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Organization Publicity

How to find news;

How to report it

WHEN YOU ARE ASKED to take over handling the publicity for your club group or organization, you can do one of two things. You can approach it as a tedious task. Or you can look on it as an opportunity to do something that is exciting and worthwhile.

You choose the challenge route, of course. But again there is that question, how do you proceed? Perhaps you are serving on the publicity committee for the local home economics association. You're urged to "get lots of good publicity" for the organization.

Your first task is to study out what the group is doing or what it can do that is worth telling the public about. An organization publicity story cannot be merely about what the organization *is*. It must tell what the organization *does* — has done, is doing, or is going to do — that will be of real interest to newspaper readers generally. In short, this type of publicity must deal with real *news* if it is to have a chance of being published.

*It's the extras you put
into a program that
make for good publicity
regarding it.*



Sometimes a meeting that is to be held will provide the needed news element. It will if the speaker is of enough importance locally to make news; if the subject to be discussed or the theme to be followed is of wide and current interest; and if a few intriguing advance quotes from the talk can be given. Mere announcement that such-and-such a group is to hold a meeting at a certain time and place is worthwhile as a reminder to members, of course, but it cannot be considered genuine publicity. Such notices ordinarily go into the club calendar in small type, and that is where they belong.

How To Make News

To work up live, worthwhile publicity for an organization, it is often necessary to *make* news — good news — about the group. Suppose your local home economics association has decided it wants to become a more important factor in the community. It has decided that a consistent publicity campaign will be helpful. How can you hope to get a series of stories about the association into the local papers?

The answer, actually, goes back to the program committee and the program-of-work committee of the organization. It will probably be up to you as publicity chairman to collaborate with these committees. Together you figure out a series of events that will make good news stories which your local papers will be pleased to publish.

Those events might include such standard attractions as a vocational field day for students in local high schools and colleges, with talks by students as well as addresses by leaders in various fields; a joint meeting of the home economics association with the local chapter of architects or decorators; a meeting to be addressed by a well-known physician or psychiatrist; or any one of a

HOW TO INTERVIEW

When you go after a personal interview, phone in advance for an appointment. Never say, "I'd like to get a story." Say, "I'd like to talk with you about . . ." Know in advance what questions you will ask, but don't fire them too fast. Let the conversation develop naturally. Get the other person to talk. Don't hurry. Don't be too obvious about your note taking. And be sure to get the exact spelling of the person's name.

number of other possibilities. Each one of these events would be the basis for a number of newsworthy stories, with plenty of names and plenty of quotable quotes.

Or suppose you're a lunchroom supervisor. You would like to get more parents and other members of the community interested in supporting your school lunch project. How can you manage to get effective publicity about this worthy cause into the local papers?

The answer, again, is *make news* that will make the newspaper columns. You might invite the officers of the school P.T.A. to go through the lines with the youngsters one day, then sit down to lunch with you and discuss your plans and problems. Send an advance story to the club editors of the local papers before the luncheon, and a follow-up report afterward.

Apply that same general plan to the problem of getting publicity for any organization, or for any person. In other words, if there isn't any news, make some that's worth writing about, then write it in a way that's worth reading.

At times it may be advisable for you to take the club editor into your confidence, and tell her enthusiastically about the big program or project that has been scheduled. Invite her to cover the event personally, if she wishes to do so, and write the story as she sees it. Assure her of your complete cooperation. She may decide to get photographs and detailed information in advance so that the feature can appear on the day the event takes place. If this is her preference, work with her, regardless of obstacles.

Writing the News Story

At other times, it may be up to you to write the story. When that is the case, visualize the editor who is to receive your offering. How would she

NEWS STORY PATTERN

When a newspaper reporter writes a simple news item, he follows the pattern of the inverted triangle. That is, he puts all the basic information in the first paragraph, and then adds details in the paragraphs that follow. This makes it easy for a reader to get the gist of the story at a glance; makes it easy for the make-up man to shorten the story by cutting off the bottom paragraphs as needed.

When you write a publicity release or a report of a meeting, follow the same pattern. Put all basic facts in the first paragraph.

like to have it written? The answer is that she wants it written as a news story. And she probably wants to receive it well in advance of the event!

If you have studied newswriting in journalism courses, you know how to proceed. If not, then follow these simple, condensed rules for writing the straight news type of publicity story.

(1) In the very first or lead paragraph pack the most important facts. Make it clear and interesting. Don't let the first paragraph get cumbersome. The reader wants to know: *Who? What? When? Where?*, and sometimes *Why?* and *How?* But the next paragraphs can answer some of these questions. Use some artistry in putting those answers together. Don't begin in that flat, dull, amateurish way, "A meeting was held. . . ."

(2) Give further particulars in the paragraphs that follow. After the most important, most interesting information, give the less important. Remember that the plot plan of a straight news story is an inverted triangle. Arrange your story so that the editor can chop it off at the end of any paragraph without cutting out any main facts.

(3) Follow the typical news style of writing. Keep your paragraphs short. Keep your sentences short and crisp. Keep your entire story short and to the point.

Write in the third person; don't use the words "I," "you," or "we," except when they occur in direct quotations. Be careful to keep all personal opinions out of the story unless they are attributed to a person in direct or indirect quotes.

If you do quote a person, be sure you quote him *accurately*, and be sure you have his approval on your exact wording. Probably more embarrassments are caused by careless quotes than by deliberate misquotes. Never be guilty of either.

PUBLICITY-GRAMS

Avoid meaningless statements in publicity. Talk with editors, get their ideas as to how stories should be handled. Never announce that door prizes or other lottery gifts will be given at a meeting. Newspapers are careful about such statements because of legal restrictions. Send out your releases at sensible intervals. Don't overdo it.

Avoid such terms as *very*, *interesting*, and, except when necessary, *the following*, *below*, *above*, *the above mentioned*, *the preceding*, *the foregoing*. Use of *very* is an indication of verbal poverty.

Tie the story up with names of individuals who are concerned. It's a timeworn but still true maxim that "names make news." When you do use names be absolutely certain that you have every name spelled exactly right, every initial accurate, every firm or organization name, every connection precisely correct. Don't just guess at them; check them. That's what telephones are for.

(4) Put up the story in professional form. That means type it clearly and neatly, double spacing the lines. As a matter of fact, many newspaper editors prefer to have the first paragraph triple spaced, to allow room for editing or rewriting without having to have the story retyped. In general, for your first page follow the layout suggested in the margin, typing the heading down almost in the center of the page, and going on from there.

(5) Find out the name of the person on each local newspaper who should receive your publicity releases. If in doubt as to whether it is the club editor, the women's page editor, the society editor, or the home economics editor who handles such news notes on a certain page, telephone the city desk and inquire. Get the name of the proper editor and send the stories directly to him or her. Be mighty sure you don't make any errors in spelling or initials of *that* name.

State on the copy if the release is exclusive to the particular newspaper, to point out that the story is not being sent to any other paper. In general, it is best to send a semi-exclusive release to each newspaper, using the same facts but different approaches. And, of course, there must be no duplication of photographs.

At this point let's hope that by working enthusiastically with the program committee and the program-of-work committee you have helped generate and publicize an idea that has news

TO SET UP A NEWS RELEASE

In the upper left-hand corner of the page, type your name or the name of your organization. On the next line put the address; next the phone number. On the fourth line give the release date. In the upper right-hand corner, state if release is exclusive. In the middle of the page — about 4 inches down from the top — put the headline. Now write your lead, triple-spacing that paragraph. After the lead, write the rest of the story, double-spacing the copy.

WHICH IS WHICH

The purpose of *publicity* is to release news; to build good public relations.

The job of a *press agent* is to promote a person or project or entertainment. The purpose is to give that person or thing a build-up.

The aim of *propaganda* is to make up the public's mind about a person or a group or an idea.

value. It has been given visibility in local papers and over the air. Perhaps, also, in one or more of the neighborhood papers or local magazines. You feel rather proud that you have done a creditable piece of work. But why stop there?

Perhaps that idea, reworked, expanded, and illustrated, might make good reading in the Sunday edition of a state-wide metropolitan newspaper, or be the basis of a story for one of the home economics publications. In either instance, you would, of course, query the editor before submitting the story and photographs.

Don't overlook the possibility of getting publicity (immediately or later) through interviews on local radio and television programs. To do so means working out a just-right air approach and then presenting the idea to the right person. Publicity via air demands that you be enthusiastic — not only about the project itself but about getting the story of it across to the audience.

In your publicity efforts always put on your mental bifocals. Along with looking at the possibilities close at hand, look for others at long range and with wider perspective.

Make no little plans. Put enthusiasm into that publicity job. When you do this, you not only deepen good public relations for your organization, but you broaden your own personal vision and heighten your own visibility as well.