

Using the media

Campaigners and the media have a complex relationship. This section explores how to work positively with the media.

Using the media was written by [Sarah Green](#), Campaigns Manager, [End Violence Against Women Coalition](#)

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Using the media to expand the reach of your campaign is like plugging in a massive amplifier. If you get your message into newspapers, on TV/radio and across social media you can reach people in all walks of life who you could never practically get to face to face. And, critically, when politicians see that a campaign is reaching the public/voters they are more likely to respond to it.

The fundamentals: Audience & Message

The dials and switches on this amplifier need careful attention however, especially those marked 'messages' and 'audience'. We are trying to achieve change – to do that we need to reach particular groups of people (whose behaviour we want to change, or whose opinion we want to inform as part of a political campaign) with a clear message. The media is simply the channel to get to them. Because it is the audience that matters, you never do media work for its own sake or for example approach the media outlet that you think will be most likely to listen to you. You focus always on your target audience – WHO do I need to hear my message - then work backwards and think, what media do they read/watch/listen/like/retweet? How can I get my message in there?

For your message, similarly, avoid the temptation to say what those in your organisation or campaign group would like to hear. You are the 'converted', and you already have a lot of knowledge about the matter. Think carefully instead –

what do those people I want to reach already know or not know about this issue, and what do they need to hear? What terms should I use to help them understand it?

These are the fundamentals. The rest is a bit of planning, drafting, phoning, uploading...

Media Toolkit: Amplifying the message

There is a free media toolkit available on the SMK website. It includes template press releases, letters to the editor, guidelines on working with 'case studies', detail on how exactly to call the media and who to ask for, tips, links and much more.

How to target the right media

The most effective way to achieve publication of your press release (PR) on your campaign or your issue of the moment is to target the right media.

How to target the right media has been written by Rhonda Smith and Emily Nash on behalf of [PINNT](#).

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The first step is to be clear about your objective - what do you want to achieve through media coverage? If you are not clear about this you will not know if you have succeeded or have any measure of success.

The second step in achieving this is to identify the audience for your campaign or message

Is your campaign or issue of relevance to:

- The general public - everyone!
- A segment of the public - older people, families, young people
- Specialist interest groups - science, academia, professional, industry
- Location specific - UK, national, county

The third step is to identify the media channel that attracts the audience you are after:

- Most popular TV show - e.g. The One Show watched by a wide range of age groups, social backgrounds, and interest areas
- Red top newspaper - e.g. The Sun, has the widest circulation and again attracts wide social groupings
- Specialist magazines in print and online for older people- e.g. Mature Times, Saga Magazine
- Focused channels e.g. Mumsnet for parents
- Social media - e.g. Facebook, Twitter
- The Ecologist, New Scientist, New Internationalist, Time, The Engineer - you will need to research the key publications often linked to a professional organisation e.g. The Director, the magazine of the Institute of Directors
- Local newspapers and local radio stations

The fourth step is to create a robust list of the key media contacts for the audience segment and media channels you wish to engage with.

The fifth step is to send out the press release at the right time so that the journalist has time to work on your story and get in touch for further information or arrange an interview.

The sixth step - follow up email with a phone call to identified key individual journalist targets.

Though you may know how news-worthy your charity is, journalists receive hundreds of stories every day and need to be able to see the story they can tell (and sell!) very quickly. Aside from a catchy title and a convincing press release, make sure it is relevant not only to the media and its audience but also the journalist - link it to stories he/she has already written, their special interests, their gender, or profile (where appropriate).

Send the press release by email embedded into the body of the email - do not send it as an attachment! Make sure the subject line presents your catchy title and lets the journalist know whether this is a story for today or next week.

To achieve success, it is not enough to merely email your PR to every name you have. Once you have released your PR, choose one or two key contacts in each media channel you have chosen to call (newspaper, radio or television). Phone them or their editors to alert them to the story - make sure you have a clear précis

of the topic and the release that you can communicate in 30 seconds! The high volume of news stories journalists receive means that speaking to them directly will not only make the story memorable but may also bring it to their attention when it may have previously gone unnoticed.

Case Study: PINNT Awareness Week, August 2013

In August 2013, PINNT (Patients on Intravenous and Naso-Gastric Nutrition Therapies) ran an awareness week to raise the profile of artificial nutrition and raise interest in existing and starting new local support groups.

Press releases of the stories of members of the charity - children, young people and older people - were sent out to their local media, and chosen key media outlets were followed-up.

A general press release was also sent out to charities and organisations involved in artificial nutrition and patient care to spread awareness through the professional field as well as the public.

The press releases were all sent out the week before the awareness week began to give journalists the chance to read the story, investigate it, and arrange interviews.

By targeting specifically local papers and contacting health journalists PINNT achieved significant coverage and raised awareness in local communities and in all key core professional groups:

- 8 local newspapers
- 6 radio stations across the UK
- 1 television interview with Scottish TV evening news.
- Coverage across 5 professional websites - doctors, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists & carers
- Additionally traffic to the PINNT website increased by 300%.

Key factors for success:

- Authentic voices from patients
- Stories about babies, children, and their parents, adults whose lives are affected by living life 'online' with artificial nutrition
- Detailed targeting of media - local newspapers and radios and professional groups

- Prompt service provided to journalists in setting up interviews and provision of further information
- Availability of subjects and charity spokespeople
- Availability of cleared photos
- Access to information for journalists online
- Suitability of information about PINNT online for readers, listeners, and viewers
- Back up from social media primarily Facebook