



# 4. Print Media

*Many non-profit organizations are doing great work, but not getting the attention they deserve. Knowing how to use the print media as a tool to reach your community at-large is essential to making your voice heard and it does not necessarily involve a great deal of money or time.*

Journalists today are busier than ever – there are fewer financial and staff resources and more competitors. At the same time, because of new technology, social media, the BlackBerry, the iPhone, and seemingly limitless blogs, there is more information available for those journalists to cull through and decipher.

Journalists need to know why your organization is so important, and believe it or not, they need you to tell them. They rely on experts and trusted sources so that they can best tell a story to their readers. There are simple ways to ensure that you stand out as a trusted source and an expert in your field.

## **Tips to Help You Get in Print:**

**Read, watch, and listen to the news.** You can be a part of the solution by sharing with reporters your policy initiatives and overall agenda and, in the process, highlight how your organization demonstrates its leadership to bring about the change the public needs and demands. Therefore, ensure that reporters and editors know who you are and what you do. Find a story in which you could have served as an expert or provided information to help tell the story. Pick up the phone and call the reporter, editor, announcer, or blogger. Introduce yourself and let him/her know that you are available when they are writing future stories on the subject and give them some helpful information to demonstrate your value and expertise.

**Be prepared.** Before you pick up the phone, have your thoughts in order – write them down. Are there things you want to be sure to pass along? Prepare notes – or talking points – for your conversation. Remember that reporters are busy, too, so you need to get your points across quickly and succinctly.

**Get to know your reporters.** Use every opportunity to establish a relationship with reporters, but reach out to others as well. Are there reporters who cover business issues? Is there a radio announcer who frequently uses wire-service news but could use “local flavor” for national stories? Pick up the phone. Introduce yourself briefly, ask for their e-mail address so that you can send them your contact

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information and follow through. Your contact information should include brief information about your organization and what you do. Check in with reporters regularly as you have news to report and add them to your distribution list for press releases, legislative initiatives, events, success stories, board additions, and other news.

**Maintain your contact list.** Keep in touch with your press contacts. Many journalists move frequently to other news outlets, leave the industry, or switch their coverage areas (or “beat”). If you keep in touch with these people, you will be the first to know when there are changes. Think of reporters as colleagues – they have a job to do and so do you, and you need one another to do your respective jobs effectively. They want you to know what they are doing so that you can best help them!

**Get everyone involved.** Everyone has a role to play. Ask your colleagues to keep their eyes and ears open for stories. Be sure to use the best spokesperson for each opportunity too. Is there a resident “expert” who would be a better spokesperson for a story than someone else in a higher position at your organization? Is there a board member with expertise that can deliver your message to the media? Act as your organization’s facilitator for media outreach. As a resource for your press contacts, you are a one-stop shop for information, access to experts, and anecdotes to help reporters write their stories. Help your spokespeople by identifying messages (or “talking points”) you would like conveyed and give them pointers to guide them when working with your press contacts.

## Working with Reporters: Rules of Engagement

Don't be scared; be confident!

Nothing is “off the record”

Never answer hypothetical questions

Never lie

Never speak for other elected officials, organizations, or individuals

Never answer a question that wasn't asked – unless it is a question you *wanted* asked

Always remember that you are speaking on behalf of the organization

Always be okay with silence/long pauses

Always find out what the reporter is asking and, if needed, hang up and call back after you have collected your thoughts

Always think about ways you can coordinate the topic with other priority areas

Always let your communications staff know with whom you have spoken and the nature of the call – if possible, check in beforehand.

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# Crafting the Message

When communicating with the public, organizations should focus on the way in which their messages are structured and also how the public will receive and interpret their information. Although an organization makes information available, it is usually others who shape how messages are disseminated. This can either make or break an organization's image and brand. Therefore, it is that much more important to ensure that your messages are custom-tailored to your audiences and carefully crafted. Each message must be powerful enough to resonate with those who re-package it and redistribute it. The best way to accomplish this is to segment your messages into three distinct areas:

1) **The Problem** – There are different ways that messages can be viewed, and knowing the various frames through which journalists see messages is vital to your issue. For your message to be successful, careful planning is required. Why is the issue a problem? Why should people care about it? Think about these things as you develop your message and define your issue.

2) **The Solution** – This is the part of the message where you insert positive values, letting people know that there are good reasons for caring about the issue. Let your audience know that they can have a voice and that there is something that can be done to address the issue or fix the problem.

3) **Take Action** – People need to be told what you want them to do and how to do it. This part of the message is crucial for achieving your objectives. Your audience is more likely to DO something about a problem if they know what steps they need to take in order to address it. Remember, a "Take Action" call is different for different audiences—the action you want younger constituents to take might be completely different from the action you want your government officials to take. Keep in mind what audiences you are targeting and package a "Take Action" accordingly.

## Print Media Resources

The IDEP Foundation -- White Paper: Effective Visual and Print Media:

[http://www.idepfoundation.org/download\\_files/media\\_training/media\\_handouts\\_eng.pdf](http://www.idepfoundation.org/download_files/media_training/media_handouts_eng.pdf)

"International Media Message Strategies: A Concept for Reassessing Communication Across Culture"

[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p169134\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p169134_index.html)

University of British Columbia : Media Training -

<http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/facultystaff/mediatrain/reporterscall.html>

Media Outreach Tips:

<http://www.naswdc.org/pressroom/swMonth/2009/media.asp>

How to Write a Letter to the Editor That Gets Published and Read:

[http://www.nancyschwartz.com/letters\\_to\\_the\\_editor.html](http://www.nancyschwartz.com/letters_to_the_editor.html)

Getting Your Message Across:

<http://www.citizen.org/documents/Messageacross.pdf>

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## Print Media Resources

Google Books: Media Literacy, by W. James Potter:  
<http://books.google.com/books?id=1T8LX1IG-t0C>

Messages and Meaning:  
<http://company.bangornews.com/files/14-%20Messages%20&%20Meaning.pdf>

Print Media Academy – Publications:  
[http://www.print-media-academy.com/www/html/en/content/overview1/publications\\_overview](http://www.print-media-academy.com/www/html/en/content/overview1/publications_overview)

How To Develop Effective Mass Communication Messages:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/NASD/docs/d000901-d001000/d000997/13-DMCM%20Tips.doc>

Media Alliance:  
<http://www.media-alliance.org/>

WK Kellogg Foundation – Communications Toolkit, Media (Pitching a story, Writing a Press Release that Works, Writing a Media Advisory/Alert, Letters to the Editor, Op-Ed Pieces, etc.)  
<http://www.wkkf.org/Default.aspx?tabid=90&CID=385&ItemID=5000058&NID=5010058&LanguageID=0>

*The New York Times* – Writing for Print Media and Electronic Media  
[http://www.nytimes.com/ref/college/faculty/coll\\_curric\\_jour\\_writ.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/college/faculty/coll_curric_jour_writ.html)