



**The Voice of Adult Education
in Massachusetts**

**TOOLS TO EDUCATE
YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE
AND OBTAIN MEDIA COVERAGE**

A Media Guide Prepared for MCAE

By Sue Dorfman
MCAE Media Coordinator

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TOOLS TO EDUCATE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND OBTAIN MEDIA COVERAGE

A media strategy is part of the larger organizational plan – which includes strategic planning, communication planning and technology planning.

The choice of WHO you want to reach and WHAT you want them to know (message) determines the platform of HOW you will want to reach your targeted audience(s).

WHAT CONSTITUTES A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?

- Define goals
- Define target audiences
- Identify your news
- Frame the issue
- Develop your timeline
- Create your message for each targeted audience
- Target reporters from your reporter database
- Produce deliverables: press kits, reports, web presence
- Determine outreach strategies for each targeted audience
- Track coverage
- Thank reporters, request corrections if needed

DETERMINE WHO IN YOUR ORGANIZATION WILL IMPLEMENT IT AND WHO WILL SPEAK TO THE PRESS

DETERMINE WHAT OTHER RESOURCES YOU CAN DEVOTE TO THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- Financial resources
- Staff time for planning overall strategy or individual events
- Classroom time for preparation of students or for planning event

DETERMINE WHO YOU WANT TO REACH

There may be many different audiences for your story. Depending on your community and outreach strategy, you may consider developing a media strategy that includes ethnic (other language or specific demographic) media

- Current and future students and their families
- Current and future practitioners
- Current and future business partners
- Elected and school officials
- Current and potential funders
- Current and future employers

DETERMINE WHAT YOU WANT THE TARGETED AUDIENCE TO KNOW

- Receipt of the MCAE Award or the presentation of the Award
- An in-program event, such as an Award ceremony or graduation
- A public event, such as a fundraiser
- Visit by public or education official
- Release of a report on your program or poll or survey or “report card”
- How your program “hooks” or ties into something related to the news of the day (local, regional, national)
- Human interest stories on how your program has changed students lives
- Significant participation in get out the vote and other civic efforts
- Appearance before public bodies, such as a photo of your trip to the State House
- Photo op with celebrity, such as a picture of your director with an elected official or sports star

DETERMINE THE PLATFORM TO REACH EACH TARGET

One approach to determining the platform is surveying students and staff on where they get their news.

- Radio – AM, FM, public radio, commercial radio, talk radio
- TV – mainstream media (i.e. WBZ), community cable
- Print – mainstream newspapers (i.e. Boston Globe), free papers (Metro), weekly community papers, general and special interest magazines
- Community calendars – in print, on websites, on TV
- Fliers – posted, inserted in newspapers, stickers
- Website – your website, links to other website
- E-mail alerts – e-Newsletters, specific emails for event
- Blogs – your blog, contributing to or links to other blogs
- Social media - Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube messaging
- Press release – maximizing exposure by posted on AP Daybook or distributed by a newswire service

DETERMINE HOW YOU WILL USE EACH TARGET

Different news situations require different responses.

- Radio –feature story, news story, listener response, talk radio as featured guest or call in response, PSA, calendar listing
- TV – feature story, news story, PSA, calendar listing
- Print – feature (human interest story), news story, op ed, letter to the editor
- Fliers – event announcement with all details of event and contact information
- Website – posting on home page, listing on own calendar
- E-mail alerts – e-Newsletters, specific emails for event, linking back to website
- Blogs – your blog, contributing to or links to other blogs
- Social networking -Facebook, Twitter, MySpace invites to join event

CREATE A MEDIA DATABASE

- Monitor who is covering what by reading/watching/listening to mainstream, ethnic, and community news sites
- Develop a list of local and regional media outlets you want to reach – which include newspapers, radio and TV stations, cable stations, newsletters, internet news sites, shoppers guides, house of worship publications
- Call newsrooms at newspapers, TV and radio stations to get contact names and details of reporters and editors. Include assignment or news editor, reporters (education, business, feature), daybook, calendar, editorial page editor, editorial writers and columnists interested in your issue
- Check websites for “contact us” information
- Research contacts in Cision, the Media Yellow Book, or other databases
- Create a computer based database separate from your email contact lists
- Use a database software rather than Excel or Access
- Database should include name, title, “beat” (what the reporter covers), outlet’s name, address, phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail address, URL
- Include how reporter likes to be initially contacted – email or fax
- Include best times for reaching reporter and when NOT to call
- Include deadlines for submission of listings
- Include links to stories the reporter has covered that relate to your program
- Periodically “clean” your database to keep it up to date.

DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH REPORTERS

Programs that get press coverage are those that have relationships with the media that matters to them. Journalists are far more likely to respond to a query to cover an event from someone or an organization they do know or call that organization if they need background information or a quote for a story.

- Research what a reporter has covered before contacting the reporter
- Introduce yourself and your program to the reporter
- Determine best way to reach reporter when you have a story
- Become a trusted source
- If a reporter calls you first, take the call. Don’t ask the reporter to call back.
- Answer questions concisely and accurately.
- If you don’t know an answer or have the information needed, say you will get back. Get back ASAP!
- If you are not the appropriate spokesperson, know who is and direct the reporter to that person.
- If the reporter includes you in a story, write a note of thanks.
- Never assume that “off the record” is off the record. If you don’t want something public, don’t say it.

A FEW MORE THINGS ABOUT WORKING WITH THE PRESS

- When calling press, always ask “is this a good time to talk?”
- When press calls you, always take the call or get back right away
- **Get press release out on time to right person** (the reporter or editor covering that beat)
- Follow up with phone call to the right person – assignment editor, specific reporter
- Assign designated and trained staff at office/organization to field call
- Always get names of journalists who covered event, expressed interest or contacted your organization. Put in database.
- Follow up with reporters who covered story and those who didn’t
- Reporters are increasingly pressed for time – if a reporter can’t or doesn’t give you coverage, inquire if you can send the press release and pictures afterwards. It just might get printed or posted.
- Get hard copy (paper) clips, audio and video files and web links of coverage

DEVELOP A PRESS KIT – Hard copy for handouts and pdf for online

A press packet or kit contains all the information reporters need to know about you. Put the following in a clearly labeled pocket folder for an event:

- Business card with contact information
- Your brochure or a one page flier
- Press release with contact information and quotes
- Background on your organization
- Bios or profiles of the speakers
- Press statement that can be quoted
- Other press coverage of your program
- Media tip sheet with bulleted facts

DEVELOP ADDITIONAL PUBLICITY MATERIALS

- Business card with contact information
- Calendars
- Banners
- Flyers and posters
- YouTube videos

MEDIA RELEASE PRIMER

A **media advisory** is typically a one-page document announcing an event or changes to an event and distributed prior to an event to individual journalists, event calendars and the AP Daybook.

A **press release** is longer than a media advisory, written more like a news story, contains more “color” and can be distributed prior to an event. It also is included in a press kit distributed at an event.

NOTE: Even a compelling release with a strong news hook only captures attention a small percent of the time. Personal relationships with reporters and follow up are critical for getting coverage.

PRESS RELEASE CONTENT

- Is your message newsworthy – does it have a news hook?
- Does it answer who what when where why?
- Does it provide description of your organization and contact information?
- Does the headline grab the reader’s attention?
- Is the main information in the first two paragraphs?
- Can it be reprinted as is for a story?
- Does it contain a quote that expands on the basics?
- Is it factually accurate?
- Is it written in active voice?
- Is it jargon-free?
- Does it contain a brief “About my organization” section?
- Does it have all contact information, including email and website?

PRESS RELEASE DOs and DON'Ts

- Use mixed case, not all caps
- Use correct grammar. Spell check.
- Provide full contact info and complete URL
- Check that all links work
- Do not send as an attachment

SENDING THE RELEASE

- Check that it is sent to the right person.
- If there is a “photo op”, send also to photo editor
- Check that it is sent prior to the deadline
- Call to follow up, but don’t ask “did you get my release” first
- Call one day prior to the event as a reminder
- If reporter doesn’t or can’t cover, offer to provide photo or a short write up

PRESS RELEASE FORMAT

- Use standard size sheet of paper for print releases
- CONTACT INFORMATION (top or bottom – print versus email) – including contact names, office and cell numbers, email address, website URL
- Designate “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” or “EMBARGOED” and provide date for release
- Headline – Strong, punchy, captures the essence of the story
- Headline - All words capitalized except a, an, of, the
- Lead paragraph – Begin with city, state, date
- Body of release – clear, crisp, compelling and accurate content
- Quote – adds color, human interest
- If continuing to second page, end first page with –more- . Start the second page with brief headline.
- Include boilerplate information at the end - brief description of the program
- End with three hash tags ### or 30

PRESS ADVISORY

- Similar to Release but shorter one page only
- One or two short paragraphs with who, what, when, where, why.
- Then list separately WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY
- Indicate if there is a photo “op” (opportunity)

PSA

- Title
- Event date
- Contact info
- Start and end (kill) dates
- Read time – 20. 30. 60 seconds
- Short double spaced text: who, what, when, where
- Include phonetic spellings for tricky pronunciations
- If music included, rights cleared for broadcast
- Send with cover letter explaining importance of message

VIDEOTAPED PRESS RELEASE

- 6-8 weeks lead
- Check broadcast format required
- Vary length of PSAs
- Rights cleared for broadcast
- Script provided
- Send with cover letter explaining importance of message

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Pay close attention to deadlines. Plan accordingly.

- Press release
- Press advisory
- Letter to the editor
- Op-ed (print media) or Commentary (radio or TV)
- Radio show call ins
- PSA (public service announcements)
- Calendar listings
- Ticket giveaways

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: EMAIL

- All involved in organization should have own email account
- Create email account for consultant working “in-house”
- Send press releases embedded in email or programs such as Constant Contact, not as attachments
- Link back to website
- When sending to reporters, BCC or personalize to individual reporters
- When sending to public as broadcast email or list serve – ask to forward

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: AP DAYBOOK and PR WIRES

- List an event on the AP Daybook with the Media Advisory (free)
- List a public policy related event with the Statehouse News Service (free)
- Distribute the Media Advisory through an Internet PR service, such as PR Newswire. (fees vary for joining a service, cost for distribution)

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: WHY SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social media is part of the larger media strategy
- Social media is interactive, where traditional PR is more one-way
- Social media expands audience outreach
- Social media requires understanding of how your target audience uses social media to gear media outreach accordingly

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: KEY SOCIAL MEDIA QUESTION

WeAreMedia.org poses the following: What do you want to accomplish?

- Research and Learning
- Increase Brand or Issue Awareness
- Reputation management
- Get your fans to talk about you (word of mouth)
- Content Generation and Issues Awareness
- Increased Relevant Visitor Traffic and Page Rankings
- Take Action (sign petition, send email, leave comment, etc)
- Fundraising

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

- Use social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, to post an event or highlight a “takeaway” from your program, such as a newly released report
- Post the event/takeaway on the site and encourage friends to link to the event or site and request their friends “spread the word”

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: TWITTERING

- Establish a twitter account for your program. Designate a twitterer.
- Twitter messages are up to 140 characters, called a tweet
- Messages can be sent out “tweeted” or “retweeted”
- Twitters send out messages, followers follow the tweets
- Tweets can be used to get news out about you and your events
- Using a hashtag (#) to identify your program, event or interest makes it easy for others interested in the same thing to find and follow you
- Tweets can be linked to websites and blogs

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: E-NEWS LETTERS

- One-way communication with membership and general public
- Use template with logo/your name at the top for easy identification
- Use different templates for different types of messages – such as newsletters, press releases, action alerts
- Identify subject in the Subject line – such as POLICY ACTION ALERT or PRESS RELEASE or NEWSLETTER.
- Put date first in Subject line if it is a time sensitive event
- Link back to website to drive traffic to the website
- Include photos, videos, artwork
- Include calls for activity (contacting elected officials), writing letters, attending meetings
- Include easy subscribe, unsubscribe, forward links
- Include all contact information
- Post newsletter link on website
- Can be scheduled for delivery
- Depending on the program, can be sent in HTML or text format
- Depending on program, can have Advocacy component
- Depending on the program, can be sent to avoid SPAM filters
- Can monitor who receives email, opens email, clicks through email

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: BLOGS

- A blog is a website journal where thoughts are posted in reverse chronological order, the most recent on top
- Create a blog to carry on conversations on a particular topic
- Link your blog to like minded blogs through a blogroll
- Add comments on other’s blogs with links back to your blog or website

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: YOUTUBE

- YouTube is a video sharing and uploading site. Others include Vimeo
- Non-profits can create their own channel (ABE).
- Allows for the uploading and viewing of videos
- YouTube videos can be embedded or linked to your website
- Great place to put student or staff produced videos

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: PHOTO HOSTING SITES

- Photo hosting sites such as Flickr, Picasa and ShutterFly allow the uploading and sharing of photos online
- Free sites tend to have less features and more limited storage
- Pay sites tend to have more features
- Photos can be displayed in public or private galleries.
- Post photos of your events and day-to-day activities
- Use weblinks, tweets, Facebook postings to send your target audience to your site

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT: WIKIPEDIA

- Create a Wikipedia page to further increase your web and public presence

USING YOUR WEBSITE TO INCREASE YOUR PUBLIC PRESENCE

Think of your home page as your front door, which then welcomes your audiences into your “home”. Consider what works and what needs to be added or changed to make the site welcoming and user-friendly.

- Up-to-date information, including most recent publications, materials
- Accurate information and working links
- Easy to type in URL related to the organization
- Up-to-date contact information. If multiple staff work with the media, include brief description of particular job responsibilities or areas of specialization.
- Staff directory with accurate job titles – pictures, bio, email optional
- Clearly visible “News” or “Press Page” link
- Press kits – that contain information on the organization, contact information, bio of director, information on specific aspect of program to be highlighted
- Archived Press releases
- Archived Radio and TV appearances
- News articles about your organization
- Video and pictures of your program
- JPEGs or artwork of your logo, banners available if appropriate
- Link your website to other websites

DOING AN INTERVIEW: PREPARATION

Interviews are a great way to get your story out to the public as well as educate members of the press about your issue. Remember that information disclosed during an interview is “on the record”.

- Interviews can be in person, over the phone, conducted as a live or taped radio or TV broadcast, or done by email or messaging
- If the interview is with a print or online journalist, read their articles or site
- If the interview is on TV or radio, listen to or watch the show to get a sense of how the journalist approaches an issue
- If the interview is tied to current news, be prepared to make connections
- If the interview is telling a personal story, let the interviewer know in advance if there are identities that need to be disguised or topics that are off-limits.
- Find out if possible the questions the journalist will be asking
- Provide the journalist with background material and suggested questions
- Develop and practice stating the 3 key points you want to make succinctly!
- Prepare by practicing answering questions. If possible, do an audio or video tape of the session and review it
- Practice referring to your organization by name
- Prepare by practicing how to deflect question you don't want to answer, “Great question, but what I'd really like to talk about is...” or “Great point, but the real issue is...”
- Practice being comfortable with silence and stopping after answering a question so you don't say something you don't intend to say.

DOING AN INTERVIEW: THE INTERVIEW

- If the interview is over the phone, ask the journalist if the journalist is taping the interview for accuracy and whether you can also tape it
- If the interview is done in a studio, ask if you can get a tape of the show
- Turn off cell phones
- Review with interviewer the pronunciation and spelling of names
- Remember what you practiced. Keep to your main messages.
- Speak clearly and do not use jargon. If you use a term specific to your work, define it within the sentence.
- If you don't know an answer, don't invent one
- If the interviewer says something inaccurate, politely correct
- If the reporter asks for information during a phone or non-broadcast interview, get it to the reporter as soon as possible
- If you want the reader/listener/viewer to do something, state it – go to the website, go to a rally, write an elected official – and explain why
- For TV interviews – look at the interviewer or where you are directed to look, not at the camera
- For TV interviews - dress comfortably and appropriately. Don't wear white or complex patterns. Wear non-reflecting glasses to avoid glare and long socks so ankles don't show when legs cross.

TRACKING THE PRESS COVERAGE

Your story could appear almost anywhere – especially if the “small” yet compelling story in a community newspaper catches the eye of a blogger or another news reporter.

- Always get hard copy (paper) clips to put in your press kits and send to your funders, supporters (such as your students, their families) and others
- Get audio and video files and web links of coverage to repost on your website
- Use free online search engines include Google, Yahoo News, Technorati
- Consider a paid subscription news services if you have a large agency, such as Cision or Nexis or a clipping service such as BurrellsLuce

FINDING PRESS LISTS

The ever-shrinking newsroom is a reality. Reporters change jobs. Publications do fold. Contact newsrooms directly to double check names and numbers, particularly when getting information from the web.

A few suggested places to start on-line

- Massachusetts News list
<http://www.mondotimes.com/1/world/us/21>
- NewsLink Massachusetts newspapers
<http://www.newslink.org/manews.html>
- NewsLink Massachusetts TV stations
<http://www.newslink.org/matele.html>
- ABYZ News Links – indicates language and ethnic group
<http://www.abyznewslinks.com/unitemabs.htm>
- New England Ethnic Newz - contains list of ethnic media
<http://www.ethnicnewz.org/en/home>

A few suggested subscription resources

- News Media Yellow Book – Directory of leading news organizations with staff contact information for reporters, writers, editors and producers.
<http://www.leadershipdirectories.com/products/nmyb.html>
- Cision – Host for the online searchable Bacon’s Media database, containing continually updated journalist contact and media outlet information. Use to create targeted media lists, track coverage and distribute releases.
<http://us.cision.com>

MEDIA TOOL KIT LINKS

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

Dubbed the “Newroom Homeroom”. Multiple links to sites for news (domestic, international, college), search engines, photos, phone numbers, comics, crossword puzzles, politics, general info

<http://www.assignmenteditor.com>

INSTITUTE FOR INTERACTIVE JOURNALISM

Check out their “cool stuff” pages – linking to websites that are expanding how news is conveyed online through the use of new technologies. Its core mission is “to improve public life by transforming journalism for today and reinventing it for tomorrow”.

<http://www.j-lab.org>

PRWEB

How to write a press release – some general info and some specific to PRWeb

<http://www.prweb.com/pressreleasetips.php>

RACE TO GED OUTREACH GUIDE: Virginia’s GED Success Stories

A comprehensive resource for programs trying to reach potential learners and the wider community. Provides information on how to target groups and develop outreach strategies, create a communications strategy, establish relationships with the media, use promotional items, and gain publicity.

<http://www.valrc.org/publications/outreach.html>

SPIN PROJECT

Overall toolkit for developing media plan. Contains valuable links. Check out session on using the Internet as a reporting tool.

<http://www.spinproject.org>

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Overall toolkit for developing media plan. Contains valuable links.

<http://www.benton.org/publibrary/toolkits/stratcommtool.html>

WE ARE MEDIA PROJECT

A wiki community of nonprofits interested in learning and teaching about how social media strategies and tools can enable nonprofit organizations to create, compile, and distribute their stories and change the world. Great tool kit.

<http://www.wearemedia.org>