

USE THE MEDIA

Selling a story in 10 (relatively) easy steps

1. Find an event/issue *that you want publicity for* and that ticks the 'good local story' boxes above, then decide:
 - a. What is the strongest angle? (At this stage, the journalist is your audience, so make it interesting for them)
 - b. What do you want to achieve? (Are you trying to highlight an event or show off your organisation?)
2. Write the first two (short) paragraphs of a press release, giving a good summary of the event but leaving out excessive detail. This should be about 100 words and must include a local place name or two. If you're struggling, think who the story is about – is it your customers? Your staff? Your manager?
3. Write a nice straightforward headline – don't worry about being clever, just summarise the story in less than ten words. Include a local place name in the headline. Above the headline write 'PRESS RELEASE' and put today's date.
4. Expand on your first two paragraphs, keeping in mind that the language needs to be non-technical, concise and targeted at someone who doesn't work for you. Write it in a way that it could be copied and pasted into a newspaper – i.e. in the third person. Write about 200-250 words in total, including the first two paragraphs.
5. Write an enthusiastic and positive quote. This is your chance to show off why your organisation is doing a good work. Write about 75-100 words. Avoid jargon/acronyms. Lead into it with 'John Smith says: "...'
6. Put contact details at the bottom and try to be available if at all possible. Call reporters back quickly or you may miss the boat. Further story detail can go at the bottom under the title 'Notes to Editors', though it's unlikely to be read.
7. Take two or three creative photos on a digital camera– get picture ideas from local papers. A picture of three people holding a cheque/trophy will rarely be used prominently by a good newspaper. Pictures need to be about 1 - 2mb each (3m pixels or higher), in focus, bright and 'captioned' (rename the file so it says who is in the picture). No more than four people should be in a picture, usually.
8. Get contact email addresses from the media outlet's website. A list of local media can be found by searching for a place name at www.mediauk.com* Don't ignore the 'small' circulation local press. Send it to the generic newsdesk email (e.g. news@express.co.uk), rather than just a specific reporter, unless you're sure they haven't left.
9. Email it out a week or 10 days before the event. Put the headline as the email subject. Attach the photos. Copy and paste the press release into the email and also attach it. Send it between 9am and 12noon on a weekday ideally. If it's not an 'event' (e.g. the discovery of a rare bird in the church tower) send out a press release asap.
10. If you're keen, phone up the newsdesk to find out if they've got the email and have put it in their diary. You can also make them more aware of it, by sending an informal email through the 'get in touch' section of the media outlet's website (journalists pay attention to emails from readers/listeners).