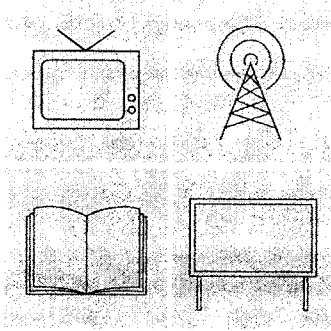


## **How to Effectively Reach Out to the Media**

- Develop a Strategic Outreach Plan
- Who / When / How to Contact
- Preparing Your Pitch
- Closing the Loop
- Checklist of General Tips
- FAQs

## Develop a Strategic Outreach Plan



Begin by creating a list of all of the media outlets in your market. Check to see which media types the advertising was created for (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, outdoor, and transit).

Prioritize your media list by considering some of the elements of the PSA campaign and the resources you have available. Consider the following examples:

### ► Target Audience

Who is the advertising intended for? Usually the target audience is defined by demographics such as age, sex, ethnicity, income, education, and/or geography, e.g., urban, suburban, rural, regional, etc.

- Try to select stations (TV or radio) or local magazines that have programming or editorial content that seems to appeal to the target audience profile.
- Research TV and radio stations to find out what kind of target audience their programming is designed to attract. Station websites can often provide you with the information you need to determine your best prospects. If a station airs primarily cartoons for children throughout the day, a campaign targeting older adults would not be a good fit and there would probably not be much interest in supporting your campaign.
- Although daily newspapers generally cast a wide net for readers and subscribers throughout the media market, look to see if there is a regular column or section of the paper that is relevant to your issue, such as a health or parenting column.

### ► Timing

Is there a period of time during the year when the public would be more focused on your issue? For example, a campaign on afterschool programs would probably generate heightened media and public interest during the school year, especially during the early back-to-school period.

- If your campaign has some seasonal skew, this may help direct you to a more opportune time in which to conduct a schedule of media outreach calls and visits.
- The period immediately preceding or shortly following the launch of new advertising is always a good time to contact the media. Chances are they have received the kit of PSA materials and/or an alert from the Ad Council informing them of the new work.
- Whether or not your issue or PSA message has a seasonal skew, remember that media outreach should be ongoing. After all, chances are your cause is relevant throughout the year. The more frequently the public is exposed to the advertising, the more likely it will be to respond and take action.

► **Leverage Your Existing Media Contacts and Those of Your Colleagues**

Consider first contacting media outlets that are already familiar with your organization and with which you have already built a relationship. Even if your media contacts are not the individuals specifically responsible for public service advertising, ask your current contacts to make an introduction for you.

- If you usually speak to reporters or editors and concentrate your outreach efforts on earned media coverage, you should broaden your goals. If the media outlet considers your issue important enough to deserve editorial coverage, it will probably be receptive to an even bigger request from you, such as adding a schedule of PSAs and content on its website.
- Remember, it's good business for the local media to show their viewers/listeners that they have made a commitment to a cause and improving the community.

► **Available Resources**

Some groups may only have the resources to contact a few media outlets each month or each quarter of the year. Other groups may be staffed to support a more aggressive outreach strategy. Whatever the circumstance, plan accordingly and set formal goals to keep your organization's outreach on track.

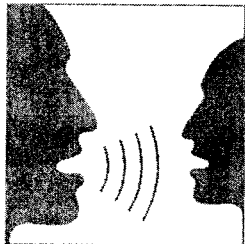
► **Obtain Media Mailing Lists**

Your organization's national office can request from the Ad Council a print-out of the media outlets that have received the PSAs. You can request a list of media for your area from your national organization and use that list as a guide to the media outlets you plan to contact over the course of the year.

*tip*

Contact community groups such as local school boards, PTAs, hospitals, retailers, other businesses, and local government to ask for their support in reaching out to the community. This could lead to collaborations beyond traditional media coverage of the PSAs, such as co-sponsoring an event, signage and distribution of information in-store or in mailings, cause-related advertising, etc.

## Who / When / How to Contact



### ► Who to Contact

You may need to conduct some research to pinpoint the key person responsible for reviewing, selecting, and scheduling PSAs. Often, that individual wears many functional hats at his or her company but usually has a title that indicates community or public affairs responsibility. A call to the media outlet, or a visit to the outlet's website, will provide the answer.

In addition to the Community Affairs Director, you should attempt to contact the General Manager whenever possible. This is the individual who oversees all operations at the media outlet.

Keep in mind that there is high turnover at media outlets, so you need to confirm that the person you last contacted is still the key decision maker.

### ► When to Contact

Just as your cause requires year-round attention, PSA campaigns are most effective when the greatest numbers of people in your market are frequently exposed to the PSA's message. Reaching out to the media, and keeping the PSA campaign and the issue top-of-mind with the media, dictates the need to conduct outreach throughout the year.

*"We cannot do all the good that the world needs, but the world needs all the good that we can do." ~Jana Stanfield*

There are periods that are especially timely, when the media may be more receptive to meeting with you and more inclined to support your efforts with media coverage for PSAs as well as editorial or programming. Those periods include

- Shortly before or after a new PSA campaign or new creative for an existing campaign is launched
- When your cause is in the news (you offer the media an important source of information)
- Six to eight weeks prior to a community event you are sponsoring or participating in
- Around key national dates linked to your issue, such as National Crime Prevention Month in October or Earth Day in April for an environmental campaign
- Whenever you have news to report, such as results, local statistics, or new research

Remember, the media are eager to hear about positive outcomes. They take pride in playing a role in moving the needle on community issues.

#### ► How to Contact

Any form of communication is acceptable and often will depend on the preferences and time constraints of the media decision makers. Ideally, you want to have a face-to-face meeting, but if that's not possible, a phone call, fax, or letter can also be effective. E-mail is a last resort for making a first impression.

## Preparing Your Pitch

Be prepared! Before you pick up the phone, write the letter, or attend a meeting, you should know exactly what you want to communicate. More than likely, you will only have a few minutes of the media's time and you want to be sure to get the most pertinent information across. Once you decide what you want to say, practice your pitch. Try to anticipate the questions that may be raised and be prepared with the answers. Keep the tone friendly but let your passion for the issue shine through to make a compelling case that justifies the media's support.

When preparing your pitch, ask yourself why the media should care about your issue and let that guide your discussion. Don't try to communicate everything there is to know about the cause and your organization. Leave those details to your website and the materials you leave behind.

#### ► Focus on Making the Connection to the Community

This is one of the most important points to make. Remember, the media have a strong preference for supporting locally relevant issues and locally based organizations. You want to make a strong argument that leaves the impression that the media outlet's support will have a significant impact on the community.

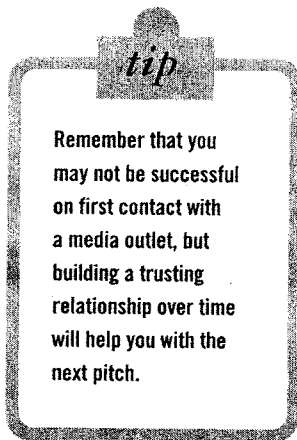
Some local connectors include

- Local statistics about the scope of the issue
- Your organization's mission
- A description of the programs, services, and events your organization provides and how they benefit the community
  - Invite your media contacts to observe your program in action, visit your office, or attend an event or news conference you are hosting.
- Local success stories and/or anecdotal information that underscores the impact your organization is having on the community

*tip*

News and talk radio stations are typically most supportive of PSAs. They like to have copy or a script available for their announcers to read on the air. They may also be willing to have a spokesperson from your organization for an on-air interview, particularly if your issue is topical and newsworthy.

## Preparing Your Pitch (continued)



- Any alliances your organization has with local businesses, local government, or other high visibility community groups
- Connecting the dots between your local group and the nationally known PSA sponsor organization while reinforcing that, although the issue and the advertising is national in scope, the PSA campaign is rooted to the community through your organization
- Mentioning any local identification that appears on the advertising or can be added to the advertising, such as a tag. Local tags may include your organization's name, address, and/or phone number, or the station's or newspaper's logo. Check with your national office to determine what, if any, policies to adhere to regarding local identifiers. (*See Appendix — Localizing PSAs.*)

*“People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” ~John Maxwell*

### ► Briefly Describe the Advertising

- Goal (the purpose of the advertising, such as recruiting volunteers, providing simple tips, steering the public to community based resources, etc.)
  - Any provocative findings or insights uncovered by the research prior to developing the creative strategy
- Intended audience (who is the advertising appealing to, e.g., adults, teens, etc.)
- Call-to-action (where the advertising is leading the public and what to expect when they go there)
  - Usually a toll-free phone number or a website that leads to a searchable database pinpointing your local office contact information

## *Sample Questions You Can Ask*

*Does your station/newspaper/magazine have a specific policy regarding public service advertising?*

*Are you focusing on any particular public service or community initiatives?*

*Has your organization supported this issue in the past? (If possible, try to ascertain this information prior to the meeting.)*

*Are there opportunities to partner with you in an upcoming event or station initiative?*

## Preparing Your Pitch (continued)



### ► How to Respond to Challenging Questions from the Media

**Q: The public service advertising is a national campaign. We prefer to use local messages.**

**A:** Ask what elements of the advertising would make the message local. Check ahead of the meeting to find out if the toll-free phone number and/or the website connects respondents to your local group and, if so, point that out in response to the question. Let the media outlet know that the use of a national toll-free number or web address allows the Ad Council and your national organization the ability to track responses to the advertising while maintaining the ability to connect respondents to the organization's locally affiliated office. Offer to provide local results to the media outlet (if they are available). Let the media outlet know that your organization is based in their market, and that any donated media support they provide will positively impact the local community and your local organization. You can also invite the media outlet to add its logo or a tag to the advertising to show its viewers/listeners/readers that they are socially responsible contributors to the community and support your issue.

**Q: We produce our own PSAs.**

**A:** Let's work together. We can enhance your public service efforts by providing up-to-date research and statistics about the issue as well as a response mechanism such as a toll-free hotline or informative brochure.

**Q: We have a policy against supporting PSAs.**

**A:** Try to find out why. This policy may be outdated or based on a misconception about public service advertising.

**Q: This is not an important issue in our community.**

**A:** Discuss the issue on a local level. Share local statistics, personal stories from the community, and any quantitative or anecdotal results since the launch of the PSA campaign.

**Q: Our radio station does not use prerecorded messages.**

**A:** Let the station know that your campaign has live announcer copy scripts available for their on-air talent to use.

### ► Don't Forget to Make an Ask

Be direct in asking the media to do what you want them to. In addition to asking for donated broadcast time or print space for the PSAs throughout the year, begin a dialog about other messaging opportunities and collaborations that can be tailored to your local needs, such as

- fundraising support
- volunteer recruitment
- event sponsorship
- community affairs programming or editorial about your issue and your organization
- participation in roundtable discussions with community leaders

The possibilities will evolve as you build strong media relationships over time.

### ► Point Out the Benefits to the Media Outlet

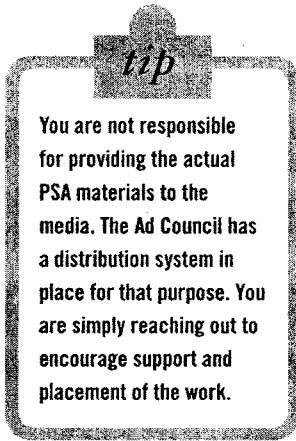
- The issue appeals to its audience of viewers, listeners, or readers, and complements its programming, news angle, or editorial.  
Do your homework to be sure that this is true before you make the claim.
- Supporting your cause by donating media time and space for the PSAs connects the media outlet to the issue and brands it as a caring and socially responsible member of the community.
- You are providing high-quality advertising for time and space availabilities.
- PSA sponsorship opportunities may be available for media outlets to offer to their current or prospective local commercial advertisers. *(Check with your national organization to determine if your PSA campaign is eligible.)*
  - Sponsorships are considered and approved on a case-by-case basis.
  - Unacceptable sponsors for Ad Council campaigns include
    - Tobacco products
    - Alcohol products
    - Pharmaceuticals (in most cases)
    - Any for-profit lobbying group, organization, or other product manufacturer that clearly conflicts with or counters the PSA's message

## Preparing Your Pitch (continued)

### ► Leave Behind Materials

Prepare materials to leave behind after your meeting or to enclose with your letter. Suggested materials include

- Fact sheet tailored to your local organization (*see sample in Section 6, Templates and Tools*)
- Tape(s) or ad slick(s) of the PSAs (if available). Remember that most media outlets will have already received the PSA materials from the Ad Council. The media can view and order additional PSA materials when needed by going to [www.adcouncil.org](http://www.adcouncil.org) and clicking on “PSA Central.”
- Brochure about the programs and services of your organization
- Your business card or contact information



## Closing the Loop

A few days following your meeting or phone call with a media outlet, send a personal note thanking those you met or spoke with for their time and attention. Reiterate that you encourage them to tap into the resources you can provide them when appropriate — for information and for interviews.

A few weeks after your initial contact, follow up to determine if there are any further questions and if the media outlet has plans to run the PSAs.

Be sure to acknowledge the media outlet when you do see or hear coverage of the PSAs.

### *A Checklist of General Tips*

- ✓ Let the media know that your PSAs are not time sensitive and that any exposure at any time of the year will greatly benefit the cause and the community.
- ✓ Invite the media to attend community events that you are hosting and to visit your office and see your programs firsthand.
- ✓ One of the single most important things you can do to strengthen your media relationships is to be sure to call or send a note of thanks to each and every media outlet supporting your cause, either through press coverage or donated media time and space for the PSAs. Report back to the Ad Council and to your national office when a media outlet has been especially supportive. We can work with you to acknowledge and reward that support.
- ✓ Be aware that it can take several weeks before your PSAs are put in rotation for available media time or space or to receive press coverage for an event or newsworthy item.
- ✓ Use every opportunity to point out the relevance of your issue to the local community.
- ✓ Don't assume that because you represent a "good cause" your PSAs will automatically be used. You need to educate the media about your cause and your organization and differentiate your group from the many other worthy causes competing for donated media time and space.
- ✓ Treat the media as a partner. Reinforce the point that you are a resource for them.