This is the best way to make your campaign instantly recognisable, especially over an extended period.

4. Do it regularly

Regular communication is essential to build a loyal and expectant constituency.

5. Be positive

Don't have a message that is totally negative. Offer a practical solution to the problem. This can inspire people. Rescues area good example.

6. Set the agenda

Redefine the problem to fit your solution.

7. Be visual

Pictures are much more effective and memorable than words, especially if they reinforce emotions. Forget the intellectual high ground. You are more likely to attract television attention if you can supply plenty of visual material either in advance or at the time of the launch. Broadcast quality tapes can be used. However it is best to create an event that will provide good pictures for TV.

8. Appeal to emotions in news stories

E.g. conflict, fear, triumph over adversity (David & Goliath).

9. Entertain

Think of the media as theatre; it is primarily for entertainment.

10. Match the medium

Tailor the message to fit the different types of media, and different publications where possible.

11. Limit the campaign

Keep campaign segments to less than three months, otherwise everyone forgets the message, people lose interest and the campaign loses momentum.

12. Use events to boost your release

Events can help to get media attention, but you need to think about them from the media's point of view. It can take a lot to get the press away from their desks! After all, they're even getting blasé about people who throw themselves in front of ocean trawlers? However with a little thought, you can make things interesting. A senior government minister will usually get the media there - if they've got something to say. A huge pile of letters dumped on the lawns outside the parliament will make a good picture. But an unknown person handing a less than charismatic politician a petition is unlikely to get the cameras rolling.

13. Develop your theme over time

Try to get regular feature coverage with national magazines, newspaper feature writers, 'magazine' style TV programs etc. Journalists do not generally want you to write the stories for them, but they do like you to feed them story ideas and background information. This is best done on a one-to-one basis e.g. over the telephone. Don't harass them, but keep in regular contact.

Contacts with the Media

The following guidance may be helpful with regard to contacts with the media: -

- Only put forward 'newsworthy' items – consider news 'angle' carefully.
- Human/animal interest stories work well too (personalise – helps empathy).
- Always remember the visual – picture opportunities help (media stunts and demos should be photogenic).
- 'Off the cuff' quotes should be well rehearsed.
- In all contacts, give essentials before background.
- Always be factual and accurate.
- Think carefully before turning down media opportunities: Is there scope for mission achievement, new supporters or financial support? If not, you may decide to decline? Also, do not hesitate to decline if you have no real expertise in the subject, it is outside your remit or you believe the media are 'setting you up'.
- Respond immediately to media inquiries. Media people live by deadlines. If they can't get your side of the story right away, they may opt to do without it.
- Acknowledge problems. Denial causes mistrust. Most people, including reporters, will be sympathetic to genuine problems.
- Never lie to a reporter. You will always get caught, and you'll lose credibility for yourself and your organisation.

- Reporters have to protect sources, so your need to protect a source will usually be understood.
- Never use 'off the record' briefings!
- Always be helpful and polite. Thank them for their help, and for any good articles or coverage; don't moan or complain when they don't.
- Local media (newspapers and TV stations may be easier targets, especially if there is a local angle)

Targeting

Target the right journalist. Producers are key people. A sympathetic researcher can help enormously. Target the specialist media, where appropriate. Also, for general supporter acquisition media, find out your organisation's target groups (most likely to be sympathetic) and target these – using the most attractive and compelling areas of your work (e.g. campaigns on flagship species, consumer campaigns, disaster relief/rescue etc.).

Once you have selected appropriate publications for your target audience, it is key to think about the readers of the publication you are targeting - what you want to say to a particular audience is not necessarily what they will want to hear, or what the journalists will print. Adapt your subject, and message to obtain coverage, yet still achieve your major objectives. The important thing is to understand the motivations of the publication and those of your organisation (and its priorities), and to reconcile the two.

Also, it can help to identify a particular column/page in a newspaper or magazine and 'spoon feed' the information to the journalist in a particular format that will exactly fit into that particular place - giving them exactly what they need - whether it be a specific image, or statistic or an offer of an interview.

Press Releases

Effective press releases will have most important information in first paragraph and the rest in descending order of importance

Consider the message you want to get across, the audience, and the desired result.

Heading: short, eye catching, includes main points

First paragraph should answer 5W's: -

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why

Body: Give essentials, then 'background notes'. Include: -

- One issue only
- Background on organisation
- One page only – short and to the point
- Quotes – from credible figure, include 'sound bites' that are readily quoted and remembered
- Photo opportunities

- Facts only – don't exaggerate
- Statistics

Background notes: include contact details and any explanations for clarity but not necessarily for publication. Include an 'all hours' contact and phone number and spokesperson details (if you are doing a national release, try to find local people to be available to speak to local media).

Send press releases to named journalist, where possible. Follow up with a call afterwards, ostensibly to offer them something further.

Letters to Editors

- Keep letter tightly composed
- Use specific examples
- One point per letter
- Accurate, up-to-date information
- Don't make personal attacks on those opposing your viewpoint
- Always sign your name
- Include contact details

Radio and TV

Don't forget news directors of radio and TV stations when circulating press releases

You will need a visual angle for TV

(Videos should be broadcast quality (Betacam or Mini DV) with separate sound tracks)

- Prepare well for radio and TV interviews
- Find out the aim and angle of the interview
- Why you, and who else will be interviewed?
- Ask for type of questions to be asked, and the first question
- Live or recorded?
- Who will be interviewer?
- Length or interview?
- Audience?

Interview Preparation

- Research the issues
- Research the programme
- Formulate and learn 3 Main 'points to make'
- Consider all possible questions and practise answers

Interview Tips

DOs

- Dress smartly
- Be punctual
- Be relaxed, be yourself
- Answer crisply and directly, speak slowly and clearly
- Give 'sound bites' of around 20 seconds

- Get your main points in
- Be sure of your facts
- Always sound reasonable and thoughtful
- Paint pictures, use examples
- Be positive and upbeat
- Mention your organisation

DON'Ts

- Exaggerate
- Lose your cool
- Be aggressive, even if challenge
- Be tricked by leading questions
- Waffle or ramble on
- Get sidetracked from your message

Press Conferences

Press conferences are similar to any other presentation and the points made in the separate chapter on presentations apply. The difference is anticipating likely media 'angles' and potential pitfalls in advance! It is important to work proactively and plan well to ensure that you use the media for your own mission purposes, rather than be used by media to fit their own agenda.

A well-written and compelling Press Release should be prepared (see above).

Press conference presentations should be kept brief, with more time for questions. Visual evidence presented at the conference should be brief and full of impact.

You need to know: -

- Location that will attract reporters
- Hour press most likely to attend
- How far in advance press to be notified, and best method for notifying

Media packs should be prepared including information such as: -

- Copy Press Release
- Background information on the organisation
- Background information on the issue
- Photo CD (or thumb nails of available photos)
- Details of further information available (e.g. reports, footage/Betacams)

Preparation should include: -

- Chose chair
- Key 'points to make'
- Good quotes/examples
- Considering all possible questions beforehand and prepare
- Ensuring everybody is well briefed
- Giving media reminder call on day of conference
- Making certain audio systems are flawless
- Name plates on the 'top table'

Keep a list of Press Conference attendees and contact details for follow-up.

Criticism

There are various ways of dealing with criticism, including the following: -

- Reclaim the agenda - redefine the issue in a more appropriate light.
- Get an independent expert speaker to answer the criticism. This is hard because once you are responding to criticism you no longer have control over the agenda.
- Divert attention away from the issue by having an event or a press release on a different but related topic.

You will need a credible and firm spokesperson for each of these options.

Media Difficulties

In many countries, it is increasingly difficult to achieve successful media coverage. This is because of the wide variety of NGOs and the subjects they cover, and the increased exposure of animal protection issues.

It can also be difficult to obtain coverage on controversial issues on commercial channels. This is because they tend to rely on advertising revenues, and are wary of upsetting advertisers.

Evaluation

- Always evaluate past performance, and improve wherever possible.
- Use evaluation as a learning opportunity, not a 'witch hunt'.

There is No 'One Size Fits All'

It must be stressed that the media in each country works differently. What makes absolutely no impact in one country may be novel and hit the headlines in another. Factors such as the level of press freedom, links to advertisers, the stage of development of animal protection issues, and even the overall level of democracy in a country, all play a part. This means that each organisation needs to 'try and test' different approaches, evaluate these, and build successful formulas into their media planning.

Further Information

🔗 Web Sites

Social Media Change: Tips for Using the Media

http://media.socialchange.net.au/using_media/

Books

Planning Media: Strategy and Imagination

By: William J. Donnelly

Publisher: Pearson Education POD; 1st edition (November 29, 1995)

ASIN: 0135678358

Surviving the Media Jungle: A Practical Guide to Good Media Relations

By: Dina Ross

Publisher: Mercury Business Books

ISBN: 1852520558

Strategic Media Planning

By: Kent M. Lancaster, Helen E. Katz

Publisher: Contemporary Books

ISBN: 0844234753

The Nonprofit Guide to Strategic Communications: A Step-by-step Resource for Working with the Media to Generate Publicity, Enhance Fundraising, Build Membership, Change Public Policy and Handle Crisis

By: Kathleen Bonk, Henry Griggs

Publisher: Jossey Bass Wiley

ISBN: 0787943738