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## Media Relations

### Self-Paced Course

Learn how media works, and how to use the media to communicate your message to your constituencies. Learn the newest media techniques including how to present yourself and your message online. Learn how to organize media briefings and materials to keep the media abreast with your plans, events and accomplishments.

This text is from an online version of the course, and as such may contain references to links and other functions that are not accessible through this downloadable version.

Course Developed by Rana Sweis



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# Media Relations

## Course Overview

### Course Description

Welcome! I'm glad you've chosen to take this media relations class. During this online course, you'll learn and reflect upon the role of the media in your personal journey. Generally the purpose of journalism is to inform us of events, to help its audience make sense of pressing issues and events that affect them. The media has a vital role in raising awareness. Although newspaper readership is declining, learning how to use new media is essential to present yourself and connect with your audience.

In this course, you'll learn how media works but more importantly, you'll also learn how to participate and use the media to send your message back to your community. The world is changing rapidly and with it, the presentation of news and events as well. In this course, you'll learn about these new techniques including presenting yourself and your message online. You'll also realize that despite the technological advancements, media relations involves networking skills. You'll learn about the need to organize media briefings and materials to keep the media abreast with your plans, events and accomplishments.

### Course Topics

- Understanding the media
- Crafting a media action plan
- Presenting yourself to an audience
- Writing an op-ed
- Presenting yourself online

- Preparing for forums and media briefings

## Course Tools

- Online learning curriculum
- Weekly assignments
- Suggested course readings and online resources

## Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you'll be able to:

- Craft your message clearly
- Write an op-ed
- Gain skills to deal with different forms of media including print, broadcast and online.
- Learn how to prepare for media briefings

Let's begin!

## Assignment

Reading **excerpts** for this course selected from:

- McLuhan, Marshall. (2002) *Understanding Media*. London: TJ International, Ltd. Pages 7-23.
- Kingdon, John. (2003) *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc. Pages 57-68.
- *The different types of media*:  
<http://www.kctcs.edu/newspublications/stylebook/mediatypes.htm>
- *Developing a Media Strategy*:  
[http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/Developing%20media%20strategy\\_tcm6-7381.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/Developing%20media%20strategy_tcm6-7381.pdf)
- *Top Tips to Get Your Media Strategy Up and Running*:  
[http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\\_article.jsp?articleId=1](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1)

[572.](#)

- Beebe, Steven. Beebe, Susan, etc. (1999) *Interpersonal Communications*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon. Pages 6- 9, 17, 24-25.
- Lester, Paul. (2000) *Visual Communication: Images with Messages*. Balmont: Matrix Productions Inc. Pages 59-75.
- *Tips on presenting yourself:*  
<http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Present-Yourself-in-Public&id=87736>
- *Op-ed: The Plight of Iraqi Refugees* by Edward Kennedy.  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/29/AR2006122901066\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/29/AR2006122901066_pf.html)
- *Op-ed: A Time for Tontines* by Tom Baker and Peter Siegleman  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/09/opinion/09baker.html?ref=opinion>
- *How to write an Op-ed:*  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4452344\\_write-op-ed-column.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4452344_write-op-ed-column.html)
- *How to write an Op-ed Column:* <http://www.mcall.com/news/opinion/all-hottooped,0,7724235.story>
- *Choosing a Topic, Op-ed Checklist*
- *A Beginners Guide to Facebook:*  
<http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/archives/page9141.cfm>Pages 57-61
- *A Digiactive Introduction to Facebook Activism:*  
[http://www.digiactive.org/wp-content/uploads/digiactive\\_facebook\\_activism.pdf](http://www.digiactive.org/wp-content/uploads/digiactive_facebook_activism.pdf)
- *A New Generation Reinvents Philanthropy:*  
[http://online.wsj.com/article\\_email/SB118765256378003494-1MyQjAxMDE3ODI3MTYyNTEyWj.html](http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB118765256378003494-1MyQjAxMDE3ODI3MTYyNTEyWj.html)
- *Five Expert Tips for a Successful Media Kit*  
[http://www.nfib.com/object/IO\\_34054.html](http://www.nfib.com/object/IO_34054.html)

# Media Relations

## Lesson 1: Understanding the Media

### Lesson Overview and Objectives

#### Overview

Most people understand how vital the role of the media is in our everyday life, but in this rapidly changing industry, it's important that we understand the pressures and the problems facing the media, in particular, broadcast and print journalism. We'll also generally examine the role, reach and power of new media.

Some reporters choose to become journalists so they can play a part in changing and questioning public issues without going into politics. Indeed reporters do have the negative capability to say things about other people in public, where they can't respond in kind. However, the media has enormous potential power. The media has the positive power to extend peoples' understanding of reality by bringing the whole world to notice. It remains the only form of communications between the government and the public and between one country and another. Using the media to reach out to your constituents or your audience is vital, but we must first understand the media.

#### Objectives

By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Understand the purpose of the media
- Learn about different forms of media
- Reflect on the role of the media and its impact in your life

### Readings

- Pages 7-23. McLuhan, Marshall. (2002) *Understanding Media*. London: TJ International, Ltd.

- Pages 57-68. Kingdon, John. (2003) *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc.
- The different types of media:  
<http://www.kctcs.edu/newspublications/stylebook/mediatypes.htm>

### The Role of the Media

Some people perceive the media as hostile, destructive and messengers of bad news.

Reporters seem to justify their intrusiveness and extreme behavior by claiming that they represent the public, asking questions their citizens would ask if they had the opportunity of meeting the leaders. But another effect is the idea of 'live events.' The attention of now and this can be the cause of people reading fewer newspapers and turning to online media outlets and television. Television and online news change very often. Newspapers come out once a day.

Despite this, what many agree on is that the media has an enormous affect on public perception. A leader once commented, "I know politicians who have learned to see themselves only as the television camera does. Television had expropriated their personalities." But the media is also a reflection of the world as reporters see it. It seems to be the only tool in which the world can communicate together, to understand each other's differences and similarities.

### Reflection Questions

*From your readings, what are the different forms of media? Which one do you seem to use the most to get your information?*

*Do you have a vision for your cause or organization? If so, have you been able to find examples of how the media has been used to shed light on an issue, cause or organization?*

*Which media form (television, online, print, radio) would you be most comfortable with to send out your message? Why?*

### The Media Process



What are the main forms of media communications? Most people list daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, wire services, magazines, television and electronic (online) media. The media continues to change rapidly and even social networking sites like Facebook may become important tools to send your message out and connect with your audience. Building a website may be a crucial part of your communications strategy. The first step we need to do is to understand how these forms of media can be used to represent your vision and mission.

Daily newspapers continue to face challenges but learning how to write an op-ed remains a crucial form of communication to get your message out. Learning how to have a strategic communications plan for your cause or organization is vital to complement the goals of your organizations or your cause. John Kingdon, author of *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, illustrates the correlation between mass media and its effect on the public. Scholars and policy makers have discovered the public's attention to issues tracks closely on the media coverage of a certain subject. If foreign policy or water shortages are receiving a lot of press, then it seems to become the most important issue that is talked about at the moment.

Despite Kingdon's study where people perceived the media as not being important, he concludes with an example of an issue that was only tackled when it was highlighted in the press, specifically in this case in *The Washington Post*.

Crafting a media action plan, understanding how to present yourself to an audience, learning how to write an op-ed, creating an online presence and preparing for forums and media briefings are all part of your media process to reach out and send your message.

### Reflection Questions

*Have you lately read an op-ed that you thought was powerful? What stood out for you?*

*Have you seen any groups on Facebook that seems to attract many visitors and that you are perhaps part of? What attracted you to that group?*

*Do you have a favorite website of an organization or a cause? What are the strengths and the weaknesses of the website?*

### Assignment

Think of a cause, issue or person you believe in, then browse the Internet for websites about them. Choose one website that you really like and feel that you acquired certain knowledge or skills from. Write the strengths and weaknesses of this website in terms of content and its user-friendly format. Then write down three messages you took away from the content of the website.

# Media Relations

## Lesson 2: Developing a Media Action Plan

### Lesson Overview and Objectives

#### Overview

You have a story to tell. You are passionate about a cause. You want your organization to be represented. You want your message out. It's time to learn how to develop a media action plan. Developing such a plan will help you incorporate the media aspect to you larger action plan.

Devising a media strategy such as publishing a weekly newsletter, writing press releases, communicating and developing relations with the media, planning your time, developing clear concise messages are all part of a media strategy. However, before we begin, ask yourself: Why do I have a story to tell? Why am I passionate about a cause? Why do I believe in my organization? Answering these questions is critical, not only for devising your messages but because if you are unable to answer these questions, it's likely that no one else can.

A media strategy gives you an idea of the resources needed and gives you a clearer day-to-day or week-to-week list of activities to do. Learning how to build a media kit will be a crucial asset for devising your message and activities. You will learn how to build a media kit in lesson six but for now, you will learn how a media strategy gives you the opportunity to present yourself and tell your story.

#### Objectives

By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Understand the need for a media strategy
- Develop and incorporate a media strategy for your cause or project.

## Readings

- *Developing a Media Strategy:*  
[http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/Developing%20media%20strategy\\_tcm6-7381.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/Developing%20media%20strategy_tcm6-7381.pdf)
- *Top Tips to Get Your Media Strategy Up and Running:*  
[http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\\_article.jsp?articleId=1572](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1572)

## The Media Strategy

A media strategy can apply to an individual project, an organization or a cause and it should establish the following:

Objectives

Audiences

Messages

Tools and Activities

Resources

Time

## Objective

Your objective is not your media objective as much as it is the objective of your cause, organization or project. When you identify these objectives, it will be easy to incorporate the answers into your media objectives.

## Audience

Identify your audience. Identifying your audience for your cause, project or organization is one of the most critical aspects of your overall strategy. The media is not your audience. Your constituents or those who are in favor of your cause and those who you want to persuade like decision-makers or voters are your audience. The media follows; they are apart from your audience. If you don't know who your audience is, your media strategy will suffer greatly. Knowing who you will be addressing will help get your message out and you will learn how to connect with you audience effectively. Understanding your

audience will help you devise ways and tools to target this audience so, you will have a greater impact.

### Messages

You will learn about the importance of messages in various classes but bringing these messages to the forefront when speaking to the media is vital. They become your ‘sound bites’ and sometimes your campaign or cause becomes defined by these messages you use in the media. It’s a way to transform your message to the larger audience.

### Tools and Activities

Tools and activities can include organizing field trips for the media or organize a monthly briefing not only for the press but also for those who can benefit from your cause or project. Devising ways to be visible at workshops and in the community can all be categorized under activities. Writing about these experiences can be a way to keep your audience abreast of your work and dedication.

### Resources

Understanding and organizing your time and budget is important. Figuring out how much time and money you need in order to carry out activities, press briefings, photos, field trips, etc. is important. A list of resources including developing a media contact list and those who might support your cause or your project is important.

### Time

Putting a time frame to begin and complete activities, monthly briefings, and tasks to be accomplished becomes an important factor in your media and overall strategy. The time frame can change depending on your cause or project but it will basically organize your media strategy goals.

### Reflection Questions

*Why do I have a story to tell? Why am I passionate about a cause? Why do I believe in my organization?*

*Who is my target audience?*

## Assignment 2

Create an outline for a media strategy. Write the following words down:

- Objectives
- Audiences
- Messages
- Tools and Activities
- Resources
- Time

Try to identify your cause, project or organization's objectives, audience, messages, tools and activities, resources and time.

# Media Relations

## Lesson 3: Presenting Yourself to an Audience

### Lesson Overview and Objectives

#### Overview

A printed or spoken word can trigger an image, sound or experience. The words we use can have a tremendous effect on our thoughts and actions and in return this reflects upon us, and more specifically, on the way we connect with the people we want to reach out to.

Since they were first invented, words, pictures, sounds and thoughts have been struggling for dominance. Some people would argue, words are more important than pictures when it comes to shedding light on complex thoughts. Images remain powerful. In a few seconds emotions can be triggered—anger, sympathy, empathy, joy, while colors and expressions are clear. Sound can spur creativity—we can hear laughter, passion, anger, and stoicism in a radio interview. Each media outlet is important in its own way, but two things remain clear: You want to be able to communicate the same message despite the media form and you want to be able to convey this message to the best of your ability—that means being an effective communicator.

#### Objectives

By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Learn about the different media forms to present yourself
- Send your message via the media
- Communicate clearly and effectively

#### Readings

- Pages 6-9, 17, 24-25. Beebe, Steven. Beebe, Susan, etc. (1999) *Interpersonal Communications*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.
- Pages 59-75. Lester, Paul. (2000) *Visual Communication: Images with Messages*. Balmont: Matrix Productions Inc.
- *Tips on presenting yourself:*  
<http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Present-Yourself-in-Public&id=87736>
- *Getting Ready for a Media Interview.*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEYBUWCdG3I>
- *The different types of media:*  
<http://www.kctcs.edu/newspublications/stylebook/mediatypes.htm>
- Obama Press Conference:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NBv88rG608>

### The Different Media Forms

There are various ways to present yourself and your cause or organization. Whether it is in a newspaper article, on a radio show, or online you want to present yourself as being professional and passionate. You can do this, if you prepare well. The media continues to change rapidly and, so do the various media venues where you can present yourself. You might find that social networking sites like Facebook may become important tools to send your message out and connect with your audience. Building a website may be a crucial part of your media strategy.

We will learn about establishing yourself online in lesson five. However, presenting yourself online is one of the various media forms that can let people know more about your cause, organization or campaign. In a survey conducted about what makes a person want to come back to your site, the 990 online users rated the following:

The ratings were based from 0 to 100% with the higher the percentage.

- Ease Of Use/Navigation: 74%
- Fast Download Time: 65%



- Regularly Updated Information: 58%
- Quality Of Content: 57%
- Organization Of Content: 40%
- Access To Customer Service: 40%
- Quantity Of Content: 30%
- Search Engine At The Site: 25%
- Front Page Layout: 20%
- Fun: 19%
- Look And Feel Of The Site: 18%
- Inclusion Of Animated Graphics: 9%.

Other forms of media include broadcast (television), print, newsletter and e-mail. Like a journalist, your strongest quality will be your credibility. The more you know about your cause and organization, the more you will be at ease to talk about what matters most.

Citing sources and telling anecdotes are all important factors that can attract the attention of the reader or the viewer. When you have developed your messages, you'll have good sound bites. The reason the message is so vital is because whether it will be in a newspaper, online, radio, newsletter or television, you'll avoid sending mixed signals, or different messages which will prove to be problematic when building credibility and professionalism on behalf of your cause or organization.

### Reflection Questions

*Did you recently read, watch or hear a certain interview with an individual that stood out for you? Why? If it something you read or heard and you can find an archived copy of it, try to go back to it and write the things you liked about the interview.*

*What attracts you to a website and feel like you want to return to it often? Do some of the points in the survey mentioned above apply to the reasons you enjoy and return to visit the website?*

## Sending Your Message

Understand your message, communicate your message and finally use your message. The more you understand and build upon your main message, the more you'll be at ease when trying to communicating it. The more you understand the mission, vision and objectives of your organization, the more confident you'll be about your message. Background information about your cause or organization strengthens your arguments and again, builds credibility.

Communicating effectively and clearly is vital in order for your message to be heard. You may spend hours writing down what your vision, mission and objectives are. You may have developed a clear, concise message, but if you're unable to articulate them clearly and confidently you may lose the opportunity to connect with your audience and make your voice heard. Again, practice is the key. The more you practice, the more at ease you'll be when it is time to present. If you feel like you are still nervous, practice in front of a video-camera and watch the tapes. Reflect and write down the changes you want to see and keep practicing.

Once you have 'mastered' your message, you'll realize that no matter what question you are asked, you will be able to link it to your main message. In short, the key to presenting yourself to the media is preparation and practice.

## Reflection Questions

*Now that you know more about the various media forms, ask yourself if your strengths lie in writing, being on a radio interview, speaking on camera, in front of an audience, in a roundtable discussion, or online?*

*Try to find a short interview with your favorite actor, CEO, author or politician on YouTube and reflect upon what the strengths and weaknesses of both the interviewer and interviewee.*

### Assignment 3

Watch the Obama press conference. Does he stay on message? How? When he is asked questions, how does he return to the main message?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NBv88rG608&feature=related>

Listen to this radio interview with King Abdullah II: What are his main messages? Does he stick to the main messages? Does he sound confident? Prepared? Does he have background information? <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=87959790>

Choose one out of the following two op-ed's on education reform:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/08/opinion/08nisbett.html?em>

Or

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123172121959472377.html>

Do you find it interesting or boring? Why? Write down the main messages? Does the op-ed include anecdotes? Is it passionate? How does the author build credibility?

# Media Relations

## Lesson 4: Writing an Op-ed

### Lesson Overview and Objectives

#### Overview

Open any newspaper and you'll find a special section for op-ed contributors. If you visit any newspaper website, you'll find a small section on how to submit op-ed, and they may even give you a few tips—word count, exclusivity, submission notification.

An op-ed is an opinion piece that generally offers an alternative view expressed often by an expert on a certain topic or issue. Op-eds can cover practically everything from small town issues to national and international issues. More recently we see op-eds in online publications such as *The Huffington Post* and others. The term “op-ed” means opposite the editorial. It describes the common placement of an op-ed piece on the page opposite an editorial.

An op-ed is an opportunity to present your message in an in-depth yet concise manner. Using short sentences, anecdotes, facts and statistics are all ways to strengthen your message and bring attention to your cause or organization.

It is a competitive space, so the more you learn how to craft your op-ed, the better chance you'll have at having it published. Moreover, updating your media contact list as well as developing relations with the media gives you an opportunity to speak to editors and perhaps a way of letting them know that you plan on submitting an op-ed.

#### Objectives

By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Understand the purpose of an op-ed
- Learn about op-eds and letters to the editor

- Write a letter to the editor
- Write an op-ed

## Readings

- Op-ed: The Plight of Iraqi Refugees by Edward Kennedy.  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/29/AR2006122901066\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/29/AR2006122901066_pf.html)
- Op-ed: A Time for Tontines by Tom Baker and Peter Siegleman  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/09/opinion/09baker.html?ref=opinion>
- How to write an Op-ed: ([http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4452344\\_write-op-ed-column.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4452344_write-op-ed-column.html))
- How to write an Op-ed Column: <http://www.mcall.com/news/opinion/all-hottooped,0,7724235.story>
- Choosing a Topic, Op-ed Checklist

## Examining and Understanding Op-eds

No matter what your cause or organization represents, there are basic tips to follow to craft an op-ed. Here are some guidelines:

([http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4452344\\_write-op-ed-column.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4452344_write-op-ed-column.html))

- Focus your column on one and only one topic. You'll want to begin discussion on one issue to invite responses so make sure your readers are clear on what they should be arguing about. So, if you're writing about banning smoking in hospitals, for example, don't begin talking about changing food menus in hospitals as well. Stick to one argument, one issue. You have your messages.
- Know your readers. Know your audience.
- Do your research. As we covered in the previous two classes, we spoke about the importance of "owning" your message – having thorough knowledge about your cause and being prepared to answer questions about it. Background information is key. An op-ed presents a well thought-out argument. Again it's an opportunity to

build credibility: the more you know, the more you are perceived as being credible.

- Double check the length but typically try not to go over 750 words (maximum).
- Be creative in presenting your message—anecdotes, a shocking statistic; avoid cliché's and unnecessary jargon. The reader must read your voice in your op-ed not only facts.
- Make sure the words are clear, concise logical and the words flow. Do not use complicated words. Appeal to the average reader.
- Educate the reader but in a way that does not seem imposing.
- Include a brief bio, along with your phone number, email address, and mailing address at the bottom.

### Reflection Questions

*Read this op-ed and reflect on its strengths and weaknesses.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/09/opinion/09baker.html?ref=opinion>

*Visit [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com) and find an op-ed blog you like. Why do you think was powerful? What stood out for you? What could have been improved? How is the format different than in print media?*

### Writing the Op-ed

Op-eds can raise awareness by bringing attention to political, social, or even environmental issues that are important to the writer and the public as well. “A published op-ed helps as an image-building tool as well, by helping to brand the author of the piece as an authority source on the particular issue at hand,” states an Internet marketing site.

We are going to examine an op-ed written by U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy on the plight of Iraqi refugees published in the Washington Post on December 30, 2006.

([http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/29/AR2006122901066\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/29/AR2006122901066_pf.html))

### **We Can't Ignore Iraq's Refugees**

*With the nation still at war in Iraq, each of us is deeply grateful to the brave men and women in our armed forces who celebrated the holidays this year with half their hearts at home and half in Iraq. But this year especially it is essential that we also reflect on another human cost of the war -- the hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children who have fled their homes and often their country to escape the violence of a nation increasingly at war with itself.*

[Notice how the Senator begins the op-ed with his audience in mind — Americans who may or may not agree with the war but those who generally support their armed forces — parents, politicians and decision-makers. He found a way to begin that is non-partisan. At the same time he inserts emotional words—hearts and home, human cost. He then mentions the issue at hand, the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have fled their homes—Iraqi refugees]

*The refugees are witnesses to the cruelty that stains our age, and they cannot be overlooked. America bears heavy responsibility for their plight. We have a clear obligation to stop ignoring it and help chart a sensible course to ease the refugee crisis. Time is not on our side. We must act quickly and effectively.*

[The author asserts his opinion when he says America bears a heavy responsibility and that it has a clear obligation. Then he states that there needs to be a sensible course to ease their plight. Notice how he uses short, concise sentences: Time is not on our side. We must act quickly and effectively.]

*Today, within Iraq, 1.6 million people have already fled or been expelled from their homes. An additional 1.8 million, fleeing sectarian violence, kidnappings, extortion, death threats and carnage, have sought refuge in neighboring countries. At least 700,000 are in Jordan, 600,000 in Syria, 100,000 in Egypt, 54,000 in Iran and 20,000 in Lebanon. Typically they are not living in refugee camps but have relocated in urban areas, where they must draw on their own meager resources to pay for food and shelter, and must depend on the good graces of the host governments.*

[Here he builds his credibility. Even though he is a well-known Senator, he is showing that he knows about the subject. He offers background information. He offers statistics—1.6 million people have already fled or have been expelled from their homes. Notice the numbers in neighboring countries and finally, he mentions that they are not in refugee camps but in urban areas, again showing his knowledge about the subject]

*The recent report of the Iraq Study Group rightly concluded that if this refugee situation "is not addressed, Iraq and the region could be further destabilized, and the humanitarian suffering could be severe." Thousands of these refugees are fleeing because they have been affiliated in some way with the United States. Cooks, drivers and translators have been called traitors for cooperating with the United States. An essential first step could be to hold an international conference on the issue -- ideally sponsored by the countries in the region and the United Nations -- to begin to deal with the growing number and needs of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons. The United States should participate in the conference and provide substantial support for the refugees. Doing so would encourage other nations to address the crisis, help the refugees and displaced persons, and assist the countries shouldering the greatest burden. Failure to act quickly and cooperatively with other nations will only result in more carnage, chaos and instability in the region.*

[In his op-ed, the Senator quotes a source (Iraq Study Group) to build upon his argument, he mentions details that matter but gives a human perspective—cooks, drivers and translators. Then he offers solutions to the problem: He mentions the first step, the International conference, US support for the refugees, assist countries shouldering the greatest burden. He ends with the larger picture, the implication of this crisis on the Middle East region.]

### Writing a Letter to the Editor

When you have a letter published in a newspaper or magazine, you become part of the media. Your voice is being heard. Writing a letter to the editor is another way for you assert your view about a cause that relates to you or your organization. Read some of the



examples below of letters to the editor. Meanwhile, here are some tips on writing a letter to the editor.

Tips: (<http://www.publishaletter.com/resources.jsp>)

- Make reference to the subject. Mention the article or the editorial.
- Keep the letter focused. Too many points will reduce the impact.
- It should make sense to people that have not read the original article.
- Don't send it to more than one publication.
- Keep it short. Most publications limit the letters to 150 to 250 words (the limit on this site is 300 words).
- Send it quickly. News goes stale very quickly. Submit your letter as quickly as possible.
- Mention credentials. If you have relevant job title, unique experience or expertise, mention it.
- Include your full contact information. Most newspapers and magazines, if they are to print your letter, will contact you before publication to verify information and discuss content. Without your contact information it is extremely unlikely that your letter will be printed.

## Letters

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/09/opinion/lweb09bottle.html?pagewanted=print>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/opinion/l08krugman.html?pagewanted=print>
- <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D00EFD7123BF931A35750C0A96F9C8B63&pagewanted=print>

## Assignment 4

Write an op-ed that is no more than 700 words about your cause or organization.

# Media Relations

## Lesson 5: Presenting Yourself Online

### Lesson Overview and Objectives

#### Overview

Presenting your organization or cause online is becoming a crucial aspect of any media strategy to reach out to your audience. Learning to use the Internet to present your cause or organization can be an effective and fairly inexpensive way to connect with your audience, raise awareness, organize and even inspire people to act.

#### Objectives

By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Learn about various social networking websites
- Create your own 'group' and 'profile'
- Examine websites and profiles

#### Readings

- *A Beginners Guide to Facebook:*  
<http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/archives/page9141.cfm>Pages 57-61
- *A Digiactive Introduction to Facebook Activism:*  
[http://www.digiactive.org/wp-content/uploads/digiactive\\_facebook\\_activism.pdf](http://www.digiactive.org/wp-content/uploads/digiactive_facebook_activism.pdf)
- *A New Generation Reinvents Philanthropy:*  
[http://online.wsj.com/article\\_email/SB118765256378003494-1MyQjAxMDE3ODI3MTYyNTEyWj.html](http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB118765256378003494-1MyQjAxMDE3ODI3MTYyNTEyWj.html)
- *Websites to visit:*
  - [https://www.ecotonoha.com/index\\_en.html](https://www.ecotonoha.com/index_en.html)
  - <http://Kiva.org/>

- <http://www.wecjordan2.com/>
- <http://www.digiactive.org/2008/06/28/guide-a-digiactive-introduction-to-facebook-activism/>

## Social Networking Websites

Like live networking skills, you'll quickly realize that building online networking skills gives momentum to your cause or organization. It's not enough to just build your own website these days -- you also need to go where there are established online groups and related social events and join them. From *twittering* to *chatting* to *blogging*, you can encourage activism, raise awareness and make the Internet one of the key components in your media action plan.

Your readings for Class Six include a booklet about Facebook activism. You'll read about the pros and cons of social networking and activism, including information about low cost communications. You'll also learn about RSS feeds which are webfeed formats used to publish frequently updated works. However, Facebook remains unorganized and wasn't initially built for social activism as much as social networking. That's why Facebook should be only one of the ways to present yourself online.

Blogging is a way to use free space online to write, update, present, place links and hear feedback from your audience and even start a dialogue. I found Wordpress to be a user-friendly, popular site where you can establish your blog. Let us watch this video, a step-by-step tutorial on blogging. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWYi4\\_COZMU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWYi4_COZMU)

Depending on your budget, you can build a website that becomes your professional space on the World Wide Web (www.) Take a look at website examples (listed in your reading) that have been created; some have been professionally created and others have been created by smaller designer companies. Be sure to check out [wecjordan2.com](http://www.wecjordan2.com/) -- this was a high school project but the website is effective in many ways. Then check [https://www.ecotonoha.com/index\\_en.html](https://www.ecotonoha.com/index_en.html) which was professionally designed.

### Reflection Questions

*Do you have a personal Facebook account? If not, you might want to begin exploring this networking site to see how you can build a professional Facebook profile. Find out who you know on Facebook. What groups can you create related to your cause and organization?*

*From the two websites that you viewed, write down what you liked and didn't like about them. What do you feel is missing? What would you add or delete?*

### Creating Your Profile

Your blog, website or social networking site is not only a place where you post news, place your mission, vision and your message, but also a place that needs to be constantly updated, offering something new on a daily basis if at all possible. Using the Internet as a media form is time consuming. However it's an inexpensive vehicle that can have an impact on your cause and organization. Make sure you have the capability and the desire to update your blog, website or Facebook site.

Visitors to websites are looking for updated news and events, newsletters (weekly or bi-weekly), updated photos, links related to your cause or organization and a place where they can contact you.

Likewise, a media corner for journalists can encourage them to cover your story, view archived press releases and read background information. You should also include a multi-media corner -- where, in four minutes or less, you can present an issue or tell a story. For example, if you went on a field trip to meet with constituents in a remote village, bring a video-camera and picture camera with you and your team. Documenting such field trips can demonstrate both your dedication to meeting with your constituents and your desire to be an effective and transparent leader and communicator.

Let us view these two multi-media videos online:

Scroll down to “Life for Iraqi refugees increasingly desperate”:

<http://www.unhcr.org/static/home/webvideos.htm>

Then watch this presentation:

<http://gnovisjournal.org/digital/dads-cancer-multimedia-illness-narrative-experiment>

### Reflection Questions

*Write a list of things you would like to see as part of your website and blog depending on your cause or organization.*

### Assignment 5

- 1) Create a Facebook profile. If you already have a Facebook profile, create a group dedicated solely to your organization or cause.
  
- 2) Create a blog on Wordpress. If you already have a personal blog, create one solely dedicated to your organization or cause.

# Media Relations

## Lesson 6: Preparing for Forums and Media Briefings

### Lesson Overview and Objectives

#### Overview

Following up with your supporters – and the media – means taking consistent and constant action. Updating relevant information suggests that you're reaching out to your audience and that you care. Building relations with the media and those who are interested in your cause or organization could be what distinguishes you from other leaders. You build a group of supporters. In fact, consider those who care and support your cause as ambassadors. Like the media, they need to be updated on the latest news and events. A way to do this is to create and constantly update your media kit as well as arranging for a monthly or bi-weekly meeting of your supporters. You'll want to invite members of the media to these meetings because your supporters will have an opportunity to meet with the reporters.

#### Objectives

By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Develop a Media Contact List
- Create a Media Kit

#### Readings

- Five Expert Tips for a Successful Media Kit  
[http://www.nfib.com/object/IO\\_34054.html](http://www.nfib.com/object/IO_34054.html)

Review the following:

- *UNICEF Press Release example*
- *UNHCR Bi-Monthly Fact Sheet example*

- *Media Contact List example*
- Newsletter example
- Photos from the field

### The Media Contact List

You want to begin observing which people and what publications cover your cause or the issues that are relevant to you. If you've already built relations with some reporters or editors, you can begin developing a media contact list—it may include all or some of the following:

- Broadcast – television and radio;
- Online and newspaper (weeklies and dailies);
- Magazines, both weekly and monthly.

Your list should include more than one contact at each media outlet just in case you can't reach that reporter on a specific day and may include international, regional and local media.

Let's take a look at this media contact list (attached). This was developed when I was working at the United Nations (UN). Although the mission focused mainly on Iraqi refugees, the list of reporters mentioned cover human rights, NGO's (Non-profit Organizations), the UN and social issues. As you can see, there are separated columns for names, media outlets, phone numbers (cell and business) and E-mail addresses.

Developing a media contact will help you to find a reporter's contact information easily. When you want to hold a press conference or briefing, it will make the process of contacting the media much easier.

You want to create a separate contact list for supporters and those interested in your cause. The list should include their names, contact information and their profession. Depending on their profession and interest, you might want separate them according to their work or profession: Individuals from governmental institutions, non-profit organizations, academic researchers, activists, students, members of like-minded organizations, etc.

When you send out invitations for them to attend briefings, make sure you follow-up one day prior to your event to confirm the number of people attending. You can include a sign-in sheet that can be passed around. Send minutes of meetings to them and to those who were not able to attend but were invited.

### Reflection Questions

*Try creating a media contact list in an Excel spreadsheet or another list management program you are familiar with (no real names or contact information is needed, if you still do not have contact information or names of reporters).*

*Also think of people you know that can be included in your list of supporters, and add them to your list of contacts.*

### The Media Kit

A media kit is printed (sometimes available online as well) information that conveys who you are, what you represent and why people should care. It confirms your identity. Your media kit should include an attractive and organized two-pocket folder, relevant and accurate information and photos. The information you provide should be simple and straightforward for the average reader but at the same time it should answer questions reporters would ask. The most relevant and updated information should appear in the front right pocket of your folder, so it is seen directly when the kit is opened. Background material should be placed in the left pocket and behind the fact sheet, newsletter, etc. Also include your business card and contact information.

Your kit should include:

### Press Release

The press release is probably one of the most important documents in your media kit. It conveys to reporters the importance of the content you wish to communicate to the public.



There is a certain format on writing press releases. Take a look at this UNICEF press release.

### **Fact Sheet and Background**

This fact sheet is updated information written in a short, clear and concise way. You can make a fixed template where it is updated on a bi-monthly basis. The background would preferably include ten most commonly asked questions and answers about your organization or cause. If you're launching an action plan or strategy, create the top ten questions and answers about it as well. Most reporters will not read the complete action plan or strategy. View this UNHCR fact sheet. Notice that statistics, history and mission are included. The format should be in an easily read format, using bullet points or columns.

### **Media Advisory**

A media advisory is a one-page document that alerts the media of upcoming events and work that you'll doing. It gives reporters ample time to organize and plan. When it is an event, make sure to include names of speakers attending as well as time and place. Include direction maps if necessary to make it easier for reporters to find the venue.

### **Photos and Multi-Media**

Photos are a way for reporters and supporters to see visually the work you're doing. Also if you created a podcast for example, you can copy it on a CD and include it in your media kit where it can be easily uploaded on other sites and blogs. The CD would include the photos as well as your logo. See UNHCR photos from a refugee camp.

### **Contact Information and Relevant Links**

Your contact information should be available and clearly visible in your media kit. Some folders have a small space on the bottom right hand corner where you can insert your business card.

Include in your media kit a one-page sheet of relevant links to your organization or cause. Make sure you update this list whenever possible. You can also include archived press

clippings about your organization or cause.

### Reflection Questions

Review a media corner in your favorite cause or company website. Do they include an 'online' media kit? What does it include?

### Assignment 6

Create a media kit for your cause or organization. Include sample documents such as a press release, newsletter, photos, contact information, fact-sheet, background, etc.