



How to Get the Media to Cover Your Events

In any event preparation process there is always the question of how to share your event with the community. Central to this concern is how to get the media to report on your event. For some, attracting media attention may appear daunting. However, attracting media attention is likely easier than you think. Try using some of these strategies to get the media out to your next event!

How do I start?

Learn and follow policy and procedures. Before you start, remember that you are representing yourself, your students, your school and your community when you contact the media. Take the time to research, inquire and follow the proper policy and procedures outlined by your school and school board regarding student engagement with the media.

Start early! Don't wait until the last minute to get media coverage for your events and projects. The more time you can give the media reporters, the better. One strategy is to contact a news reporter in the early stages of the project, once the vision and purpose has been established. Giving the media lots of notice before the event will allow them to organize their story schedule in order to cover your event. If your project requires community participation throughout its duration, make this clear to the reporter during your initial communication. Ask the reporter to mention your efforts in their columns each week or to do a special feature emphasizing the duration of your project and your desire for community engagement. Ensure that you have your vision and steps to action clearly articulated and organized before contacting the media so you can make a great first impression!

Plan, plan, plan! Make media contact part of your project management strategy. Right from the beginning of your project planning you should begin thinking of ways to promote your initiative. Assign this responsibility to two or three people to research such things as the names and contact information of local media companies and their news reporters.

Make yourself known. Follow media personnel (such as individual news reporters as well as the larger organization) on *Twitter* and have them follow you. Tweet about your upcoming events and tag the personnel in your tweets. Also, create a *Facebook* page for your event or your group and invite local media to be your friend and attend.



Create a contact database. Keep all your media contact information handy and in an easy to access database. Creating an electronic spreadsheet, online or hardcopy address book, *Facebook* group, Twitter following, or email address list can make the process of informing various media contacts less time consuming. Tech-savvy kids may even know of other ways to organize contact information – ask them what they use, or give them the opportunity to practice their Excel skills and create the database. Ensure that the children do not contact the media personnel directly unless authorized by their parent/guardian. Once you have created a contact database, keep adding to it as you meet new people. Challenge yourself to make another new media contact with each new project you begin.

Make contact! Contact your local newspaper and ask for the name of their local events news reporter (or Google this- many media organizations provide the name and phone number or email of their reporters online). Establish a relationship with a local news reporter (from a newspaper, magazine, online blogger, local radio or television station, etc and send them email updates on your upcoming project. Invite them to your school to meet your principal and your class; or send them a photo of some of the elements of your project. A picture may make your story more memorable.

Expand your audience. Contact the local college/ university journalism class or campus newspaper and ask them to cover your event in their paper. Contacting soon to be professional reporters is a great way to give them practice, establish a relationship with them for future stories, and reach a broader audience or demographic including visiting academics, professors and students through their unique media channel.

World Wide Web reach. Create a webpage with regular updates on upcoming events. Send the link to your local media contacts (news reporters at local television stations and newspapers). Start a daily or weekly blog about your event to provide information in a quick and easy to read format. After you receive parental/guardian permission, you can use this as an opportunity for your students to practice their non-fiction writing. Using the Internet to share news of your event with others outside of your local community may get your event covered by non-local reporters and may even inspire other groups to do a similar project somewhere else in the world!

Be active! Attend other local community events where the media are present and introduce yourself (and your project) to the reporters. Offer them a business card with your contact information and ask for one of theirs in return. Affix a flyer, post card or other promotional material for your event to your business card to provide information to the media personnel.

Ask for advice! Attend other local community events that have media personnel there and ask the leaders of the events how they acquired media coverage.

Who should I contact?

Newspapers (photo and journalist), local and national television stations, local politicians, local bloggers, radio personalities, etc.

Don't forget the power of the airwaves! In a highly computerized age, many people may forget about the power of radio! However, the radio can be an excellent way to communicate ideas and promote your project or event. Many universities, colleges, and even high schools have local radio stations which could promote your event to a wider sector of the community. Contacting your local radio station and asking them to mention your event in their news section each evening or asking to have an interview about your project can also be effective.

Utilize your local Community Events Calendar. Ask for your event or initiative to be added to the local community events calendar. The scope of these can range from a school, library or church community to a town or city community. Some communities offer a community events calendar online and others may publish this in the newspaper, a monthly pamphlet or newsletter. Reporters may refer to these calendars when looking for a story to cover. Also, some local news stations mention upcoming events during daytime television commercials or the daily evening news. Make sure you research each organizations' submission deadline early so that you don't miss out!

Call on local figureheads. Contact local politicians, councilors and representatives and invite them to attend your event. This is a good way to bring the media to your event.

One email is never enough. With how busy everyday life is, it is likely that the email you sent to the local newspaper outlining your amazing project was initially read and noted but may get lost among the dozens of other emails received that day. Always send a follow-up email and if you can, request a time to meet so that you can provide more details about the project, your intentions and your overarching goal.

Connect the pieces! When sending information about your event to a reporter or news outlet, outline some specifics as to why your project is important and what it will do for the local and global community to hook the interest of the reporter. Provide some information about the organization (if any) you are supporting, who your group is and what you do. The more appealing and community-relevant your story is, the more likely it will be covered.



What do I do now? Key Strategies

Thank you! After the event, send the reporter or media station(s) that advertised and/or covered your event a thank you note. This is a great way to establish a relationship with the media for future event coverage.

Plan for the future. When you send your thank you note, attach some information about your next event as well so that the reporter is aware of your upcoming projects.