

Grabbing the Media's Attention

Especially in television newsrooms, the question often asked is, "What kind of pictures (or video b-roll) can we get?" In radio newsrooms, the question is, "What kind of sound will we get?"

If you're sending a release, inform the editor if photos ops will be available, and if anyone from your organization will be on hand to do interviews. (If you invite the media, you should always make sure to have someone there!) Be aware that media members often view organizations and their representatives somewhat suspiciously. They are fully aware that we have an agenda, and no matter how pure-hearted that agenda is, the media will be reluctant to serve as a vehicle for promoting it. Make sure you have "real people" available to do interviews as much as possible.

If you want to maximize visual appeal, you may need to really think "out of the box," perhaps by teaming up with other organizations in your community that have more solid media contacts. It's okay to ride their coattails in some instances—just make sure you're not upstaged! Here are some examples:

- If there is a local health fair, set up a booth to inform people about the opportunities for planned giving to healthcare causes. Work with a hospital's public relations department to find a patient who benefited from a bequest to a hospital wing or surgery center, and arrange for this person to be available for interviews. In this case, the hospitals benefit by your presence, so free booth space could be negotiated.
- At local arts fairs, museum exhibition openings, and music festivals, set up a booth to explain the opportunities for planned giving to cultural causes. News media, especially on the weekends, focus on cultural fairs and community events.

Think About Current Events, and How They Apply to Your Program

- If a national survey comes out that suggests charitable giving is down a certain percentage that year, call media outlets and offer your response to this. Use the chance to promote your program's agenda—planned giving through will and estate gifts. Write a release that centers around this particular news event and your response to it. Remember—don't wait for the media to call you—call them first!
- Participate and/or begin National Philanthropy Week activities in your local area. Make sure you have a presence in any local National Philanthropy Week activities. Make sure the media know about the local LEAVE A LEGACY involvement. If your area doesn't currently do anything, begin efforts. Alert the media about what you're doing. You can alert them with a quick and easy "Media Advisory," via e-mail, which is nothing more than Who, What, When, Where, Why.
- When a movie such as "The Passion of the Christ" brings messages related to giving to the mass media, work with churches to remind congregations of the very easy ways common people can do good works. Write press releases centered around the movie release and its specific message to your organization.

Look Ahead!

- Most magazines and business journals publish editorial calendars for the year well in advance. Acquaint yourselves with what is listed on these schedules, and see if your experts may have something to say about this. Call well in advance and offer your expert up as someone who can be interviewed.

Recognize the True Heart of Your Program—the People!

- Find especially moving stories of how a bequest has brought about positive change, and name an award in the donor's honor. Perhaps you could dedicate a plaque or sculpture to this person that is housed in a special place. Have a press conference for the unveiling! (Call local trophy shops or artists to negotiate pro bono work. Many artists, especially college students, are looking for ways to strengthen their portfolios—they may offer their work for free! If they do, be sure to credit them in the press release!)
- Once you've found astounding stories of giving, write a release to tell the media about them. There have been numerous stories in the popular press—television news magazines, *People Magazine*, local papers and Sunday magazines, etc.—that focus on relatively poor people who saved every penny to make a difference. Many media outlets are in search of “stories that inspire.” Share those stories!
- Celebrate anniversaries. If it has been five years since Jane Doe's gift made a difference in your community, mark that anniversary and invite the media. Inform them of how Jane's gift has had a tremendous impact on the community over time. This anniversary provides the perfect opportunity for you to tell the LEAVE A LEGACY story.
- Find inspiring examples of younger people (not the typical senior citizen we often associate with LEAVE A LEGACY) who are making a difference. Tell their stories, which in turn tell the LEAVE A LEGACY story. Contact your local newspaper editor or TV assignment editor about these inspiring young adults. Tell them why these people are newsworthy.
- Issue a news release that informs the media of the people who work for the local LEAVE A LEGACY program, and what they have accomplished. People like to read about their neighbors. Keep the names of local people involved in LEAVE A LEGACY program in the paper as much as possible.