

An introduction to...

# PR and media relations



This course is a 5min read  
with additional time required  
for exercises

## Building relationships to get more out of media channels

Do I want to be associated with this organisation? Do I want to work with them? Do I like the messages or values they support?  
Do I trust them?

How you view an organisation from the outside is often the result of PR.

Public relations (PR) is the way organisations and companies communicate with the public and media. An organisation's website and social media channels can provide one outlet for PR activities, as they are in control of information communicated. These activities can be enhanced through a good relationship with media contacts. Media relations refers to the way an organisation interacts with external media representatives and channels.

### Key terms:

#### PR ('public relations')

Public relations is the way organisations and companies communicate with the public and media.

#### Media relations

Being the point of contact or liaison between the organisation and news or media journalists.

## Getting started

### Think strategically

Media PR and comms professionals are often very good at tactical thinking (e.g. finding stories) but not so good at the why are we doing this? strategic reflections.

Before just 'doing some comms' think carefully about who you want to reach and what you want them to think, feel or do as a result, e.g. sign up volunteers or increase fundraising.

### Who is your audience?

Once you know what strategic outcomes you are hoping for, next is to understand who you are trying to reach, why, and what you want them to do next.

Different media channels have different audiences and readerships. Going to the local printed newspaper is unlikely to reach young people effectively, as they don't read it, but might be good for raising awareness of a new podcast aimed at commuters if the paper is available for free on public services.

### The right time and place

In order to select a suitable media outlet, it's important to become more familiar with different channels available and what each could offer you. Do they align with your organisation's values? Have your competitors used them?

Understanding more specific details about a channel is really useful for future connections – it helps you create content they are more likely to use as you can frame it in a style they like. Think about the language they use, e.g. The Sun and The Times have different audiences and use different language accordingly. How do they typically frame their media, e.g. punchy stories or deep dive into the stats. Once you know what the outlet wants, you can align your content for greater engagement.

Remember, you don't own the channel. You reach your audience through the channel, so consider what the journalists want.

### Write for the end user

Writing a press release with too much assumed knowledge, or lots of acronyms and jargon will not get the point across – write for someone who is flicking through pages during a lunch break. How do you get their attention? Higher management internally are not your target audience.

If you're approaching TV, think about the visuals. It's your job to think in advance and offer the studio what they could film to make the story attractive to viewers – this shows you know what they need to deliver a good story to viewers.

**Act strategically**

Sending targeted messages to key media contacts can be an effective way of improving visibility of your brand. However, if you constantly send press releases or messages to your contacts, without considering whether the key messages align with their channel aims or audiences, it may be that they don't see your message when it is relevant.

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## What is a press release?

- ✓ A story designed to go out to external media channels with a view to get coverage
- ✗ It is not just an article on your website

Although a press release might end up on your website as a findable record, its primary aim is to be relevant to media so it gets picked up and given coverage through other channels.

Don't send a press release to people or media channels you know it won't work for, just because your organisation wants a press release sent out. You can easily damage your standing with journalists with irrelevant materials.



This activity takes 15min

## Activity: Getting to know your target media

Take some time to familiarise yourself with a target outlet. Select a media outlet. Read it, watch it, listen to it. Get a sense of what works for them, then reflect on the following:

- Who are their key audience(s)? How do they engage with them?
- How do they frame their media and why do they frame it that way? Why have they spoken to this person? What language are they using?
- What are their hot topics? Are there any recurrent themes?

Ask yourself lots of questions to understand how this outlet operates and why. It will help you to prepare for future engagement with their channel and their audiences.

If you have time, compare outlets or research different similar channels with a colleague. What are the most striking differences between the channels? Do channels aimed at similar audiences share more similarities?

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## Top tips

**1. Be contactable**

It should be easy for media contacts to reach you. Even if you don't want the story to be covered, being contactable really helps longer term.

**2. Think about the long game**

Relationships are important. Building strong relationships with media contacts can provide more than just useful channels for your comms, it can help to improve your organisation's brand.

**3. Speed vs. quality**

Speed is always good but needs to be balanced against quality. Proactive external communication, e.g. on your website, can take longer than reactive. If you're responding to a story in the news agenda, you need to be quick.

**4. Make the first contact**

Take some time to make contact, proactively, with the media outlets you think you will be talking to a lot. Having made those introductions will stand you in good stead.

## Further resources

[Guide to working with the media](#)

[Stempra guide to being a press officer](#)

[GCS playbook](#)

[Impact toolkit](#)