

How to Get Better Media Coverage

FOR YOUR CAUSE

Related Cause Clarity topics:

- How to tell your story
- How to create a core message



This worksheet is a complementary guide to help you put into practice the advice found in our “How to Get Better Media Coverage for Your Cause” video. Each 3-minute video is packed with information and is designed to be watched multiple times—even while you are completing this worksheet.

WHAT Get your cause more (and better) media coverage.

TIME REQUIRED 5 hours (can vary depending on extent of website additions)

WHO IS INVOLVED We suggest brainstorming responses as a team.

Alternatively, you can start this process alone and then refine with a larger group.

Media coverage is a great way to gain exposure, get your message out and potentially increase donor support. Getting attention from reporters can be tough and getting that attention to focus on your priorities can be even tougher. Pitching relevant and interesting stories about your cause is always a great idea, but over-pitching will exhaust reporters. Make sure each story you pitch is newsworthy and press releases are relevant to the reporter you are pitching. In an increasingly competitive media market, not only should you always tell a good story, but it is also important to have an “expert” from your organization who can speak about your work and respond to issues of the day.

This worksheet walks you through three steps that will help you develop relationships with media.

1. Position yourself or others within your cause as experts
2. Stay in contact with relevant reporters
3. Make your website media friendly

Here is a list of what you will have when you have completed the steps:



- List of experts for issues related to your cause that have agreed to speak to the media
- Media contact list
- A website with all the essentials a reporter needs to develop a story around your cause

→ For more help, contact Cause Communications at CauseClarity@CauseComm.org or visit CauseCommunications.org/tools to see other Bite-Size Courses.

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Complete the following three steps to develop a list of experts who have agreed to speak to the media for issues related to your cause, a media contact list and a website that has all the essentials a reporter needs to develop a story about your cause.

1. Position yourself or someone within your cause as an expert:

A. You want reporters to come to your organization for your expertise. To do this, position key members of your staff as experts related to your cause's mission. Take 10 minutes to list the "experts" within your cause. Consider staff, board members or advisors and think about what topics they know well. Keep in mind, experts may not be at the highest level of your organization. Instead, they may have knowledge in a specific area or may be a particularly good communicator. Answer the following questions for each person:

Expert Name #1: _____

What is the person's area of expertise?

Why would a reporter want to interview this person?

Is this person "media friendly" or can s/he be coached?

Expert Name #2: _____

Expert Name #3: _____

B. Confirm that each person is willing to speak to the media. Explain that they will be called if an opportunity arises and will be provided with materials to prepare them. We suggest media training to help get everyone up to speed on key talking points for your cause. It is also a good idea to provide a quick refresher immediately before they talk to the media. (See CauseClarity.org for more resources.)



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2. Stay in contact with relevant reporters:

A. Develop a media contact list that includes all reporters who cover news related to your cause. Ask any staff members who have contributed to media in the past or check past press coverage files for names, search for past stories on related topics and note the reporter, check media outlet websites for listings of journalists or use a media database. Depending on the focus of your cause, consider local, regional, national and international press outlets. You can also check websites such as HARO (Help a Reporter Out) that help connect reporters to potential sources. Sign up is free, and you will receive daily emails with media opportunities.

Media Contact List Information:

Name of reporter: _____

Media organization: _____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

Topics covered: _____

B. Once you have developed your media contact list, it is vital to maintain regular contact with reporters. Contact them to complement the coverage of an issue or point out another potential angle to cover in a follow-up story. Thank you notes after your organization has been included in a story are another great way to strengthen relations.



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3. Make sure your website is media friendly:

A. Create a section of your website that is dedicated exclusively to media. It should include press clippings about your cause, expert bios, information about past events and other information that would be useful to a reporter searching for a story or an expert. It may be helpful to publish topics related to your cause on your blog and look for opportunities to speak at conferences as a way to increase your organization's and experts' media profile.

B. To test your website for its media friendliness, ask two to three colleagues or volunteers to act as reporters on a story about a topic related to your cause. Request that they go to your website to do their research. What do they find? How easy is it to navigate? Can they quickly come up with information and easily identify ways to contact an expert for their story? If not, ask your "reporters" for feedback on what is needed. You can do this exercise yourself, but it is generally most useful to get the perspective of someone not involved in your website on a regular basis.

Update your website based on the checklist below and any additional suggestions from your testers.

Media Friendly Website Checklist

- Clear direction for media on your homepage
- Basic fact sheets on:
 - The organization
 - The cause and key issues
- Biographies for experts and their given issues or topics
- Media contact person with email and phone number