

## **MEDIA OUTLET TYPES – UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA**

Before you begin sharing your news, you must determine the types of media outlets you are targeting before you can craft your message using one of the tools of public relations, such as a news release or media advisory (discussed under the “PR Tools” section of this toolkit). Here is some insight into the various media outlets and how to work with them.

### **Newspapers**

Daily local newspapers and weekly community newspapers are an excellent means to communicate news about an activity, service, event, or issue. While daily local newspapers follow regional or national news, they place a strong emphasis on covering the stories from local angles. Know who to target at the newspaper based on the type of news you are sharing. Consider the following newspaper beats when distributing news about your organization:

- General assignment/general news
- Op-Ed page/Letters to the Editor
- Business
- Education
- Political
- Lifestyle/Features
- Health
- Consumer
- Calendar of Events/Events
- Photo Desk

General news coverage is handled by the city editor or managing editor. The other areas are typically covered by a reporter specific to that beat. A complete list of beat reporters and their contact information can usually be found on the media outlet’s website.

For community events, send a news release or media alert to the Calendar of Events editor two to three weeks prior to your event that explains who, what, where, when, and why. Also, if your event or news lends itself to a photo opportunity, send a media advisory or photo opportunity alert directly to the photo desk.

Weekly and community newspapers are often minimally staffed and may not have beat reporters or staff that can attend or photograph your event. Therefore, it is often beneficial for you to take photos of your event or activity and send the image with a post-event recap.

Resources for locating media contacts and their contact information is located in the “Contacting the Media” section of this toolkit.

### **Television**

Local TV news stations follow national and regional news, but will often try to “localize” their news stories. Television is a medium of feeling, with communications presented in short, compelling sound bites – “to the point” information that can be shared quickly. Viewers in general react to appearance, voice, and attitude. When an informational topic is being discussed and you are the “expert,” as the interviewee you should convey a sense of comfort and knowledge about the subject matter being discussed, and avoid using industry jargon or technical terms. Present a compelling story and offer interesting visuals. If an event is of interest to a large number of viewers, a reporter may be sent to do a live broadcast during the



event. TV stations may have specific beat reporters or a single news director. For events, send a news release or media alert to TV stations two to three weeks prior to the event.

## Radio

Radio stations that feature news segments generally run them in the morning or during afternoon drive-time. Radio spots range from 10 to 30 seconds and may be repeated. Radio stations conduct both taped and live interviews. As with television, if an event is of interest to a large number of listeners, some radio stations may broadcast live from your event. Because radio is an auditory experience, reporters try to create a mental picture for listeners. Interviewees must be conversational, interesting, and able to create images with words fashioned in short sound bites. For events, send a news release or media alert to radio stations three weeks prior to the event.

## Magazines

For longer, more in-depth, feature-style stories, magazines are an ideal target media outlet. When sending a press release to a magazine reporter or editor, offer interview sources and images. Many cities and suburbs have lifestyle or business magazines that focus on local stories of interest, local businesses, and hot or current topics. If you have news or activities that would be of interest to others in your field or industry, reach out to national trade publications with a corresponding focus. Magazine issues are often planned three to six months in advance and reporters need time to write the story, so news releases and media alerts must be distributed accordingly.

## Social Media

Social media allows an organization or individual to directly communicate news and messages to members, subscribers, the general public and even other media outlets. Your chapter, company, or organization should use social media to comment on or share your own or others' content, converse with key influencers on social networks, and follow supporters and advocates. Visual content, such as images, video clips, and infographics are powerful conversation-starters. Frequency of posts is important to keep your followers engaged, with three to four posts per week being the recommended minimum (consider using a syndication tool like HootSuite to repost your tweets to Facebook and other relevant social sharing sites – this can help maintain frequency). While there are a number of social media tools, four of the most common include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and blogs. A presence on each is not required – choose only those that are most useful to your goals. Below are definitions and guidelines:

**Facebook:** Facebook is useful for providing real-time communication to “Friends” “Followers,” “Groups,” and other relevant audiences that may “Like” or monitor your Facebook pages and posts. Facebook is free and offers a medium for dialogue (“Status,” “Comment,” “Share” and “Messages”), promotion of events and awards, images and videos, posts of/links to news and feature stories and blogs, and Newsfeed stories from people and pages being followed. To make your communications open and available to everyone, keep Facebook settings public. Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).



**Twitter:** Twitter is a micro-blogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts of 140 characters or less, as well as images or links to videos. Most Twitter posts – called “tweets” – address the audience with an announcement (“Check this out” or @topic to refer to a topic), provide an interesting link or image, offer a summary regarding the content of the link or image, and/or list relevant hashtags (#further topics), and ask for comments. Go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com).

**YouTube:** YouTube is a video-hosting website that allows registered users to store and share video content. Make sure to align videos with your YouTube channel context and target group(s). In creating videos, provide an entry sequence, welcome viewers, provide an overview, tell the story (keeping sentences short and concise), and end with a wrap-up or call to action. Address the audience directly to establish a rapport. Select relevant keywords/tags to optimize searchability and hits. Go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

**Blog:** Short for weblog, a blog is an online journal that can be written to provide clear, bold opinions on a topic; share stories; or provide updates on a journey or undertaking. When used as a public relations tool to promote your industry or company, the writing style and content should be interesting, compelling, unique, and reflect your professionalism and expertise. The blog should be updated frequently and can include images, videos, and links. Provide a title for each blog entry; offer a starting question, lead, or image; state the purpose of the entry; provide descriptive content and/or opinion; and ask for comments. Blogs can be created on [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) and a variety of other blog development sites found on the internet.

