



MEDIA GUIDE

TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS for getting good newspaper, radio and television coverage for your Club

If you have any new tips, ideas or suggestions, please email them to the Development Officer.

These notes will be updated from time to time

A MEDIA STRATEGY

Clubs should begin by discussing and deciding if and why publicity, and of what kind, is needed. If the purpose is to attract new members, then the media releases and other publicity items need to be geared to bringing in potential recruits.

Which poses questions regarding the targets (what kinds of people are these prospective new members) and what is likely to attract them (for example, an 'open evening' or a 'taster course'). It is vital that enquiries are dealt with effectively, all visitors warmly welcomed, their contact details recorded, and each new member's special requirements understood and responded to. In other words, a media strategy needs to be part of a wider awareness, recruitment and retention strategy.

A PUBLICITY OFFICER

Most Clubs have a Publicity Officer. In small Clubs, this is often combined with another office such as Secretary or Treasurer. In others, two or three members share the role. It makes sense to choose persons who are willing, and, if possible, have some experience in journalism, marketing or sales. However, enthusiasm is the essential qualification and a member with no previous familiarity with those areas will, as Publicity Officer, develop a valuable range of valuable communication skills.

'Publicity' should be a regular agenda item at Committee meetings and reported upon to the AGM. Many members will have constructive suggestions and occasional surprises may be forthcoming: (*"The editor of the Tamworth Terrier is my nephew..."* *"I taught that DJ in primary school..."*).

CONTACTS ARE CRUCIAL.

A fundamental task of a Club Publicity Officer is to build up and maintain a contacts book or file containing email addresses, telephone, fax numbers, website details (implying internet access and computer fluency) and notes covering items accepted and specific comments. When one Publicity Officer hands over to a successor, the

passing on of the contacts book is as significant as is the transfer of presidential regalia.

GIVING THE MEDIA WHAT THEY WANT

Before sending an article or media release, you – as Publicity Officer – should carefully study the requirements of the newspaper, magazine or radio programme in question. Contact the relevant editor (or the highest level deputy whom you can reach). Simply telephone, introduce yourself and your Club, and ask what kinds of news and features are of most interest to readers and listeners, and obtain advice regarding how and when items should be sent and to whom.

In other words, find out what they need, and what they are looking for, and make a friend as you gain a contact. And remember, if you make just one approach to a particular publication (e.g. emailing a media release) the chances of its being used are low (e.g. 15%). However, if you make, say, three linked approaches (e.g. the initial telephone call, the media release, and a further call to check whether it was received – “*would you like another photograph?*” “*any further information needed?*”) the chances are maximised (to perhaps as high as 75%).

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

Having made contact with the key person within each publication, send her/him articles and press releases directly. From time to time, it is both courteous and good PR to thank your contacts for including your notice, article, photograph or extracts from your media release.

Careful handling of your press contacts may lead to all sorts of possibilities. For instance, the editor might like a feature on the speaking styles of various local politicians or a ‘hints to good communication’ article. Be alive to such opportunities and increase their likelihood by inviting a key journalist to an appropriate Club function (editors are especially fond of good dinners).

Apart from general news and feature coverage, most local papers have a ‘Community Noticeboard’ or a ‘What’s On in Wensleydale’ regular feature. All Club, Area and District meetings should be advertised in this manner: paid advertising should not be necessary.

INGREDIENTS OF A GOOD MEDIA RELEASE

- Sent directly to a particular person by name;
- Delivered as an email attachment;
- Clear concise sentences in short attractive paragraphs that flow;
- Well-presented, neatly typed on A4, double spaced, with good margins;
- With correct spelling (especially people’s names) and good grammar;
- In the style of the publication and related to its readers’ interests;
- No more than 200 words, including a sensible and snappy headline;
- With an eye catching photograph.
- Containing a clear and purposeful message;
- Including a contact name, email address and telephone number; and
- Stating clearly that it is your Club that is issuing the release.

ASC’s National Public Relations Officer is happy to provide constructive advice to Clubs on their media strategies and draft releases and he may be contacted on pr@the-asc.org.uk

MAGAZINES

There is a wide variety of magazines ready to publish well-written articles on public speaking activities, ranging from Church newsletters, through local council publications to the array of special interest journals. The above advice regarding media releases and newspaper articles (identifying a particular contact... interesting, well-written and well-presented items in the style of the publication and geared to its readers' interests...) applies to magazines also.

It is suggested that, from time to time, each Club should have a short discussion in order to identify two or three magazines to which suitable articles (letters, photographs with captions...) might be contributed, and to agree on who should put together each item.

LOCAL RADIO

As with the print media, the starting-point is to make contact with your local radio station(s) to see if they are interested. Reporters and interviewers tend to look for stories or angles that are different, provided there is a person who can tell that story well. From your Club's perspective, radio offers an excellent opportunity to publicise your programme (meeting content, dates and location) and to explain and demonstrate the benefits of improved public speaking skills.

All ASC clubs should consider practising radio interviews during their meetings. A common fault is to over-prepare and then be so engrossed in the facts and figures that the essential messages are lost. If a club member is about to be interviewed, a practice session, a sensitive evaluation and an open discussion may be of value to the individual and to members generally.

TIPS FOR RADIO INTERVIEWS

- Before the interview begins, ask the reporter what s/he wants to focus upon – make your own suggestions as appropriate;
- Determine your main message in advance;
- Ensure that you say the main things that you wish to say, even if they are sometimes tangential to the actual questions asked;
- Keep it simple; answer in short declarative sentences; be clear and concise;
- Answer each question, unless it cannot be answered: don't bluster and feel you must say something;
- Start the point over again should you stumble;
- Prepare some graceful transition phrases for broad questions that you may be asked;
- Don't give a lecture – keep the answer sounding like a friendly conversation;
- Make it fun (it is!) without trivialising the subject;
- Do a relaxation exercise beforehand;
- Portray a (true) image of someone people would like to be in a club with;
- Chuckle (but do not overdo it – attempt to appear sane);
- Practise within your Club and also with someone who is unfamiliar with the subject matter;
- Check (or allow a friend to check) whether you have any odd mannerisms (such as saying “OK!” while the interviewer is speaking) and, if so, abandon them; and
- State clearly how listeners should respond (e.g. by contacting the station, by accessing a Club website...).

TELEVISION

TV offers an even more challenging opportunity to publicise your Club and demonstrate effective communication skills. As with radio interviews, anticipate the questions, write out the answers and practise delivering them in the most effective way, and stage an enjoyable TV interview session at your Club before the actual event occurs.

SOME ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR TV INTERVIEWS

- Be neat but do not overdo it; don't wear garish, multi-coloured clothing; don't wear glasses that darken in sunlight;
- Look at the reporter, not the camera;
- Sit sensibly, without slouching; cross legs at knee, not ankle; if standing, don't place your hands on your hips;
- Smile (but do not overdo it);
- Check (or allow a friend to check) whether you have any odd mannerisms (such as scratching your neck or fiddling with a pen) and, if so, abandon them during the interview; and
- State clearly how viewers should respond (e.g. contact the station) and ask if this information could be shown on the screen.

With both radio and television, opportunities other than public service announcements and interviews abound. Effective public speakers have much to offer 21st century broadcasting just as debates and public speaking contests may, properly formatted, attract huge audiences over the coming years.

CONTROVERSY

The tabloids and much of commercial television thrive upon sensation – and the broadsheets and even the most respectable broadcasters are not entirely immune to it either. Indeed, part of the reason that Speakers Clubs presently receive relatively little publicity is that we tend to be polite, mutually supportive, and positively rather than destructively critical: that's the kind of people that we are.

Nevertheless, there may well be opportunities for fostering the kind of controversy that attracts attention, while preserving our constructive and impartial image. For example, a media release leading to news flashes or newspaper headlines such as "Public Speaking Skills of Local Politicians 'Deplorable'" or "Lord Mayor joins Club to learn how to speak" may be more widely read than one entitled, say "Speakers Club to meet as usual during October".

Members seeking further advice on these matters - or who are interested in developing PR skills generally - should acquire a copy of *'Striking a Happy Medium'*, the ASC Guidebook on making best use of the Media, written by the ASC's National Public Relations Officer and available from the ASC's Materials Officer

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