



HOW TO HANDLE THE MEDIA ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH A JOURNALIST

- Make sure you read the publication, or listen or watch the programme before hand if possible.
- The first time you call, ask whether it is a good time, or would it be better for you to call another time.
- Once you have them listening, ask about their deadlines - when do they plan their coverage, when do they go to press, when would they like to be contacted?
- Ask how they would like to receive information - fax, email or phone.
- Ask what kind of stories they are interested in - and listen.
- Make sure you get their direct phone line if they have one, their fax number, email address, and any other relevant details.
- Keep a note of journalist's responses - it might be worth making a file. Each time you call them make a note of when it was and what was discussed.
- When you call again, remind the journalist what you discussed before, e.g. "you might remember we spoke about the opening of our new headquarters a couple of months ago." This helps build the relationship.
- Invite them to any event your organisation might have - once you meet face to face they are more likely to remember you.

Don't forget - you are not going to get every story you suggest into the publication. However, do not be disheartened as once you make it into the journalists address book you become a "source" that they will turn to whenever they need the kind of information you can supply.

Remember the factors competing for attention:

Bulk

Journalists are sent huge numbers of press releases, most of which are irrelevant and go straight in the bin.

Time

Journalists will be worrying about their deadlines, their editors, and their colleagues - sometimes they might have to compete for space.

Mess

The newsroom is rarely an ordered place. It is very easy for press releases and pictures to get lost or mislaid.

Luck

The journalist may just be in a good mood, have an interest in your kind of organisation for personal reasons, or they may not be as busy as usual.

As always, do let me know if you have given an interview or taken part in a programme – this information is truly invaluable in building up relevant contacts.

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