

## Chapter 8

# Public Relations

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*While the advertising in California's tobacco education media campaign has received a lot of positive recognition, the public relations component has been the unsung hero of the campaign. The public relations work is equal in importance to the advertising.*

— Colleen Stevens, Tobacco Control Section, California Department of Health Services

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Like advertising, public relations (PR) is a way of reaching people with a message. But while advertising space or time must be bought or donated, PR exposure is “earned” by working with the news media, opinion leaders, or others. That’s why the media coverage generated from PR is dubbed “earned media”: You must *earn* the coverage by developing materials, by working with reporters, and by expending resources through a continuing, systematic process.

Enhancing the credibility of your message is a key feature of PR. Because audiences know that an ad is designed to influence them, they may evaluate its message more critically than the information that’s received through the news media, which is often seen as less biased. Although audiences may question some of what they read in newspapers or see on the news, most still consider these sources to be more objective and accurate than advertising, and they generally accept the information more readily. For example, many would believe the information released in an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, yet may not be convinced by an ad on the same topic with the same message. The same is true of other credible sources. The job of PR is to encourage the dissemination of your messages through others, most notably the news media.

## In This Chapter

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- Setting Goals and Selecting Tactics
- Preparing for Implementation of Your Public Relations Program
- Working With the News Media
- Developing Press Materials
- Responding To Negative News Stories
- Evaluating Your Public Relations Efforts

To help you create an effective PR campaign, this chapter covers four main topics:

1. Setting goals and selecting tactics for your PR activities, including efforts to reach your target audiences and important stakeholders.
2. Preparing for the implementation of your PR program, including developing a PR plan and managing a PR firm.
3. Working with the news media, including creating press materials and responding to negative news stories.
4. Evaluating your PR efforts.

### ***Setting Goals and Selecting Tactics***

PR is an essential component of a tobacco counter-marketing program because it offers credibility, objectivity, and a de facto endorsement of your campaign (as long as the media coverage is positive). When you have a small paid media budget, PR becomes your primary method of communicating with various audiences. Even if you have a large paid media budget, PR will complement and support your paid media efforts. Without an effective PR effort, even the most expensive and creative paid media campaign can founder.

#### ***What PR Can and Can't Do***

##### ***PR can***

- Provide quick responses to hot issues and sudden events
- Establish relationships with media, stakeholders, opinion leaders, and others
- Reach audiences on an ongoing basis with information that may be seen as more credible than advertising messages
- Enhance the credibility of your advertising/paid media messages
- Gain public support and create an environment conducive to your other tobacco control initiatives
- Expose the practices of your competitors (i.e., the tobacco industry, smokers' rights groups, and others) and provide a contrasting perspective
- Provide a framework for effective crisis communication

##### ***PR can't***

- Guarantee your message placement, focus or slant, specific content, or accuracy in the media or other venues
- Substitute for other components of an integrated and comprehensive program

In general, PR complements your counter-advertising program and other efforts by:

- Reaching your target audience with in-depth messages that elaborate on your key points in ways that ads can't
- Helping to create positive views of your campaign and your organization among the news media, stakeholders, policy makers, and opinion leaders
- Helping to influence policy change through long-term relationships, partnership and coalition building, and consistent efforts to expand the support base

An integrated counter-marketing program will use PR to serve all three of these functions.

This section discusses the first two functions:

(1) using PR to reach your target audience and (2) using PR to promote your program with opinion leaders and stakeholders. The third function, discussed in another chapter, is changing policy. (See Chapter 9: Media Advocacy for more information.)

### Target Audience Public Relations

PR can be a strategic communication tool for sending key messages to targeted audiences and for complementing advertising messages. This use of PR will be referred to in this manual as “Target Audience PR.”

Developing Target Audience PR activities is similar to developing an advertising campaign: You need to clarify your overall goal, determine target audience(s), set specific objectives, select key message strategies, and select the

best channels. Much of your advertising research will also apply to your Target Audience PR activities. However, rather than buying ad space, you'll be working with reporters and editors to encourage them to run stories, op-eds, and editorials that convey the key messages of your campaign. These stories can provide additional context—and additional credibility—that will make the advertising component of your campaign more powerful.

For example, if your goal is to increase cessation and your key audience is adult smokers with children, your message strategy might be to highlight the pain that smokers may cause their families if they die or get sick. Your advertising efforts might include running TV spots of testimonials from a smoker's relatives about how they have suffered from the smoker's tobacco-related death or illness. Your Target Audience PR might include directing reporters to “real-life” human interest stories about local families who have suffered with this situation, possibly even the individuals who are featured in your ads.

In addition to working with reporters to get the message out through the news media, you might also coordinate a lunch meeting with chamber of commerce members to discuss various ways to help working parents gain access to cessation support in the workplace. You might also make a presentation at a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting about smoking cessation support groups or quitlines, and bring fliers with recommended steps for quitting and the local quitline phone number.



How do you make Target Audience PR a reality in your program? Once you know your goals, audiences, and messages, you or your PR firm should first identify the organizations or news media outlets that reach your target audience. Second, you should determine how you can encourage those organizations or media outlets to disseminate your messages.

### **Finding Media Outlets That Reach the Audience**

One easy way to find media outlets that reach your target audience is to examine your advertising media buy. The newspapers, magazines, and other outlets included in the media buy will have been analyzed by the media planners and buyers to ensure that they reach your core audience. They also may be ideal for your

Target Audience PR activities. You should also consider the media that weren't part of the media buy. For example, even if your ad campaign doesn't include Web advertising or newspapers, you may want to use these outlets in your PR effort. Depending on your target audience, you may also want to consider community-based media, such as church bulletins, newsletters, and fliers from local organizations. If you're working with a PR firm or consultant, they'll be able to identify the optimal media outlets for your target audiences based not only on efficiency (how many target audience members they reach for the resources expended), but also on the quality of communication (e.g., how credible the sources are and how appropriate they are for the message).

### **Gaining Exposure Through Media Outlets**

Once you identify the outlets that reach your target audience(s), you must generate those intermediaries' interest in disseminating your message. In Target Audience PR, the most common intermediary is the news media. The best way to get your message in the media is to help reporters make that message appear new and interesting to their audience (readers, listeners, or viewers). Here are some of the most common tactics:

- **Create an event.** Reporters will often cover your newsworthy campaign events, including summits, community activities, rallies, and so forth.
- **Set up interviews with program participants.** Everyone loves a good personal story (witness Art and Entertainment's "Biography," VH1's "Behind the Music,"

and Lifetime's "Intimate Portrait"). Some participants in your campaign may have interesting personal stories related to tobacco. These personal profiles work well for magazines and newspapers' lifestyle sections, and they humanize your efforts.

- **Set up interviews with local residents affected by the issue.** In addition to campaign participants' stories, you might want to identify local residents affected by your issue who can talk to the media. The resident is more likely to generate news coverage if he or she is a prominent member of the community, such as a sports celebrity or an elected official. But remember that these community members must appeal to your target audience—if you're targeting teens, don't use the authoritarian, middle-aged mayor.
- **Offer reporters "behind-the-scenes" access.** You can give reporters a look behind the scenes of making an ad, or let them follow one of the actors during the shoot (similar to MTV's "Making the Video").
- **Try a stunt.** You can conduct unique events for the sole purpose of getting news media coverage. Mississippi set up its own version of MTV's "The Real World" and placed a group of smokers who wanted to quit in a house with Web cameras so that people could see who gave up smoking first. This tactic received national exposure and educated the audience about cessation.

- **Create a speakers bureau.** A speakers bureau will help make your subject matter experts more easily available for speaking engagements with associations, groups, and businesses at conferences and other events, and prepare these speakers for media interviews.
- **Announce the results of a study or survey.** Sometimes when you do this, you'll get featured twice: once when you announce the launch of the study or survey and again when you announce the results.
- **Develop a publication or Web page.** You can develop publications or add information to your Web site that will encourage readers to pass on your message to other interested parties or to those who could benefit from the information. Your tobacco control campaign's Web site can include copies of and links to the media coverage that you've received, which will increase the reach of this coverage. These efforts will need to be coordinated with your advertising activities.

You can also leverage your advertising spending to create Target Audience PR opportunities. Many media outlets offer "bonus weight time," which is extra space or time given to you as an incentive for purchasing advertising with them. This bonus weight time can be used for communications other than additional ads. For example, you can work with the outlet on promotional or sponsorship opportunities. For the national "truth" campaign, the American Legacy Foundation worked with teen magazines to include "truth" gear in their

“What’s Cool” fashion sections, rather than run additional ads. You can also work with media outlets to get interviews for campaign leaders and others involved in the campaign.

These are just a handful of the ways that programs win attention for their messages. Pick the ideas that may work for your program. There are plenty of other possibilities—try inventing your own.

### **Capitalizing on Outside Events To Increase Exposure to the Message**

Events independent of your tobacco control campaign may generate news stories that offer opportunities for media coverage. These stories can either undermine or support your campaign. In either case, you should respond to related stories to ensure that your campaign messages are heard. It’s especially critical that you respond to any challenges to your campaign messages. Even if you don’t get equal coverage for your response, you will have educated the reporters about the issue, which will be to your benefit for future stories. How to respond to negative news stories is covered later in this chapter.

For example, if you’re targeting teens and a positive story about the Philip Morris “Think. Don’t Smoke” campaign runs in a publication that reaches this audience, you can submit data to the reporters on how “Don’t Smoke” efforts are ineffective and how other approaches (such as those used in your campaign) are more effective. In these cases, it may be helpful to contact local nongovernment organizations, such as the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American

Heart Association, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and others, to see if you can coordinate your responses.

Your counter-marketing program will be conducted in the context of national tobacco control efforts. You’ll need to anticipate events, such as the release of a Surgeon General’s report, newly published scientific findings, the American Legacy Foundation’s campaigns, state or federal tobacco legislation, and the advocacy efforts of volunteer and nonprofit organizations (such as the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids). Staying abreast of these activities may involve subscribing to national tobacco news services, signing up for various tobacco-related e-mail distribution lists, and participating in national forums (such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Media Network).

You can also piggyback on national PR events, such as the Great American Smokeout, Kick Butts Day, and World No-Tobacco Day. When you’re planning your PR campaign, do some research on these national events and include tie-ins to the events that are appropriate for your audience. Using these events to gain exposure for your messages can be a more efficient tactic than creating your own events. A Tobacco Control Media Events Calendar, along with accompanying media materials, is available on the CDC’s Office on Smoking and Health Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/calendar/calendar.htm>.

You’ll also need to monitor the competition’s PR activities. You can track news releases issued by the tobacco industry by searching the PR

### *Target Audience PR in Florida's "truth" Campaign*

With \$70 million from its landmark settlement with the tobacco industry, Florida launched the Florida Tobacco Pilot Program in 1998. It was the nation's first antitobacco education program funded with tobacco industry money. The program's "truth" campaign is designed to create an antitobacco brand that appeals to teens the way that the major tobacco brands do.

Target Audience PR played a key role in the "truth" campaign. Much of the media coverage resulted from the efforts of Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), the program's youth advocacy group. The group's activities were designed to engage teens and to garner media coverage that complemented the ad campaign's messages and tone. Examples of their PR activities include:

- In the summer of 1998, the campaign offered the "truth" tour, a 10-day, 13-city whistlestop train tour and concert series across Florida. Then-Governor Lawton Chiles rode the train, joining the teen spokespeople who conducted their own press conferences at every stop. SWAT members trained their peers in advocacy and media relations along the way, empowering teens throughout the state to join in the movement's rebellion against the tobacco industry.
- During the fall of 1999, SWAT took on tobacco magazine advertising with "Big Tobacco on the Run." SWAT members tore cigarette ads from the magazines they read, plastered them with a neon-orange "Rejected. Rebuffed. Returned." sticker and mailed them to tobacco company executives along with a request to meet with SWAT to discuss youth marketing guidelines. The Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation accepted the invitation and sent a representative to meet with the SWAT board of directors.

The media coverage of these and other events, handled by the PR firm supporting the Florida Tobacco Pilot Program, resulted in more than 845 million media impressions (the combined audiences reached by all of the media vehicles covering the events). Coverage included stories on "Good Morning America" on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC); on the "Evening News' Eye on America," "60 Minutes," and "CBS News Sunday Morning" on the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS); on the Cable News Network (CNN) and network affiliates throughout Florida, as well as outlets in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and elsewhere. Print coverage included *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Seventeen*, and *Teen People*, as well as every major-market Florida newspaper and numerous minority outlets.

newswire (<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews>). Another comprehensive source of tobacco-related news is at <http://www.tobacco.org>, which e-mails daily news briefings to subscribers. These briefings will help you to stay informed about the latest national and state tobacco-related news.

## Stakeholder Public Relations

A comprehensive PR program will reach not only your target audience(s), but also your stakeholders, which may include opinion leaders, business leaders, policy makers, local advocates, and the public. While the primary goal of your Target Audience PR is to reinforce your campaign messages, the primary goal of your Stakeholder PR efforts is to garner support for your program and its funding. By demonstrating your program's effectiveness and value, Stakeholder PR may help to increase your program's longevity.

To conduct effective Stakeholder PR, you must:

- Identify your stakeholders
- Identify ways to reach those stakeholders
- Identify and capitalize on media opportunities to reach stakeholders
- Involve stakeholders in the campaign—and keep them involved

## Identifying the Stakeholders

The first step in Stakeholder PR is identifying your stakeholders. You must determine whose support is critical to your campaign and who can add to the credibility of your campaign.

These are your core stakeholders. You'll probably want the public's support as well because policy makers may follow public opinion if the support—or lack of support—is great enough. Think beyond the state level and identify stakeholders at the community level, especially if your program provides grants or funding for activities at that level.

You should identify your stakeholders before you begin planning your program because one of the best ways to win support is to involve key stakeholders early in your planning. Think of ways to encourage them to have a stake in the program or to view it as partly *their* program. You may also want to include your potential detractors in certain meetings so that you can understand the opposition and develop a response or modify your plans. These accommodations, if they don't detract from your goals and objectives, may be the key to turning a detractor into a supporter. For example, if you're going to focus on smokefree workplaces (including bars and restaurants), you'll want to include some restaurant and bar owners and workers in your effort. By seeking their input and making adjustments to address their concerns, you could earn their support up front and help your initiative.

There are many individuals and organizations that you should consider as potential stakeholders, including local businesses and employers, business associations, chambers of commerce, volunteer and community-based organizations, places of worship and faith-based groups, hospitals and health care facilities, neighborhood associations, social clubs,



health and other professional groups or associations, state and local government officials, school boards and PTAs, public and private universities and community colleges, vocational and continuing-education schools, and daycare and childcare centers.

### Identifying Outlets That Reach the Stakeholders

Once you have identified your stakeholders, you will need to find ways to connect with them through various communication channels. These channels will include not only media outlets, but also conferences, personal meetings, and other communication opportunities. The media outlets are likely to include traditional news outlets (daily newspapers, TV and radio news programs, and TV and radio talk shows), along with health- and tobacco-related publications, Web sites, and policy-related publications. You may also consider community-based media, such as bulletins published by local, faith-based, and other organizations.

Mass media may not be the most appropriate way to reach your core stakeholders. Some people and groups will require more personal forms of outreach, including phone calls, meetings, and individualized letters. Other ways to communicate with your stakeholders are through customized outlets, such as the following:

- **Newsletters.** You can create a campaign newsletter to inform and entertain supporters and to recognize their efforts. You can also send print or electronic bulletins on the campaign to partner

organizations so that they can include them in their newsletters. (See Appendix 8.1 for a sample printed campaign newsletter and Appendix 8.2 for a sample online newsletter.)

- **Speaking engagements.** In-person communication is valuable because stakeholders can ask you questions directly. Not only can you provide them with the information that they want, but you can also learn the issues that are most important to them, which will help you tailor future outreach. Set up a yearly schedule of opportunities to deliver messages to your stakeholders at their meetings; you should also hold meetings of your own and invite them.
- **Web sites.** You can create a Web site solely for stakeholders. For example, Legacy created two Web sites for its “truth” campaign. One site is for teens (<http://www.thetruth.com>) and focuses on campaign messages. The second site is a password-protected site (<http://www.truthpartners.com>), specifically for stakeholders; it disseminates research, strategies, and other information to the campaign’s partners. It has a mass e-mail function that can be used to notify partners of important announcements or updates.

### Identifying Media Opportunities To Reach Stakeholders

Certain kinds of campaign activities are more likely to attract the attention of large groups of stakeholders:

- **Campaign launch.** This is your prime opportunity to get significant news media coverage about your campaign. All of your main stakeholders and policy makers will be interested because the campaign is new. You'll want to focus on the campaign's goals and create a sense of excitement.
- **Specific advertising flights.** Although less of an opportunity than the campaign launch, releasing a collection of ads can garner news media coverage, especially if the ads are unique or controversial. A flight or set of ads also demonstrates progress toward the campaign goals. However, it is important to notify particular stakeholders (such as the local programs and volunteers) of new ads *before* they are run, so that the stakeholders can be prepared for inquiries from reporters or the public.
- **Events.** Related summits, speaking engagements, health fairs, and other events are opportunities to reach out to stakeholders and gain coverage.

### *Stakeholder Involvement in California's PR Campaign*

California has been at the forefront of integrating many components of a comprehensive tobacco counter-marketing program. One California PR effort illustrates how to successfully meld local programs, grass-roots efforts, and advertising with stakeholder involvement to disseminate campaign messages in the news.

In the spring of 1995, California's tobacco education program worked with local programs throughout the state on Operation Storefront. More than 700 trained youth and adult volunteers surveyed more than 5,700 tobacco retailers throughout California, including grocery stores, supermarkets, drugstores, convenience stores, small pharmacies, gas stations, and liquor stores. These volunteers documented the number of indoor and outdoor storefront tobacco ads in the retailers' establishments, including window signs, posters, banners, display racks, decals, clocks, neon signs, doormats, ashtrays, counter mats, and other items that included tobacco brands or slogans.

The survey found a significantly higher average number of tobacco ads and promotions in stores near schools (within 1,000 feet) than in stores not near schools. Tobacco retailers near schools were more likely to place tobacco advertisements close to candy racks or less than 3 feet from the floor, where children were most likely to see them.

The survey's results were released at 19 local press conferences throughout the state. With the coordination by the PR staff at the state health department and at the PR firm, each local program was able to attract local press coverage and to contribute to the powerful statewide and national impact of the results. The survey results were subsequently incorporated into ads that exposed tobacco industry advertising tactics directed toward children.

- **Evaluation reports.** Stakeholders as well as detractors will be interested in whether your campaign is working. If your results are positive, you'll definitely want to spread the word. If your goals aren't met, you will still want to share with your core partners the results as well as the reasons why you believe that the results were not as strong as hoped, so that your stakeholders can help you develop new directions and defend your efforts from attacks.

### Capitalizing on Media Opportunities

Responding to attacks on your campaign is essential to maintaining its credibility and support from stakeholders. Be prepared to work quickly with reporters and to draft news releases, editorials, and op-eds in response to attacks. When you respond to the attacks, it is important to use the right tone. Sometimes a forceful approach is appropriate, while, at other times, you should present a calm, non-confrontational response. In either case, don't sound defensive and be sure that your responses are supported with appropriate data. If you've built good relationships with your partners, ask them to support your program by issuing their own responses to the attacks. Quick decision making and action are essential in these situations.

As with Target Audience PR, you'll also want to monitor the activities of the tobacco industry. Keep an eye out for fake grassroots efforts organized by the tobacco industry or other opponents. You should counter these efforts by exposing them as coordinated by the tobacco

industry. For example, a smokers' rights campaign may successfully cloud the issue of secondhand smoke by claiming that free choice is being threatened. If you have concrete evidence that these efforts are funded or coordinated either directly or indirectly by the tobacco industry, then you may provide that information to the news media to ensure that they have all of the facts. If you're not completely sure of the information, don't risk your credibility by speculating.

Don't forget to look for good news about counter-marketing efforts (even in other states) that support your campaign.

Highlighting the successes of similar efforts will show stakeholders that you're following a proven path.

### Involving Stakeholders in Your Campaign

Once you have identified potential partners or stakeholders, directly involving them (especially local coalitions and advocates) in your counter-marketing effort can be an excellent method of retaining their interest and support. You'll also gain the benefit of their insight and expertise. Stakeholder involvement may be valuable in:

- Campaign planning (especially when working with specific populations)
- Research and evaluation planning
- Key phases of implementation (for example, invite stakeholders to be part of your proposal review committee after you issue a Request for Proposals for work to be done by contractors)

- Advertising development
- Visibly supporting your campaign when it's facing a threat from detractors
- Planning and implementing media advocacy and grassroots events

The more that you genuinely involve key stakeholders in your efforts, the more time, resources, and effort they'll invest in protecting your program and ensuring its success.

Defining the stakeholders' role in your efforts helps them understand the rationale for their involvement and will motivate them to become involved and stay involved. These reasons will differ, depending on the interests and focus of each stakeholder. For example, the business and labor sectors have a significant interest in the health of local families and communities. In addition, private sector industries are interested in being "good neighbors" in the communities in which they operate, since the community supplies their workforce, and often, their markets. However, because each entity has a different agenda, you'll need to tell them individually why they need to get involved with your cause and how they can help. Consider the ways in which the participation of partners will help them. What incentives and benefits exist or can be created to help win their support? Consider what these people and their institutions are already doing to help the community. Building community goodwill, for example, can be a motivating factor for some partners.

## *Preparing for Implementation of Your Public Relations Program*

The first section of this chapter provided a conceptual framework for organizing your PR activities into Target Audience PR and Stakeholder PR. This section provides information on preparing for the implementation of your PR activities, including developing a PR plan and managing a PR firm.

### **Developing a PR Plan**

Because your PR efforts should be conducted in the context of a strategic communication effort, you should develop a PR plan for each of your major tobacco control program initiatives. As you develop the plan, you'll need to be mindful of what role your organization plays in tobacco control (e.g., public education, advocacy, lobbying, and health care). Outlining the goals, objectives and associated tactics, and timing for each effort will ensure that no steps are overlooked. Tracking the activities as they are implemented will provide you with a record of what was done, which will help you to evaluate your efforts and to improve future PR outreach.

The PR plan should answer four basic questions for each outreach effort:

1. **What do you want to accomplish?**  
Describe your goal in as much detail as possible so you'll be able to determine whether you are moving toward this goal.
2. **How will you accomplish it?** Detail your objectives and associated tactics, including activities that you plan to

undertake, materials that need to be developed in support of those activities, a materials dissemination plan, a list of intended media contacts, follow-up contact plans, planned press events, and spokespeople. You may want to outline partners who will assist and what their roles will be.

3. **When will you accomplish it?** Create a timetable that shows when each of your activities will be completed.
4. **How will you determine if your goals were met?** Describe how you're going to measure your effort. You should decide up front what indicators you'll use to measure the results and how you'll collect the information. Indicators may include the number of media "hits" that you received or the number of people exposed to your messages through the news media. Other key indicators include the focus, slant, and placement of news stories in which you've tried to communicate your key messages. For example, if the stories written have a pro-industry slant, then you may not have met your goal, even though you have received substantial media coverage.

As part of your overall PR plan, you should develop a crisis communications plan that outlines the process for dealing with attacks on your campaign. Because you'll have to respond quickly to such attacks, you may need to develop a shortened review process to replace the usual lengthy review process. Your shortened process may include having your

head PR person craft a response and having it quickly approved by the program manager or the marketing director. Receiving a call from a reporter for your response to an attack is a valuable opportunity to convey your campaign messages that you will not want to miss.

Planning ahead will allow you to include recommendations of experts and partners who can support your efforts. If you don't develop such a plan proactively, you may find yourself being attacked without time to do the necessary planning to provide a strategic response. (Responding to negative news stories is covered later in this chapter.)

Your program is likely to be scrutinized by the media, the public, and the tobacco industry. To help prevent criticism, you should proactively consider how your messages and activities may be perceived by these audiences. Hold yourself and your program to high standards of ethics, accuracy, and accountability about how you position your messages and what activities you choose to conduct.

### Managing a PR Firm

PR firms provide a range of services and can be valuable for conducting target audience and stakeholder outreach in support of large campaigns. Although your PR firm will have staff who can handle most, if not all, of the communication functions, you should stay well informed about all PR activities so that you maintain the lead role in decision making.

Many firms like to set a monthly retainer for their services that is based on the expected level of services to be provided, while others will establish a yearly budget for your program,

then bill only the incurred labor and other costs each month under some maximum annual ceiling. With large counter-marketing programs, the latter arrangement may be preferred because each monthly invoice reflects the level of the work actually performed and allows for easier tracking of the specific costs.

If you want to reach specific populations in your state (e.g., African Americans; Hispanics/Latinos; Native Americans; the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community; and people with disabilities or other special needs), then you may want to look for one or more firms that specialize in reaching these populations. The firms may recognize specific communication challenges with these groups and may have stronger and broader relationships with the media and stakeholders that are important to them. Often, these specialty PR firms can subcontract with your primary PR firm, removing the need for separate competitive bids.

If you do arrange for subcontractor PR firms, make sure that you can establish direct contact with each firm when needed and that you stay fully informed about their activities. Although most of the work may flow through the prime contractor to the subcontractors and back, there may be times when it's critical to have direct access to a subcontractor. Keep in mind, though, that the prime contractor is legally responsible for all work done on the contract, even by subcontractors, so make sure that they're aware of any contact that you have with subcontractors.

To locate specialized firms in your area, you can review directories such as the *Directory of Multicultural Relations Professionals and Firms*, which is offered by the Public Relations Society of America.

### Key PR Firm Functions

A PR firm can perform several functions for you:

- **Strategy**—helping you to develop your overall image and supporting communication strategies to reach your goals
- **Counsel**—giving you advice on how to handle issues and situations to maintain image and reputation and to support your messages
- **Research**—conducting research on the target audience, messages, and public opinion
- **Message and materials development**—developing messages to fit your strategies, developing materials for the news media and others
- **Media relations**—working directly with the media to get coverage
- **Spokesperson training**—identifying and training spokespeople who support your campaign
- **Stakeholder relations**—facilitating meetings with partners and other key stakeholders
- **Issues monitoring**—reviewing the news to see how your issue and campaign are covered

- **Event planning**—creating events and holding press conferences to attract media coverage
- **Creative**—creating “collateral materials” (items such as posters, brochures, and fliers that are given to your target audience), Web sites, and other communication tools to convey your key messages

You may not need all of these services from your PR firm. For example, you may rely on your ad agency for strategy development and on a contract with a state university for research. However, you should be aware that PR firms offer a perspective that differs from most ad agencies or other vendors, so you’ll probably want to tap PR expertise when making crucial strategic decisions. If you are relying on multiple sources for support, make sure that all of the sources are coordinating their efforts while you maintain the lead for overseeing the work. Coordination among all of the individuals and entities involved is essential to avoid a PR crisis that could occur if everyone is not on the same page.

### Coordinating Your PR Firm With Your Ad Agency

Many of the services offered by PR firms overlap with those offered by ad agencies, event management firms, and others. Be sure to designate a lead agency for certain functions, like establishing your overall strategy. Many people on the counter-marketing team, including those at the advertising agency, will have opinions on what will generate news coverage. Listening to these opinions is important because you may get some great ideas,

but give special consideration to the advice of the PR firm staff on news media issues. They have worked with reporters and know what is more likely to attract coverage and how that coverage can be managed. Because you are ultimately responsible for the activities of your organization, it’s important that you consider all of the input and advice and make the final decisions on major issues yourself.

Bring in your PR staff early in the development of the whole counter-marketing program.

Involvement from the start will help PR agencies develop ideas and give them time to plan effective outreach and events to achieve your goals. Calling a PR firm a few days before you release a new ad campaign will not give you or the PR firm time to maximize media opportunities or to plan for other components of a comprehensive approach. Therefore, you may not have the necessary partner support and media relationships in place to complement an ad campaign. With these components in place, your campaign will be more likely to gain valuable media coverage and collaboration among partners. Involvement during the campaign’s development will also allow the PR experts to identify potentially negative or controversial issues and to develop contingency plans for them.

### Handling PR In-House

Although PR firms are uniquely qualified to conduct outreach to media, stakeholders, and others, you can also handle the public relations functions in-house if you have the right staff and resources. You’ll need to designate someone to manage the PR tasks. Major

tobacco control programs often employ full-time staff solely to manage news media relations, especially in the program's initial stages. In Florida, for example, the counter-marketing program employed a press secretary, a deputy press secretary, and two interns to manage the news media when the campaign was most visible. If you choose to handle all of your PR in-house, you will need at least a press secretary and probably others to work with reporters, develop materials, train spokespeople, and develop strategies that include partnership building and special events planning.

### *Working With the News Media*

The news media can be difficult to work with if you don't understand their needs and if you don't develop good working relationships with them. However, successfully working with the news media can greatly support your programs and enhance the image of your campaign and organization. To work effectively with the news media, you will need to consider:

- What the media want
- What they consider newsworthy
- Who they are specifically and how you can reach them

- How you might gain their attention and pitch a story
- How to keep them interested in the program through press conferences, editorial board meetings, and Web-based "press rooms"
- How to place your messages in the media through letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, and calendar items
- How to respond to their unsolicited inquiries
- How to develop spokespeople
- How to develop the optimal materials for the news media
- How to meet media deadlines, which often are short





### *Checklist To Determine Newsworthiness*

- Is the story timely? Is new information being offered, perhaps newly collected data?
- Is the story distinct, unusual, or unexpected? Is the issue or some aspect of it new to the public?
- Does the story indicate a trend or relate to other breaking news?
- Is the information essential? Does it convey something people want or need to know?
- Will it affect many people in the community? Does it hit close to home? Localizing a national story by adding local statistics, spokespeople, and experts significantly increases a story's chances of being picked up.
- Is the information useful to readers?
- Does the story have emotional appeal? A human-interest element?
- Do you have compelling visuals to accompany the story? Offering a reporter visuals may increase the appeal of a story and may increase its chances of being run.
- Does the story involve a national or local celebrity?

### **Knowing What the Media Want**

Most media companies are in business to make a profit. They make money by developing and disseminating accurate, informative, and sometimes entertaining media content (for newspapers, magazines, TV programs, and radio stations) with two goals in mind: (1) attracting or retaining readers, viewers, or listeners; and (2) selling advertising. The more readers, viewers, or listeners that they have, the more they can charge advertisers for advertising space or broadcast time, and the more money they can make. Competition among media outlets for consumers is intense, as is the continuing search for compelling information and high-quality entertainment. Keep the media's goals in mind when you're developing stories that you want placed.

### **Determining What Is Newsworthy**

To attract coverage of your issue, you must have something newsworthy to say. You're competing with countless other issues and organizations for scarce space or airtime. Before you pick up the phone or write one word, put yourself in the place of a reporter, editor, or producer and ask yourself why people should be interested in your story at this time. The same facts can produce entirely different stories. You'll need to have a new "hook" or "angle"—some piece of information that's new or could be examined in a new and interesting way. To gauge the potential of the story idea that you want to pitch, check the proposed news hook against the criteria in the checklist provided. If your story is timely and if you answer "yes" to at least two other criteria,

### *Typical Entries for a Media Contact List*

- Date when the information was most recently updated
- First and last name and title of the reporter or the editor
- Name of the media outlet
- Complete mailing address: street, city, state, and ZIP code
- Telephone, fax, and e-mail
- Field of interest or beat
- Deadline and schedule
- Other relevant information, such as ABC network affiliate, radio, monthly magazine, or daily newspaper
- Reach and circulation

the odds are that the media professionals will consider it newsworthy.

### **Developing and Maintaining a Media List**

Maintaining up-to-date media outlet lists for your area is key to a functioning PR program. Media lists contain key information about all of the journalists that you work with or would like to reach.

If you are putting together a media list yourself, one easy way to get started is to look on

the Internet for listings of media outlets in your area. For example, you can find listings of established media outlets at <http://www.emonline.com/links/index.html> and <http://newsdirectory.tucows.com/news/press/na/us>. Other sources for information about media outlets in your area include chambers of commerce and the yellow pages. You can also purchase publications that provide listings of media outlets. Don't forget to perform searches for the media outlets that reach the various ethnic communities and diverse populations within your area. Your partner organizations may be able to provide you with the media lists that they've used.

The PR firm or consultant with whom you are working should be able to identify the optimal media outlets for your target audience(s), based not only on audience reach, but also on the credibility of each outlet with your audience(s). Most PR firms have access to databases of reporters and editors and can generate media lists quickly. You will probably want your PR firm to develop a custom database and to track your contacts with key reporters and what they like to cover.

Your media list will likely include:

- Newspapers (dailies, weeklies, and monthlies)
- Local trade and business publications
- Other local publications, such as university papers, bulletins from places of worship, and community newsletters
- Local TV and radio stations (including college and university networks)

### *Working with Minority Media*

Many state programs include a focus on specific populations disproportionately affected by tobacco use. (See Chapter 4: Reaching Specific Populations for more information.) To reach these populations, you often have to augment your general media selection with minority news media. Specialized PR firms can provide media lists and contacts for media that reach specific audiences. However, some minority media outlets may be less likely to publish tobacco control articles if they accept and depend on money from the tobacco industry for advertising, events, or promotions. When working with minority media, you must be aware of their position on the issue.

When pitching a news story to minority media outlets, be sure to:

- Highlight the toll that tobacco use has on their audience
- Explain the positive role that they can play in solving the problem
- Provide them with information on your efforts
- Include members of the relevant stakeholder organization(s) on your team when holding in-person meetings

As mentioned, the minority media outlets that you're approaching may be accepting advertising, event, or promotional dollars from the tobacco industry. Many minority media outlets are on tight budgets and rely on tobacco advertising as part of the revenue mix that supports their publications. You should sympathize with their situation so that they don't feel chastised by you or your program, but you should not condone or support their receipt of this money. If your campaign includes paid placements in their media outlets, mentioning this when you meet with them may show that you value their outlets as paid media channels.

- Local cable stations
- Public broadcasting stations (which may have community-affairs programming)
- Public information officers at military bases (many bases have broadcast stations and newsletters that reach service members and their families)
- Freelance writers who may be looking for stories to feed to media outlets

If you are conducting a paid advertising media buy, be sure to include all of the newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, and other media outlets in your advertising buy.

Once you have collected the media listings, you must determine who your contacts are with these outlets. You will not have much success if you simply collect media outlet fax numbers and send unannounced news releases and advisories. You must call the media outlets and ask

who in their organization covers topics related to tobacco. Don't limit yourself to health reporters, although they will be key. You may be interested in the reporters who cover stories related to restaurants and other businesses so that you can prepare them for your smokefree restaurants campaign. You may also want to know who covers education, family, recreation, and other relevant areas. Staff turnover is frequent at many media outlets, so update your contact list or database often.

The next step is to contact the identified reporters to introduce yourself. Become a "source" for them—someone who can tip them off to news about tobacco, explain the context, provide background information and additional data, and connect them with relevant people for interviews or quotes.

If you want your story to run nationally, you should know that many newspapers are members of one or more wire services (e.g., Associated Press [AP], United Press International [UPI], and Reuters), and rely on these services to provide their readers with national news and features. A story that goes over the AP wire is commonly picked up by 200 or more newspapers. That's a quick way to get national coverage of your story. Often, larger circulation papers feed stories to wire services. You can contact the services directly or develop media contacts with the larger papers in your area to gain access to these services.

Another idea often used in larger media markets is to join a press association and network to find reporters who will competently cover your issue.

## Developing and Cultivating Good Media Relationships

Reporters are inundated with information every day. You'll need to take steps to attract the reporter to the information that you have to offer. Make it as easy as possible for the reporter to write the story that you want without having to contact you. Make your information concise and to the point. Be available to give the reporter direct quotes and additional information; the reporter is likely to need these for most major news or feature stories. When you talk with reporters, be sure to:

- **Treat reporters as respected individuals.** Learn their beats and interests. Journalists are almost always pressed for time. To cultivate positive coverage, be courteous, concise, timely, relevant, and objective. Ask how they prefer to get information (e.g., by fax or e-mail) and abide by their request. Don't send large e-mail attachments with big graphics.
- **Be prepared and credible.** Have backgrounders, fact sheets, and lists of experts ready to discuss the issue, and fax the information to the media outlets before contacting the journalists.
- **Respect deadlines.** All media outlets operate on deadlines. When you call the assignment editor to learn who covers what, find out when the deadlines are and respect them. Information sent too early may be forgotten. A hot, last-minute story can be pitched on the phone. In general, mail news releases so that they arrive three to five days before

an event. This extra time will allow the editors to assign someone to your story. If you are phoning in a story, do so at least one day ahead of time.

- **Be polite.** If the journalist just isn't interested, accept it. The reporter may suggest that someone else at the media outlet cover the story, be interested in the next story idea that you offer, or learn that you are a source and come to you for information or ideas in the future. Don't burn any bridges.

### Pitching Your Story to Reporters

Pitching a story means contacting reporters to persuade them to cover a story or event.

Journalists want to hear about good story ideas because your ideas can help them put together more compelling stories. When pitching a story to a reporter, you must:

- **Be succinct.** Jot down a few sentences that clearly and briefly state what you want to tell the reporter. You can use these notes as a script to prompt you. The purpose of a story pitch is to pique the interest of a journalist, not to communicate everything there is to know about a subject. In most cases, less is more.
- **State clearly who you are and why you're calling.** Then convey the essence of your issue or event in the first 15 seconds. Think about what you're pitching as though it were a headline that will grab the journalist's attention immediately. The first sentence of the conversation

should emphasize why people will care about this story.

- **Ask whether the reporter has time to talk.** If the answer is "no," inquire about a better time. If the reporter agrees to chat for a moment but is rushed, be brief and get to the point quickly. Journalists will elect to keep you on the phone longer if they're interested in your story. They'll also make themselves more available to you in the future if they feel assured that you will be respectful of their time.
- **Be sensitive to the time of day.** Different media outlets work on different schedules and deadlines. Find out the best time to contact each outlet on your media list. A general rule of thumb is that newsroom editors are the most open to discussing story ideas after the morning meetings have concluded—usually after 10:30 a.m. Avoid calling newsrooms after 3 p.m. because journalists are often focused on meeting tight deadlines at the end of the day.
- **Position your story as one that is receiving attention right now.** Then ensure that your pitch includes an angle that's timely, topical, and pertinent to a current news peg.
- **Whenever possible, humanize a story.** Providing compelling visuals, personal storylines, and interesting anecdotes with the initial pitch will afford journalists the

luxury of acting on a story idea quickly without having to do a lot of homework.

- **Preserve your credibility.** Avoid making claims about a story that won't hold under further scrutiny. Making claims that can't be substantiated will compromise your credibility and limit your success with future pitches.
- **Avoid repackaging the same old information.** If a story does not reveal new information, do the necessary research to find a fresh hook, a recent statistic, or a different angle to justify running the story again. For example, if you're pitching a story on smoking cessation programs that have been covered in the past, narrow your pitch to include a timely news peg, such as recent statistics on smoking among teenagers and adapt your message points to support that angle of your story.
- **Become an ally to the news media.** News outlets want stories that will appeal to their audiences. Understanding the audience base of a news organization will help you to pitch stories that will interest them.

## Conducting a Press Conference

Holding a press conference is a great way to get information to the media. Before planning a press conference, determine if there's a compelling reason to have one, such as a release of new information or another significant event. If you can create a local angle for a story or create a local link to a nationally breaking

story, you are more likely to get local media outlets to attend your press conference and to cover the story. To make sure that your press conference goes smoothly, take these steps:

- **Choose a location.** If you choose a public location, make sure that you apply for any necessary permits or get permission from the appropriate person.
- **Set the date and time.** Midmorning on a Tuesday or Wednesday is generally the best time to attract reporters.
- **Select speakers.** Determine who will speak at the press conference, what each person's topics will be, and how long the press conference will last (usually 30 to 45 minutes). Generally, you'll want someone to make an opening statement (five to 10 minutes), followed by other speakers who can share different perspectives or secondary information (10 to 15 minutes). The remaining time should be used for a question-and-answer period. You should have a moderator who can direct the questions to the appropriate participants and can maintain order—especially if you are dealing with a controversial topic.
- **Invite public figures.** Invite "VIP" guests, such as the governor, the mayor, or other public figures, well in advance to increase the likelihood that they can attend. Having such public figures in attendance can provide an implicit endorsement of your message. Follow up as the date gets closer in case there

are cancellations. You don't want to promote their attendance if they can't make it. Make sure that you coordinate with their PR staff.

- **Decide which pictures or visuals will best convey your message.** You can create enlarged photos or giant posters that show your findings. Use your logo and make your organization's name visible on a big sign.
- **Prepare a news advisory.** Include a point of contact and phone number on it, and mail or fax it to reporters on your media list early enough to arrive one week before the event.
- **Encourage reporters to attend.** A few days before the event, phone the reporters to remind them of the press conference and encourage them to attend.
- **Assemble media kits or handouts.** Include summaries of the topic that you're presenting, prepared statements to be read, and photos and graphics illustrating the topic of the press conferences.
- **Set up the room.** On the day of the event, leave enough space for TV cameras on the sides or in the back of the room. Be sure that there are functioning electrical outlets available where the reporters will set up.
- **Have all members of the media sign in.** Give them a copy of your media kit or handouts.

- **Prepare an agenda.** Give all attendees an agenda for the press conference that includes key speakers and timing for the event.
- **Be punctual.** Start and end the press conference on time.
- **Say thanks.** Thank the media and your guests for attending.
- **Follow up.** Contact reporters who request additional information.

### Meeting With Editorial Boards

One way to add to your program's credibility is to encourage favorable editorials. Editorials are articles that express opinions and are usually not signed by an individual because they are seen as representing the official position of the newspaper. To educate a newspaper about tobacco control and to properly introduce major elements of your campaign, consider meeting with newspaper editorial boards. The editorial board sets the paper's general editorial policy and includes the people who write the editorials that appear in the paper. The editorial board of a major metropolitan newspaper usually consists of the publisher, the editor, the editorial page editor, and some columnists and editorial writers. However, most editorial board meetings include only the editorial page editor, the editorial writers, and/or the columnists. At a smaller paper, a single person may handle the entire editorial page.

Editorial boards each have their own schedules and procedures, so call the one that you're

## Checklist for Press Conference Planning

### Facility Accommodations and Appearances

Be sure to select a location with

- Adequate space for attendees and equipment, including tables and chairs
- Enough electrical outlets for equipment
- Adequate parking available
- Accessibility for senior citizens and people with disabilities
- Adequate lighting
- Properly functioning air conditioning or heating
- Good acoustics for speaking and recording

Be sure to have alternative plans in case of bad weather.

Other accommodations and equipment that you may want to consider include:

- Lectern and/or platform and stage
- Reception area
- Videotape equipment
- Microphones and amplifier
- Recording equipment
- Audiovisual aids (e.g., screens, charts, easels, chalkboards, slide projectors, computers, and projectors)
- Photographer and video crew

Test all of the equipment in advance and allow time to get any needed replacements.

### Before the Event

- Conduct a “walk-through” to determine the appearance of the facility
- Check the condition and location of the signs
- Before the press conference, test the equipment again with the actual material that you plan to use

### Materials

Make sure that your spokespeople and staff are equipped with the materials that they need to effectively deliver your messages and to meet event objectives. Examples of materials include the following:

- Agenda, schedule, and program
- Gifts or awards
- Brochures
- Media kits
- Direction signs
- Name tags
- Host badges or ribbons
- Guest book or sign-in sheet
- Posters or banners
- Placards for speakers or guests of honor

### Staffing

Make sure that staff are available to oversee these functions:

- Rehearsal
- Parking and traffic control
- Registration and guest sign-in
- Master of ceremonies
- Photography and/or videotaping
- Audiovisual arrangements
- Decorations and catering
- Setup/cleanup

NOTE: If your event involves a presentation or demonstration, you may wish to have prepared questions for designated questioners in the audience to facilitate a question-and-answer discussion.



targeting to find out how it functions. Many editorial boards hold regular meetings with outside groups. If you can get on the agenda for one of these meetings, make sure that you're thoroughly familiar with the media outlet and its position on tobacco. Also, you should:

- Attend the meeting with no more than three people
- Prepare a 5- to 10-minute presentation (no longer) that states your main message and the importance of your issue to the community
- Take materials to hand out, including a succinct explanation of the issue, a fact sheet on your issue, and the names and contact information of people who can be reached for more information
- Be prepared for a pointed group discussion in which everyone asks questions and voices opinions

If you can't meet with the editorial board, you can write an editorial board memo. This memo will contain the same basic information that you would have presented in person. If a hot issue is in the news, you can use editorial board memos to target columnists by providing an interesting point of view on the issue.

### Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are an effective way for you to voice an opinion to policy makers and to educate the community about your tobacco-related issues. Use these letters to correct facts in an inaccurate or biased news article, to explain the connection between a news item

and your activities, or to praise or criticize a recent article. Your program may send the editor as many different letters on the same subject as you have allies to write and sign them. To increase your odds that your letter will appear with little or no editing by the paper, consider these guidelines:

- **Avoid general salutations.** Whenever possible, use the actual name of the editor. If you don't know the name, address your letter to Dear Editor. Do not use general salutations like "Dear Sir" or "To Whom It May Concern."
- **Keep the letter short.** A maximum of three to five short paragraphs or 200 to 300 words should be sufficient. Some newspapers have length restrictions. Some newspapers also reserve the right to edit for length and may not edit a letter the way that you would want. Find out about these policies before submitting a letter.
- **Keep it simple and succinct.** Make sure that your first sentence is short yet compelling. Don't be afraid to be direct, engaging, and even controversial.
- **Get personal.** Demonstrate local relevance with your letter. Use local statistics, personal stories, and names to make your point. If you are going to tell someone else's personal story, be sure to get his or her permission in advance.
- **Be timely.** Capitalize on recent news, events, editorials, and public-awareness campaigns. If you are responding to a

recently published article, refer to the headline of the article and the date that it was published at the beginning of your letter.

- **Correct but don't emphasize inaccuracies.** If the letter is to correct an inaccuracy, very briefly mention the misconception or inaccuracy, but do not give it much space (you don't want to introduce the negative point to an even wider audience). Then set the record straight in no uncertain terms and back up your statements. In the last paragraph, draw a conclusion or ask for an action, such as “call a toll-free number for more information or visit a Web site.”
- **Don't forget to give your full name, address, and telephone number.** The editor may want to confirm your identity and organization/affiliation, or to clarify some point in the letter. Include a phone number where you can be reached in the evening, especially if your issue is urgent.
- **Follow up.** Don't be discouraged if your letter isn't printed. Keep trying. You may want to submit a revised letter with a different angle on the issue at a later date.

## Op-Eds

The op-ed (“opinion/editorial” or “opposite the editorial page”) expresses a forceful opinion on an issue, backed by well-researched and documented facts. While a letter to the editor often provides a concise and direct response to a specific article or broadcast, the

op-ed may be more detailed. Here are some suggestions for content and format:

- **Be timely.** Connect the op-ed to the release of a new survey, a recent article, or a community event. Timing is key for an op-ed.
- **Follow the standard format.** Provide the author's name, title, and occupation. Mention the author's connection to your organization. Double-space the text and keep the article between 500 and 800 words. Localize the article with statistics and stories that provoke discussion and provide practical solutions to the issue. End with an overview of your group's mission.
- **Select a messenger.** Identify the best author or signer for the op-ed. Selection of the most appropriate author is critical in getting the article published and maximizing its impact. Even if you collaborate on the research and writing, ask a board member or a local influential politician to sign the op-ed. The more prominent the signer, the more likely the piece is to be published.
- **Follow up.** Call the paper three to 10 days after sending your op-ed to ask if it is being considered for publication. The follow-up call is also an opportunity to educate your contact about your tobacco-related issue, even if the op-ed isn't published.

(See Appendix 8.3 for a sample editorial, Appendix 8.4 for a sample letter to the editor, and Appendix 8.5 for a sample op-ed.)

## Calendar Items

Newspapers, radio and TV stations, and local access/community cable TV channels often mention special events and meetings. This publicity is free and easy to obtain. When your event or meeting is open to the public, send the calendar editor a one-paragraph description of the program, plus information about the event's time, date, place, and cost, along with a contact name and phone number. This information is best sent two to three weeks in advance of the event. Respect the media outlets' deadlines.

## Developing a Web-Based Pressroom

Making information about your program easily accessible to reporters will help you get more accurate coverage. Members of the media are increasingly turning to the Web for information about the topics that they cover, and creating a Web-based pressroom will make it fast and easy for reporters to get information about your effort.

Although your general Web site may contain a wealth of useful information, it may not include your latest news or clearly address what a reporter will want to know. Creating a special section tailored to reporters' needs can make it easier for them to get the story right.

Some tips for creating your online pressroom:

- **Post the same elements online that are in your media kits.** These include news releases, media advisories, fact sheets, backgrounders, speeches or articles by organization leaders, biographies of key

people, an annual report, a calendar of events, photos with identifying captions, and contact information. (See the Media Kit section later in this chapter for more information on the contents of media kits.)

- **Put your ads online.** Digitize your ads and put them on the Web site so that reporters can see them. Be sure to secure all of the necessary permissions and pay all of the required talent fees before you place any ad online. The Web version of the ad should be low resolution so that it can't be downloaded to ensure that reporters or others don't use the ad in a news program or for any other purpose without your knowledge and express permission. Provide information on the Web site about how a reporter can quickly receive a videotape with your latest ad(s) for use in a news story.
- **Include screen captures of your TV ads.** Place screen captures (stills from a video) of the ads on the site so reporters for print publications can download them to use with their story. Screen captures should be of a high enough quality to be used in a publication. Contact your ad agency or the CDC's Media Campaign Resource Center in advance to make sure that all of the permissions are secured and that the talent fees are paid.
- **Make the links easy to navigate.** Make sure that the link to the pressroom is on the main page of your Web site. Don't create several layers of links in the press

area; every key piece of information should have a link from the first pressroom page.

- **Make it easy for a reporter to contact your organization.** Each page should have a link where the reporter can send an e-mail to your organization's media contact for more information.
- **Track usage.** Use a log-in function to track who is using the pressroom and when.
- **Send automatic e-mail updates.** Consider programming an automatic e-mail notification function that sends a message to reporters when new information is posted.
- **Keep the Web site current.** All news releases and other information should be posted to the pressroom at the same time that they are distributed by fax, e-mail, or another method.
- **Continue your other media activities.** Realize that the online pressroom only supplements—but doesn't replace—regular phone calls, faxes, and other contact with reporters.

## Responding to Unsolicited Media Inquiries

When you get a call from a reporter for information about your campaign, you should

- **Ask for particulars.** Find out what news outlet the reporter represents, what the full story is about, when the story will

run, what questions the reporter has, and who else he or she plans to interview.

- **Ask about deadlines.** You are under no obligation to respond on the spot. However, it is important to respond to the reporter in a timely fashion. You may want to find out more or discuss the question with others before responding—before the reporter's deadline.
- **Determine who is the best source and respondent.** If it isn't you, brief the person who is the best source and have that person return the call.
- **Note the reporter's name, affiliation, phone number, and deadline.** If you're unfamiliar with the media outlet, do a little research, perhaps on the Internet.
- **Check the information.** Check all the facts carefully and collect your thoughts before you return a call.
- **Always call back.** Respect deadlines. Set a time to return the call, and make sure that you don't keep a reporter waiting.

## Selecting and Training Spokespeople

Selecting and training spokespeople who will carry your message to your audiences are essential for disseminating your messages and for creating and maintaining a positive image for your campaign and organization. Your spokespeople should be ready to speak on the record and on the air with reporters. Make sure that they understand that discussions with reporters should always be considered "on the record." Many organizations have full-time spokespeople, although the role often falls to

## *Bridging Statements*

“Bridging” is responding to a question by answering the question that you want to answer, not the one that was asked. You should never have to say “No comment.” Bridging is a way to keep the interview on track, to control it, and to get your message out. Here are just a few examples of bridging statements:

- “I think it’s important to know...”
- “We see it from a different perspective...”
- “What I’d like people to remember is...”
- “Let’s talk about what’s happening...”
- “Our perspective is...”

the director of a program. When selecting spokespeople, you should choose spokespeople who have the following characteristics:

- **Represent the image that you want to project for your message, campaign, or organization.** They may be friendly and energetic, scientific, or very polished or casual in their appearance. Your selection depends on the message and image that you are trying to convey. It helps if your spokespeople are viewed as likable as well as credible.
- **Represent your target audience.** You want the spokesperson to be seen as credible. If your target is kids, you may want a youth spokesperson; if it’s policy makers, you may want a respected leader of a community organization.
- **Are well spoken, articulate, and fast thinkers.** However, do not assume that people who are articulate in conversation will be “naturals” at being spokespeople. Make sure that you provide training and that they are prepared to deliver your messages.

It is helpful to have a list of spokespeople that you’ve trained so that you can quickly refer reporters to them for quotes and interviews. You can record key information about your trained spokespeople by using a spokesperson profile sheet. (See Appendix 8.6 for an example.) When you want to refer reporters to your spokespeople, you can use these profiles to help select the most appropriate person to contact.

All of your spokespeople should go through media training to perfect their on-air presence. Most PR agencies offer media training as a core service. Many independent media trainers are also available and can be hired as freelancers. Most media training sessions include videotaping mock interviews and then critiquing the performance. Most people improve significantly with just a few practice sessions. When reviewing a taped mock interview, look for:

- Clear and believable answers
- Main points repeated in quick, appealing sound bites
- A relaxed and comfortable interviewee

## *General Interview Tips*

- When working with reporters, try your best to correct factual inaccuracies; otherwise, they will be accepted as fact.
- Pair the use of statistics with personal stories or case studies that bring them to life.
- Repeat important information to reinforce key message points.
- Know your campaign goals and objectives, and be prepared to provide information and answer questions in depth.
- Don't speak to issues that are not your area of expertise. If a reporter asks you about another unrelated health issue, refer the reporter to an appropriate subject matter expert if you are not knowledgeable on the subject.
- Don't speculate or lie to reporters. Always be honest and stick to the facts. If you don't know an answer to a question, say so, and offer to find the answer or refer the reporter to someone who can.
- Always make your own statement. If a reporter asks, "Would you say . . ." and then adds a quote for you to agree to, don't take the bait. Instead, succinctly state the main message you are trying to convey.
- Assume that everything is on the record and that everything is for attribution. Don't confide in a journalist. Say only what you would want to appear in a headline or lead of a story.
- Don't offer personal opinions when speaking on behalf of your organization.

## *Tips for Print Interviews*

- Take notes during the interview, mainly about points that you want to address. Interviews are high-pressure situations; don't count on keeping it all straight in your head.
- Smile, stand up, and move around. You'll be more animated, and it will come through over the telephone.

## *Tips for Radio/TV Interviews and Talk Shows*

- Before the appearance you should:
  - Become familiar with the show.
  - Role-play with a stand-in for the host.

- Jot down likely questions and answers.
- List three or fewer key points that you want people to remember. Keep them simple and be prepared to repeat them using varied wording throughout the interview.
- Prepare anecdotes, examples, or research to support your messages.
- During the appearance, you should:
  - Be confident, personable, and honest. If you don't know an answer, say so.
  - Talk more slowly than usual and speak in short sound bites.
  - Dress for success. For TV, wear medium tones; don't wear stripes, bold plaids, or wild prints. Stay away from bright white, too. Keep jewelry and ties simple.
  - Always assume that a microphone is live. Never say anything within earshot of a microphone or a reporter that you wouldn't want to be broadcast or recorded.

### *Developing Press Materials*

If you want to get your message in the news media, you'll need to make your message—and your supporting points behind it—very easy for the media to find and use. Over the years, PR professionals have developed a standard way of organizing information into materials to suit this purpose. These materials are often packaged together in a media kit (also called a press kit, a press packet, or an information kit).

#### **Media Kit**

A media kit generally contains a lead or main news release and related elements (brochure, fact sheet, and photos) that tell a complete story. Effective media kits offer an appropriate amount of unduplicated information, arranged in the order of importance to the recipient. The most recent news release should be the first thing visible when the kit is opened. The contents should be compiled with the needs of the intended audience(s) in mind.

Media kits usually take the form of a two-pocket folder with a cover label featuring the name of the organization providing the information. (Use a computer-generated label to identify your organization and the kit's contents if customized printed folders are unavailable.)

Media kit components include:

- Table of contents
- Pitch letter (described below)
- Media advisory (described below)
- News release(s) (described below)
- Fact sheet or backgrounder on the issue and your organization (described below)
- Photo(s) with identifying captions
- Business card or label with contact information for your organization's main media contact

- Additional information, such as the following:
  - Printed brochure
  - Reprints of speeches or articles by organization leaders
  - Biographies of key people
  - Press clippings from previous coverage of the organization
  - Annual report
  - Calendar of events
  - Video news release

## Pitch Letter

The pitch letter is designed to persuade reporters to cover a specific story. More than a phone call, a pitch letter or e-mail lets you outline what you're doing and why it is newsworthy. A good pitch letter has staying power. (See Appendix 8.7 for a sample pitch letter.) If it doesn't generate a story today, it may tomorrow. Here are some format and style suggestions:

- **Target pitch letters and news releases.** Send correspondence to one journalist at each publication or media outlet. Avoid having two journalists at the same outlet compete for the same story.
- **Be timely.** Play off recent or anticipated events.
- **Be concise.** The pitch letter should be one typewritten page or less. Aim for no more than four or five paragraphs.
- **“Sell” the story idea’s newsworthiness.** Propose a news hook, state why it’s a hot story, and suggest photos or other possibilities for visuals. Providing good visuals is especially critical to a TV pitch.
- **Skip the hype.** Forget cute leads, flowery text, and self-congratulatory language.
- **Organize the letter like a news story.** Don’t beat around the bush. Make the opening tell the story, then provide background information.
- **ALWAYS include a contact name and a phone number.**
- **Advance the story.** Offer the names of interview subjects and experts who complement the contents of the accompanying news releases or materials.
- **Localize.** Generate local statistics and provide local anecdotes to tie your story to a national story on the same subject.
- **Conclude with your intention to follow up by phone.** Include your phone number.
- **Follow up.** Phone in a few days to explore different angles, but don’t be pushy. Your job is to let reporters know what’s going on, and their job is to decide whether it’s newsworthy. Always thank reporters for their time. If the idea is rejected today, it may be more relevant tomorrow.
- **Use organizational letterhead and hand address the envelope.**



## *Common Traps*

There are some common “traps” that people fall into when giving interviews. Sometimes, reporters will intentionally set up the interviewee to get a better quote; sometimes, these happen spontaneously. In either event, keep them in mind when being interviewed. Always keep your cool and never argue with or be condescending to a reporter.

- **Off the record.** You are never off the record. Consider anything that you say to a reporter as a potential quote.
- **The long pause.** Sometimes, a reporter will pause after you’ve answered in an effort to keep you talking. When you’ve finished answering a question, don’t feel compelled to fill a silence by continuing to talk.
- **The derogatory remark.** If a reporter makes a derogatory remark, don’t take the bait. Ignore the comment and bridge to your key message.
- **The phantom authority.** The reporter makes a vague reference to a study or a quote by an unnamed authority. Don’t respond unless the reporter can provide exact information about the study and author.
- **Badgering.** The reporter asks the same question over and over or asks the same question in several different ways in an effort to get the response for which he or she is looking. Don’t concede the point. Bridge to your message.
- **Irrelevant questions.** If a reporter asks a question that’s not relevant to the topic or your area of expertise, bridge to your message.
- **“A” or “B” dilemma.** The reporter gives a dilemma, “Do you prefer X or Y?” Don’t let the reporter limit your choices. State what you think is best and don’t hesitate to state several options if that’s preferable.
- **Multiple or rapid questions.** A reporter asks several questions in rapid order or asks questions with multiple parts. Respond by taking the issues one at a time. If the reporter has asked several questions, answer the one that you want to answer and ignore the other ones.

## Media Advisory

A media advisory telegraphs basic information about an upcoming event and may catch a busy editor's attention when a longer news release may not. It should be very simple and can even be written in bullet format, like an invitation showing who, what, when, where, why, point of contact, phone number, and date. Send media advisories to all local media outlets, as well as to the AP wire service, which maintains a daily log of events that is sent to all subscribing news outlets in a particular city or state.

Be sure to indicate a time and a place for the interview or photo opportunities, especially if the event is an all-day affair. Make sure that you also provide a contact name and phone number on the advisory for reporters who want to get more information or schedule interviews.

## News Release

The news release (also called a press release) is the workhorse of media relations. It communicates an issue's newsworthiness in a matter of seconds. If it doesn't, it will be tossed. Although news releases are sometimes used as submitted, they most often provide the foundation for a story or interview.

Just as important as the content of the news release is the format or look. Neatness counts. Make sure that the release date, your organization's logo, and the necessary contact information are shown clearly and prominently. Here are some guidelines for the format:

- **Style.** Indent paragraphs five spaces. Double-space and leave wide margins.

- **Fonts.** Choose one font. Don't mix fonts or type sizes.
- **Length.** Try to keep your news release to no more than two double-spaced pages, about 400 to 500 words.
- **Pagination.** For releases that run more than one page, type "more" at the bottom of the first page. Avoid carrying forward single words or lines of text. Make sure that the name of your organization, an identifying phrase (or "slug"), and the page number appear at the top of subsequent pages.
- **End.** You can denote the end of a release in two ways: Type "—30—" or "###" after the final paragraph.

(See Appendix 8.8 for a sample news release.)

Also note that you can prepare print news stories with images and pay to have them distributed to the media. Agencies that provide this kind of service include PR Newswire, North American Precis Syndicate, and News USA.

## Video News Release

The video news release (VNR) is essentially a prepackaged 90-second TV news story sent to TV stations. You should ask your regular media contacts whether VNRs are useful before investing money in creating them. VNRs are useful when you're conducting an event that TV stations can't attend but would be interested in covering. TV stations often take sections of a VNR and use them with footage of their anchors. VNRs are often transmitted to TV stations via satellite. You can also digitize them and place them on your Web site so others can see the story.

Some major media outlets have a policy of not using VNRs because VNRs do not meet their broadcast standards. An alternative to a VNR is to send a satellite video feed featuring sound bites and background footage (B-roll) that the TV station can use to create its own story. This approach is more cost-effective and easier to

put together because you supply just the raw materials instead of a fully packaged news story with a voiceover. To let the stations know about the feed, you can send a media advisory with the time and satellite information, then follow up with calls to the news editors.

### *Criteria for an Effective News Release*

- Does it grab the reader's attention from the start?
- Does the headline inform the reader? Does it presell the story?
- Does the lead paragraph single out at least two of the five "Ws" (who, what, when, where, and why) that explain why the story is important?
- Does the second paragraph address all of the other "Ws"?
- Have you put the most important information up front?
- Have you put the most important quotes up front?
- Have you clearly and accurately provided the title and affiliation of the people being quoted?
- Does it use the inverted pyramid style? Start by giving the reader the conclusion, follow with the most important supporting information, and end with background information. This allows editors to cut from the bottom and still retain the newsworthy kernel of the release.
- Does the closing paragraph succinctly restate the purpose of your campaign or organization?
- Is the text concise, readable, and easily understood?
- Is the information accurate? Have you double-checked all of the facts and figures? Are all of the attributions and sources complete? Are the names, titles, and all of the text spelled correctly?
- Does the release avoid jargon and spell out acronyms in the first mention?
- Are quotations used properly to express opinions, offer ideas, and explain actions, and not merely to puff up the story?
- Is a pertinent Web site or other reference information provided?
- Have you provided a date and a point of contact with a phone number at the top of the release?
- Does the release clearly indicate when the information can be published (e.g., "For release at 10:00 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 17" or "Embargoed until noon, Feb. 1")?

## Fact Sheet

The fact sheet or backgrounder provides basic, objective, and detailed information on an issue or subject. Fact sheets are usually a single page. A fact sheet supplements the information in a pitch letter or a news release. It adds credibility to any accompanying advertisements, media kits, op-ed pieces, or other timely materials. Follow the news release format guidelines to create your fact sheet. You may also want to use bullets or boldface for key points. If appropriate, use a question-and-answer format. (See Appendix 8.9 for a sample fact sheet.)

## *Responding to Negative News Stories*

Sometimes, despite your best efforts to communicate accurate information and messages that support your program, a news outlet will run a negative or inaccurate story. It is important to respond calmly and strategically.

### Tip 1: Remain calm.

- **Stay calm and don't take the negative story personally.** When you talk to the media, you are speaking for your agency or organization. No matter how angry you are, reacting thoughtlessly or attacking the reporter will not only reflect negatively on both you and your organization, but it will also hinder your efforts to communicate your messages.
- **Try to understand the reporter's point of view.** Reporters do not always have the time to get all of the facts before their deadline, or they might fear that if they continue to spend time on research, a competing reporter might release the story ahead of them.

- **Look at the situation as an opportunity.** Always try to think in terms of educating the media, thereby building bridges to promote accurate stories in the future.

### Tip 2: Analyze the situation.

- **Look at your relationship with this reporter and media outlet.** Following up on a negative news report is usually not the best time to work with a reporter or media outlet for the first time. Expressing your complaint to someone who knows you and knows that you're credible is easier and more productive.
- **Keep in mind that reporters don't work for you.** Reporters have no obligation to report only positive stories for you—although they do have a responsibility to inform their audience with accurate information. You can and should appeal to their sense of community service if the stories that they're running are inaccurate or not in the best interest of the public.
- **Remember whom you're trying to reach.** You're not trying to win a contest with media representatives. You're trying to reach your target audience(s). If the reporter or media outlet is unwilling to hear your position, consider trying to get your point across to your audience(s) through alternate news sources.
- **Determine whether the story you saw or heard attempted to express both sides of the issue.** To many reporters, a balanced piece is one that examines the opposing sides of a story, even if you perceive one point of view as an extreme position and the other as the

generally accepted point of view. As long as reporters attempt to present both sides, they will likely consider this to be fair reporting.

- **Determine whether there truly was an inaccuracy or if the reporter simply presented the facts with a negative slant.** Correcting a factual error is relatively simple and straightforward. However, a difference of opinion about a subject isn't as easy to counter. Statements that you may perceive as biased, uninformed, or sensational reporting may not be viewed by reporters as an error on their part. You can still respond to the piece, but your strategy will be different than if you're simply correcting a factual error.
- **If the story is basically true with only minor factual errors, you may choose not to comment.** Quibbling with a reporter over a minor point when a news item is otherwise accurate will not help you build bridges for future positive stories. However, you may still want to contact the reporter to establish a dialogue and offer yourself as a source, which may result in more positive stories in the future.

### Tip 3: Know what to request.

Once you have analyzed the situation and have decided that action is necessary, know your options. Reporters only have a few possibilities for how to respond to your complaint. Decide ahead of time your ideal solution as well as your minimal solution. Think of this as a negotiation. Here are some actions that you may request:

- **Ask for a retraction or correction.** This is reasonable when a grievous error has been

made and you have supporting material to refute the facts or statements reported. Ask for a correction immediately, and request that it be run as prominently as the original piece. Although this is not likely to happen, you may be able to discourage the editor from burying the retraction in a section that's not widely read.

- **Ask for another piece to air that presents your perspective on the issue.** A follow-up response is a reasonable request if your point of view was completely ignored or misrepresented in the original report. Reporters are not likely to present a follow-up piece that simply contradicts a story that they have recently run because they will not want to lose credibility. They will be more likely to work with you if you give them a fresh perspective or a new angle, or supply some "new information" (thereby giving them a way to maintain credibility).
- **Ask for an apology.** Sometimes reporters make mistakes unintentionally. If the errors are not egregious enough that they will significantly hinder your communication efforts, perhaps an acknowledgment of the mistake over the phone by the reporter is enough. If this is the case, you may use this as an opportunity to develop rapport with this reporter and to establish yourself as a source that the reporter can contact to confirm the accuracy of information in the future.
- **Ask that a correction note be placed in the permanent record.** Ask the reporter or editor to place a written correction on file with the original piece in the permanent record and

to tie the correction to the original report. If the mistake is a factual one, you do not want to see it repeated. Reporters often go back to do research, and may report the mistaken information again if they don't realize a correction was made.

- **Ask that a letter to the editor or guest editorial be printed.** A letter to the editor may be an effective response because these letters are widely read and publications are often very willing to print opposing views. Before releasing your letter, be sure to coordinate with your PR staff and seek concurrence from subject matter experts within your agency. See tips on writing letters to the editor earlier in this chapter.

#### Tip 4: Know whom to contact.

- **Talk to the reporter first.** Always give the reporter the first opportunity to respond to your concerns before moving up the chain of command. Give the reporter the benefit of the doubt. An editor may have changed a piece without the reporter's knowledge. A producer putting together the nightly news teaser may have misunderstood the message that the reporter was communicating in the piece, or "sensationalized" an originally balanced report. Let the reporter have an opportunity to respond and explain. Know the reporter's position before taking any further action.

- **If talking with the reporter doesn't result in the desired action, then speak to the news editor or the producer.**

Keep going up the chain until you are satisfied with the response or until you are convinced that you will not get the desired action.

- **Consider going to an alternate media outlet.** If you have doubts about the integrity of the media outlet that presented the negative or inaccurate report concerning your issue or organization, you can go to an alternate media outlet to present your information and point of view. Of course, go to the alternate source with a great story idea, not just a complaint about the other media outlet.
- **Consider reaching your public through many alternate outlets.** If all else fails in your efforts to set the record straight with the original media outlet, redouble your efforts to get your message to the public through alternative means. For example, set up a public forum, make your presence known on the Internet, and invite partners to write letters or make phone calls. Offer articles for community newsletters. Work to establish contacts in competing media outlets.

#### Tip 5: Know what you want to communicate.

- **Remember who your ultimate audience is.** You are ultimately trying to reach specific target audiences and

stakeholders. Keep them in mind as you craft your messages and responses.

- **Develop your message.** Have your messages reviewed by advisors and subject matter experts in your organization and partner organizations.
- **Frame messages in a positive way.** Don't focus on criticisms or negativity. Don't get distracted by the arguments or concerns of your critics unless they're substantial enough to truly be creating obstacles to communicating your messages.
- **Include a call to action.** If appropriate, include specific information about what audiences can do to respond or become involved in the issue.

### Tip 6: Prevent and plan for future attacks.

- **Be ready to voice objections quickly.** When a surprise negative news story hits that relates to your effort or attacks your program or tobacco control efforts in general, you need to respond very quickly (often the same day of the story) to take advantage of it. Thus, you may need to develop a shortened review process to replace the usual lengthy review process. Your shortened process may include asking your head PR person to craft a response, then having it quickly approved by the program manager or marketing director. Having a crisis communications plan on hand will facilitate your response.

- **Prepare responses in advance.** Because you know the important issues as well as the basic arguments of your critics, you and your PR staff can prepare messages and responses ahead of time, especially for potentially controversial issues. Draft letters to the editor that could be altered slightly and sent within hours of the airing or printing of an inaccurate or negative story.
- **Attempt to prevent negative stories.** Staying in contact with your media list and providing them with the most recent and accurate information will help keep reporters informed about your issue and will likely prevent inaccurate or negative stories.
- **Let the media outlets know that you're paying attention.** Because you are part of media outlets' audience, they have a stake in responding to your needs. Let them know that you watch or read their stories. Maintain regular contact. For example, you may call a reporter to praise a good story. Build bridges with the media at every opportunity.
- **Let the media know that you're a potential source for information.** Invite reporters to call on you for interviews or information verification in the future. Make sure that you're available to give credible and constructive interviews and information. Identify and train spokespeople that you can offer as contacts for reporters to interview.

- **Coordinate with your PR team.** Make sure the team is aware of any ongoing issues with the media and are involved in planning responses.

### *Evaluating Your Public Relations Efforts*

As discussed in Chapter 5: Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program, evaluation is an essential component of a successful counter-marketing program. Evaluation will help you report to stakeholders about what you're doing and will give you valuable insight into how to adjust and improve your efforts. More specifically, evaluation can help you answer questions such as the following:

- How is the funding for PR being used?
- What activities have you conducted?
- What are the results of your efforts?
- Did you identify, reach, and involve key stakeholders in the PR activities?
- Did they view your campaign as effective?
- Did you identify and reach your target audience(s)?
- How can you use the evaluation results to adjust your PR plan, reach more of the target audience, and contribute to the success of the counter-marketing program?

### **How To Evaluate Your PR Efforts**

First, in a process evaluation, you'll need to monitor your efforts by tracking exactly what you have

done. As indicated in Chapter 5: Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program, you or your PR firm will need to regularly complete logs, call sheets, and other tools to track the activities that are linked to the goals and objectives of your PR plan. If, for example, one of your process objectives is to reach a specified list of journalists by a certain date, a call sheet should be created to allow you to document what journalists were reached and when. (See Appendix 8.10 for an example of a media contact record.) If process objectives specify that certain events (e.g., press conferences, radio and TV appearances, and meetings with editorial boards) will be held or materials (e.g., news releases, pitch letters, and a Web-based pressroom) will be developed and/or distributed within a certain time frame, event and materials logs should be designed and used regularly to document your efforts. This tracking system may be time consuming, but it's important to have these data on hand. You can use the records to respond to inquiries from stakeholders and for planning purposes.

Your process objectives may also specify your intention to achieve a certain amount and quality of media coverage and target audience exposure. To measure media coverage, you'll probably need to use a clipping service, such as Burrelle's, Bacon's, or Luce. These firms search a list of publications that you identify for key words related to your efforts. They clip the stories that contain these words, compile them, and send them to you on a regular schedule. Each clip will contain a slip that indicates the source publication, the publication's audience, and other information. You usually pay a set-up fee for these services,



then pay for each clip. You can then analyze the clippings to determine whether the slant of each story supports your efforts. For an additional fee, some clipping services will provide reports analyzing the coverage for you. Larger newspapers are often available online and can be searched electronically, either by visiting their individual Web sites or by using a search service like Lexis-Nexis.

You can also track video coverage through firms such as VMS and Bacon's. If you know that your topic was covered by the broadcast media, you can tell them the name of the program and station, and they can get a tape for you. They can also search the transcripts and provide you with a report of all broadcast coverage, including the text transcripts of each "hit." These broadcast-tracking services usually charge by each search, with tapes costing extra. You should consider using one of these services because it's generally the only way to track your earned media efforts.

Conducting an outcome evaluation to determine how your PR efforts have affected the target audience (i.e., change in awareness, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors) requires considerable time and resources and may include

surveying the audience exposed to the counter-marketing messages. One cost-effective way to do that is to collaborate with those who are conducting a target audience survey to evaluate counter-advertising and include PR evaluation questions in that survey.

### **Using Process Evaluation Results for Decision Making**

After you have compiled the news coverage that your PR efforts have generated, analyze it to see what adjustments and improvements you should make. Are certain reporters not covering your issue? Perhaps you should pitch a different reporter or a different media outlet, or perhaps you should consider using a different angle. Are your key messages not getting into the coverage? Maybe you need to retrain your spokespeople or try new PR tactics. After each PR opportunity, determine and then document what did and didn't work so that your next opportunity will be more fruitful. By regularly evaluating your efforts, you'll learn which stories will likely get good play and which approaches will most likely succeed in getting the maximum coverage in support of your messages and campaign.

### *Points To Remember*

- **Create an annual PR plan.** For both your Target Audience PR and your Stakeholder PR, create a yearly calendar of all the PR opportunities that you plan to pursue. Include national events that you'll tie in to (e.g., Great American Smokeout, World No-Tobacco Day, and Kick Butts Day), holidays and times of the year that lend themselves to certain stories (e.g., New Year's for cessation and back to school and spring break for youth prevention), and your own campaign events. See what gaps are in your calendar, and decide how to fill them so that you maintain a high level of coverage year-round. Create a PR plan for each activity that indicates the target audience(s), specific objectives, key messages, media channels, tactics, and timeline.
- **Stay on message.** Getting news coverage helps only if the coverage promotes your message. To make sure that you stay on message, create a limited set of standard talking points and key messages that will be used in all PR activities, whether planned in advance or done in response to an unplanned PR opportunity.
- **Respond quickly to unplanned PR opportunities.** When a surprise news story hits that relates to your effort, you will need to respond very quickly (often the same day of the story) to take advantage of it. This means that you may have to skip the campaign's usual lengthy review processes and let your head PR person craft the response and have it quickly approved by the program manager or marketing director. In many cases, you may receive a call from a reporter for your reaction. These opportunities require quick thinking, quick decision making, and quick action.
- **Integrate PR with other counter-marketing activities.** PR is most effective when it works in synergy with other components of your program. For this to happen, the PR staff must know everything about the campaign well in advance so that they can plan the appropriate outreach. Involving PR staff in the planning of advertising, grassroots activities, and other efforts will allow them to identify potential PR issues, both positive and negative, and to plan appropriately.
- **Evaluate your PR efforts.** For each event or activity, track the coverage you get. You'll learn quickly what works and what doesn't in getting the coverage that you want. Modify your annual PR plan accordingly. If you have the resources, perform a formal content analysis of the coverage to document the campaign messages to which your audiences are being exposed. At a minimum, review all of the key news stories to make sure that they reflect your campaign messages.

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