

Grand Lodge, AF & AM of New Mexico

Public Relations Guide

Produced by the Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee

PR Reference Guide

This public relations (PR) guide will help you gain a better understanding of the public relations function and give you some useful tips and procedures on what to expect with regard to media relations. The guide includes details on all elements of the public relations function, yet it concentrates predominately on media relations-what every lodge needs to pursue to ensure that news about lodge activities (charitable and otherwise) is effectively distributed in their community. The Grand Lodge of New Mexico's Public Relations Committee is a resource to individual lodges and their officers to provide advice and support with their media relations efforts.

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What Is PR?

Public relations are a planned and sustained effort to establish credibility and understanding between an organization and its audiences.

A public relation program can be implemented using different communications techniques, including media relations as well as through tactics such as news releases, contributed articles, and speaking opportunities. PR can educate people, change the way they think and create awareness that should lead to greater recognition and understanding of the Masonic Lodge in New Mexico.

More specifically, here is what public relations can and can't do.

Public relations can achieve many things, especially telling people about what the Masonic Lodge does and raising awareness of our charitable activities and civic leadership.

PR can:

- Create awareness
- Inform and educate people about it's the programs that the Grand Lodge and local lodges have planned and/or implemented
- Encourage involvement in the community

Public relations cannot, most importantly, guarantee what appears in the media.

Remember that PR can't:

- Control what a journalist writes or says
- Guarantee coverage of a particular issue, event or announcement
- Stop a problem from happening. PR can't change the fact that something has occurred, but it can manage the way people perceive what happened.
- Serve as a replacement for advertising.

Source: Ketchem's Cookbook-a PR Reference Guide for The Integer Group

Pursuing Media Opportunities

Ongoing media relations consist of proactive and reactive communications. Proactive media relations include taking information or a media release to a reporter. Reactive media relations include fielding an inquiry, responding to a general reporter query or managing an unexpected situation. Reactive media relations can involve both positive and negative situations. What is important is to have processes in place to make decisions and act quickly.

Proactive Media Examples

What makes a story newsworthy? Reporters consider many factors in evaluating a pitch. For instance, is the topic unique? What's the local relevance? Why should my readers care?

Following are a few of the methods you can use to pursue proactive efforts.

- **Editorial Calendars** – Many publications publish a calendar of topics. Obtain and review the calendar to determine which topics offer the best opportunity to offer information and to identify any overall trends in story topics. For instance, newspapers and TV will be doing stories about charitable activities during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.
 - ❖ **What is needed:** To pursue editorial-calendar opportunities, you need to initially interest the reporter by providing a combination of relevant spokesmen, relevant topic expertise, or snippets of information highlighting our knowledge of a subject. Often, a reference may also be required.
- **Feature-Story Pitches** – Sometimes, a story is so relevant and interesting that it calls for a special effort to place the material. Feature-story pitches require a good deal of preparation and willingness to wait (possibly up to several months) for Results.
 - ❖ **What is needed:** Answers to several questions a reporter would ask, before they ask them and before you put the information in front of a reporter. For example, a reporter will definitely ask the Five W's-Who, What, When, Where and Why. Some of these questions may be structured as, "Why is the topic significant to my readers? What third party source can I talk to about it? What kind of artwork or photography do you have to accompany the story?"

Tip: Never ask or expect the reporter to write your story for you. They are not your public relations person.

- **Bylines -- Several** publications accept contributed materials for publications. Although the media outlet might edit the content somewhat, bylines are a great opportunity to present information and speak directly to your audience. As with feature stories, placing a byline can take several months, but the reward can be well worth it.
 - ❖ **What is needed:** Enough information to develop a brief abstract of the proposed article and brief biography of the writer. Why is the topic relevant? What are some examples of this topic in the community at large?

- **Speaking Opportunities -- Although** not truly a media relation's tactic, speaking opportunities provide a chance to make a positive impression in the public's mind about Freemasonry. Speaking opportunities can include speaking at a civic organization meeting, historical associations, college or university seminars or at public events held on Memorial Day or the Fourth of July.
 - ❖ **What is needed:** Once opportunities are identified, you need to create a speaker's abstract and biography. These documents have to prove why the speaker is interesting and how his experience and insight are relevant to the opportunity. Resumes, news releases or case studies are examples of what can be used to develop this information.

Source: Ketchem's Cookbook-a PR Reference Guide for The Integer Group

Reactive media-relations examples

Reporters are famous for their great research and infamous for their ability to catch people by surprise. Some typical reactive situations include:

- ***Direct media inquiries*** – phone calls or e-mails from reporters. For example, a couple of years ago, the newswires picked up a story about a clandestine lodge in New York State where a fellowcraft was accidentally shot and killed during a ritual. This resulted in negative publicity about the Craft and necessitated damage control by lodges across the country, in some cases, Letters to the Editor were used.

❖ ***What is needed:*** In the event that you receive a call from the media, respond quickly to the reporters' requests and never offer any information off the record. When you respond, remember that time is of the essence. Reporters work under deadline pressure, so tomorrow will be too late.

- ***General media queries -- reporters*** have several tools, most importantly, Internet databases and national e-mail inquiry services, that enable them to survey the country for information relating to a current story.

❖ ***What is needed:*** The ability to decide quickly whether to participate in the opportunity. When reports send out these kinds of queries, they are "first come, first served." Reporters sometimes only have a day to find sources to fulfill their needs, but that doesn't mean that they need all the information in a day. Only what they consider essential will get on their radar; you can work out the logistics later.

How to Write a Press Release

While it may appear to be a daunting task, press releases are actually easy to write. The problem is, that reporters and editors are inundated with press releases (both good and bad) on a daily basis. To ensure that your press release doesn't end up in the trash, you must make it newsworthy. Consider the following questions and advice for formatting a press release and deciding what to include and where to put it.

1. What are you announcing?
2. Who are you targeting with this announcement?
3. What are the key features? How will they allow your audience to do (or do better) what they couldn't do before?
4. How will the product/service save time, money or worry?
5. Is there anyone that can serve as press references (i.e., the sources who can be used for a quote in the press release and these who will be willing to speak to the press)?
6. When is the service/product available?
7. What is the price (or what is the pricing structure)?
8. Do you see any opportunities to team with a strategic partner in announcing this release?
9. What web page URL should be used in the release?
10. Do you have any other information we haven't asked about? Anything interesting you have read that's related to the topic?
11. Do you need your local lodge or Grand Lodge approval to release this information?

Once you have answered these questions, follow these steps to write a bulletproof press release:

Step 1: send it to the right reporter. Identify the publication(s), reporter(s), and editor(s) who cover your topic and send your release directly to them.

Step 2: Use the reporter's preferred mode of transmission. Find out if they prefer to receive press releases by e-mail, fax or the U.S. mail. Getting your press release to them the way they prefer, increases the chances they will actually read it.

Step 3: Make it newsworthy and timely by answering the questions above.

Step 4: Avoid hype. Terms like "best" should be avoided. Anything you state should be backed up by facts and figures or used in quotes from nonbiased reviewers.

Step 5: Avoid made-up words and phrases and jargon. These terms would only confuse the reader and will be edited out by the reporter.

Step 6: use standard journalistic style. Put the most important information first, followed by the information that is less important, but still relevant to the release. The lead paragraph should contain as many of the five W's (who, what, why, where and when) as possible without creating one long run-on sentence.

Step 7: Be brief. There's no such thing as being "too short" in a press release. Once you have said what needs to be said, stop writing.

Press Release Template

Every Press release should contain seven basic elements.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: These words should appear in the upper left hand margin, just under your letterhead. You should capitalize every letter.

Contact Information: Skip a line or two after the release statement and list the name, title, telephone and fax numbers of your spokesperson (the person with the most information).

Headline: Skip two lines after the contact information and use **boldface** type.

Dateline: This should be the city your press release is issued from and the date you are distributing your release.

Lead Paragraph: The first paragraph needs to grab the reader's attention and should contain information that's relevant to your message.

Text: Fully develop your message in the main body of your press release.

Recap: At the lower left-hand corner of your last page, restate the highlights of your press release.

Source: PRW, www.press-release-writing.com

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Name
Organization: Name
Phone: Number
Fax: Number
E-mail: E-mail address

Headline Headline Headline Headline

Subhead Subhead Subhead Subhead

CITY NAME (Date)

Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph.

“Quote number one.”

Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph.

“Quote number two.”

Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph.

About (insert Lodge name)

Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph Release body paragraph
Release body paragraph Release body paragraph.

PR Contacts

New Mexico Newspapers

Alamogordo Daily News

518 24th St

Alamogordo, NM 88310

Telephone: 505-437-7120

Fax: 505-437-7795

Website: <http://www.alamogordonews.com>

William Morgan, City Editor

Albuquerque Journal

7777 Jefferson NE

Albuquerque, NM 87103

Telephone: 505-823-7777

Fax : 505-823-3499

Email : Journal@abqjournal.com

Website : <http://www.abqjournal.com>

Charlie Moore, Metro Editor

Journal North/Santa Fe

328 Gallesteo

Santa Fe, NM 87501

Telephone: 505-988-8881

Contact: Neva

Albuquerque Tribune

7777 Jeffereson NE

Albuquerque, NM 87109

Telephone: 505-823-3642

Website: <http://www.abqtrib.com>

Bill Slakey, City Editor

New Mexico Newspapers (continued)

Carlsbad Current Argus

620 S. Main St.

Carlsbad, NM 88221

Telephone: (505) 887-5501

Website : <http://www.currentargus.com>

Andrea Rich, Managing Editor

Email: arich@currentargus.com

LeAndia Stabner, News Editor

Email: lstaebner@currentargus.com

Robert Fabian, City Editor

Email: rfabian@currentargus.com

Deming Headlight

219 East Maple St

Deming, NM 88030

Telephone: (505) 546-2611

Website : <http://www.demingheadlight.com>

New Mexico Newspapers (continued)

Farmington Daily Times

201 North Allen
Farmington, NM
Phone: (505) 325-4545
Fax: (505) 564-4630
Website : <http://www.daily-times.com>

Troy Turner, Editor
Telephone: (505) 564-4624
Email: tturner@daily-times.com

Eric Fisher, City Editor
Telephone: (505) 564-4620
Email: efisher@daily-times.com

Nathan Gonzalez, Asst. City Editor
Telephone: (505) 564-4648
Email: ngonzalez@daily-times.com

Gallup Independent

500 N 9th St.
Gallup, NM 87305
Telephone: (505) 863-6811
Website: <http://www.gallupindependent.com>

Las Cruces Sun News

256 W. Las Cruces Ave.
Las Cruces, NM 88005
Phone: (505) 541-5400
Fax: (505) 541-5498
Website : <http://www.lcsun-news.com>

Jim Lawitz, City Editor
Telephone: (505) 541-5438
Email : jlawitz@lcsun-news.com

New Mexico Newspapers (continued)

Lovington Daily Leader

P.O. Box 1717
Lovington, New Mexico 88260

Telephone: (505) 396-2844
Fax: (505) 396-5775
Website : <http://lovingtonleader.leaco.net>
E-mail: leader@leaconet.com

John Graham, Publisher/Editor

New Mexican

1368 Cerrillos Road.
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Telephone: (505) 986-3035
Fax: (505) 986-9147
Website : <http://www.sfnewmexican.com>
E-mail: citydesk@sfnewmexican.com.

Portales News-Tribune

101 E. First St.
Portales, NM 88130
Phone: (505) 356-4481
Fax number: (505) 356-3630
Website: <http://www.portales-news.com>

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New Mexico Newspapers (continued)

Ruidoso News

104 Park Avenue
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Phone: (505) 257-4001
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The Silver City Daily Press & Independent

300 West Market Street
Silver City, NM 88061
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Website: <http://scdailypress.com>

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Roswell Daily Record

PO Box 1896
Roswell, NM 80202
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Andrew Poertner, Editor

New Mexico Newspapers (continued)

Hobbs News-Sun

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Hobbs, N.M. 88240
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Daniel Russell, Editor (505) 391-5440
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1818 N. Silver City St.
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Telephone: (505) 538-5893
Website: <http://www.scsun-news.com>

Quay County Sun

902 S. First St.
Tucumcari, N.M. 88401
Telephone: (505) 461-1952
Fax: (505) 461-1965
Website: <http://www.qcsunonline.com>

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