



Chapter 2
Facing the Media (Without Pain)



You Will Find

- ★ Getting It Right With The Media
- ★ Turning the CEO Into A TV Star
- ★ No Comment! And It's Off The Record
- ★ Hate Giving Speeches?
- ★ Speech Writing For Press Events
- ★ Forget The Gimmick, Go For The Message
- ★ Ten Ways To Annoy The Press



GETTING IT RIGHT WITH THE MEDIA

*“People everywhere confuse what they read
in newspapers with news”*

- A J Liebling

In this piece:

- ★ The do's and don'ts when dealing with the media
- ★ PR vs advertising
- ★ Why your company website is important

It used to be that only the larger corporations would get serious attention from the media, but over the last few years there's been a big change in the way business news is reported, with small and medium enterprises commanding as much attention as the multinationals.

It's no wonder really, when you consider the amount of space newspapers dedicate to business news and similarly, television news and current affairs programming now carry hours of business-related stories.

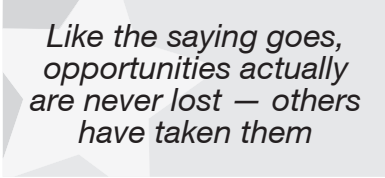
So if business is big news nowadays, why is it, you may think, your company gets little attention from the media? Surely, you say to yourself, I have an interesting story to tell and lots of newsworthy items that the media ought to cover.

On that score, you're right, but if your company is not in the media's playing field, then it's best to acknowledge that your approach isn't working and start going back to the drawing board.

Here are **SIX COMMON MISTAKES** made by companies in the way they conduct their media relations:

1. Failing to understand the importance of the media

Media relations – the creation of good rapport and goodwill with the press (quite separate from advertising) must be factored into the communications plan. This can play a bigger-than-life role in pushing your corporate image and product awareness. It's so important that all communication plans must include meeting face-to-face with the press.



*Like the saying goes,
opportunities actually
are never lost — others
have taken them*

2. No media training

Media training for the CEO as company spokesperson is a must because the first impression must turn out to be the right impression. You want to project your company with a good image and you have just one chance to do it right - at the beginning.

3. Depending too much on advertising

This is another misconception — the inability to differentiate the role of public relations and advertising. Newsworthiness comes from an active programme of public relations that uses the media to tell stories about you, your products and your company – though not necessarily in that order. The rule of thumb is that higher AWARENESS comes from advertising, while INFLUENCE comes from the combination of both ads and PR.

4. Failing to use technology

The Internet continues to push the boundaries of how quickly and efficiently messages can be disseminated across the globe — the same applies to news about you.

5. Failing to spot and grab media opportunities

Like the saying goes, opportunities actually are never lost — others have taken them. Most companies are too blind to spot media opportunities, though the good ones will grab any chance they get.

6. Bad news releases

Most experienced editors rely on news releases for story ideas, facts, and valuable sources of information. A good news release can be a lifesaver when it arrives just in the nick of time with a nifty story idea and an arresting headline, compelling lead, powerful quotes, maybe even a publishable photograph.

Your company has a good chance of being a great attraction to the media and after letting you know of the six “sins” of media relations, here are **SIX GOOD WAYS** to capture media attention:

1. Seek publicity - But with a purpose

Your goal should not be “to get noticed” so much as to get your message across to the right audience. So your first step is to identify the media (print, TV and radio) that cater to those audiences. You must already determine your key messages and stick to it at every media appearance.

2. Learn about the media

Learning how the media works paves the way on how you would carry out your media appearances. Learn how they do their work. Learn what they want and need. In short, UNDERSTAND the media.

3. Company information

Your website and other media material should be media friendly. Ultimately, journalists need to obtain accurate information quickly. When deadlines are pressuring them for a story, you will lose to companies that can furnish the media with the most concise and fastest information.

The Web is becoming a media magnet, with journalists using it to research stories and communicate with sources. If your firm has a website, be sure you direct reporters to your “Media Centre” or “Press Room” page, and post your most recent releases there, as well as any announcements and answers to questions that reporters frequently ask you.

4. News releases - The ultimate weapon

A well-written news release (takes practice), newsworthy (which takes creativity), concise (which takes discipline) and responsive to the needs

of audiences (which requires actually reading all the publications), will help your company get into the media's circuit. News releases that have succeeded in getting good publicity have done so because the writer thinks like a journalist and knows exactly what they need. This is one case where it pays to learn what makes news and what doesn't.

5. Get to know media deadlines, and respect them

It's the 8.00 o'clock news, not the 8.10 news.

6. Use Technology

Newsrooms are increasingly incorporating e-mail into their daily routines. A growing number of editors and journalists now prefer that you e-mail press releases to them, rather than fax or mail. This will cut a lot of time and you will reach the media earlier than the rest.

Enough said, so are you ready for the media?



TURNING THE CEO INTO A TV STAR

“Your attitude determines your altitude”

- Vince Lombardi

You will know why:

- ★ CEOs are in showbiz (without knowing it)
- ★ TV is your friend, embrace it
- ★ Many CEOs are hungry for TV opportunities

Hundreds of people are interviewed on television everyday - could you be next? As CEO, television presents enormous opportunities to get your message across to the right audience — and if you don't take advantage of them, your rivals probably will.

TV today reaches many far corners. Apart from local audiences, TV stations in Asia have satellite footprints that cover Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, Indonesia, China and many parts of the Philippines.

If you want to boggle your mind, consider the international stations in which you could appear. Just CNBC alone reaches 40 million homes in Asia, 61 million in Europe and 75 million in the United States. Why miss out on a good opportunity to tell your messages out to millions?

Always remember the first rule of TV — everything on TV is showbiz. Believe me! Yes even the news is planned and choreographed. So before you attempt to appear on TV, please make sure you consider these:

Do your homework

Solid preparation creates an effective TV interview. Find out as much as you can about the programme - is it live or recorded? Why have they chosen this particular topic and what's the angle they're taking? Who (in general terms) are their viewers?

Keep your answers and messages simple

Once you know the audience — whether it is general (like the news), or targeted at housewives or businessmen across Asia, think about the points that you as a CEO could make which are most interesting, useful and relevant to this target audience.

*Loose those jargons!
Not everyone is a
computer expert or a
Harvard business
graduate*

A CEO should be prepared with one or two clear messages — and no more. It's much better to repeat points than to deluge your audience with information they can't retain.

Television viewers have only one chance to get a message; they can't go back and re-read an opening statement. So the simpler the message, the higher would be the retention rate.

Learn about the interviewer and programme

Is she friendly or antagonistic? Does the show accept call-ins over the phone? Previewing the show won't eliminate all surprises, but does provide insight into the kind of interview situation you will encounter. Watch the programme to get a feel on how the host conducts the interview, how she throws those follow-up questions and so on.

Sensitive questions

You must prepare for possible sensitive areas where negative questions need to be “turned around”. With advance planning you can succeed in using negative questions as “bridges” to delivering your own message.

Dress like a CEO

A CEO should dress well, but not to the point of distraction that it gets in the way of what you say. Avoid jackets with close-checked or hounds tooth patterns — the cameras convey a dizzying strobe effect to viewers. The same applies to closely striped shirts in sharply contrasting colours. Men should also avoid very dark suits, particularly in combination with white shirts, which can drain colour from the face.

Say it right

Loose those jargons! Not everyone is a computer expert or a Harvard

business graduate. Think about the way you as a CEO talk to staff at work. Is your conversation always peppered with abbreviations, technical terms and other jargons? For the outside world, this will just not fly. Explain clearly as if the audience are ten-year olds.

Strike a pose

Body language is the national language of TV. Impressions of people are actually formed within the first minute they're on camera - it's in that minute that you as a CEO can win or lose an audience. To win, you should practice the "executive pose", which radiates the confidence needed to sell a message. The pose includes legs crossed at the knee, hands folded when not being used to gesture, and elbows rested on chair arms (if any). You should lean forward slightly, communicating interest and enthusiasm, and smile appropriately.

Rapport

The route to good rapport with the interviewer is by way of first names. Skill in conducting "warm and human" interviews greatly increases your prestige and the audience's affection for you. So you must try to identify yourself (in the minds of the audience) as a friend of the interviewer.

FOUR MAJOR MISTAKES TO AVOID

Repeating the interviewer's negatives

Suppose you are on the spot and the interviewer says 'Surely the evidence shows you're the reason for this crisis?' If you say 'I don't think I'm the reason for this crisis, I've done the best I can' you sound defensive. Better to dismiss the negative entirely: 'Far from it, I've achieved the result we wanted in difficult circumstances ...'. This sounds a lot more positive.

Saying 'No Comment'

If you ever say this, viewers are likely to jump to the conclusion that things are so bad that you haven't got any line of defence at all.

Allowing your eyes to wander around the studio

If your eyes flicker around during a TV interview, you will look uncomfortable and probably guilty. You should keep your eye-line focused on the interviewer and come across as being in command of the subject.

After all, you're supposed to be some kind of expert and that's why you're on TV in the first place.

Being boring

Put energy in your delivery so that it is bright and enthusiastic, rather than dull and low-key. Remember, broadcasting is show biz! If you can't hold the audience's attention, there are plenty of rival channels they can switch over to. And they will.

"It is not whether you really cry. It's whether the audience thinks you are crying"

- Ingrid Bergman



NO COMMENT! AND IT'S "OFF THE RECORD"

"When in doubt, tell the truth"
- Mark Twain

You will know why:

- ★ CEOs tend to be misquoted
- ★ Avoid interview traps by the media
- ★ Pre-determine outcomes of media encounters

"No comment" and "Off the record" have become really famous phrases thanks to people who use them as convenient escapes from touchy media situations. The first phrase is so common it has become a cliché in Hollywood movies. You can almost predict the leading character will say "No comment" when swarmed by aggressive reporters.

Well, there's more. These same people obviously want to avoid issues and sweep problems under the carpet! Such actions give the media a green light to go for the jugular (yours usually). So it makes sense to speak honestly – which time and again has succeeded in defusing many negative perceptions and situations.

From where I'm sitting as a PR consultant, there's no such thing as "no comment". Though some CEOs believe the best defence against hard questions from the media is to simply refuse to comment, this often proves to be the wrong approach.

We should look back at Watergate, the most famous political scandal in American history, where it taught the world that "no comment" is a tacit admission of guilt.

Instead of saying “No comment!” (which you should never say to a reporter), how about one of these :

- I hadn’t heard of that. May I get back to you?
- May I ask my office to call you with that information?
- May I confirm that information and get back to you as soon as possible?

What is “off the record” supposed to do?

During a media interview, when you want to tell the reporter something, but don’t want to be quoted, you will most likely say, “This part is OFF THE RECORD.”

Then, when you’re done speaking off the record, you will tell the reporter, “We are now talking ON THE RECORD again”.

All “off the record” means is that the information will not be attributed to you. It doesn’t mean that it won’t appear in print

For example, you are explaining to a reporter about your plan to introduce new safety procedures at your factory. Without wanting to be quoted (by saying this is “off the record”), you quietly explain that the reason behind the move was due to the loss of two workers in fatal accidents over the past year.

So you think the sordid stuff won’t come out in the interview, but in fact, you have opened the window for a sensational follow-up story.

Does OFF THE RECORD have a guarantee?

The answer is NO!

We must remember that off the record information may still wind up in the article, if the reporter can find another source to say the information “on the record”. Good reporters know how to get another source to confirm information, especially if it makes a good story. They may even tell the other source that you told them the information.

All “off the record” means is that the information will not be attributed to you. It doesn’t mean that it won’t appear in print.

When you speak off the record, you are giving the reporter background information for their story. Never tell the reporter idle gossip. When you speak to a reporter, you are doing so for only one purpose: to provide them with information for their story.

If you don't want something to appear in print, don't tell it to them (at all), even off the record. Be very careful with on and off the record. With established publications, if you say "the following is off the record" they tend to respect that. But again, it does not come with a guarantee.

Most reporters dislike material that is "off the record" at news conferences and during interviews, even when it is used for background purposes. They would prefer a qualified "on the record" to any amount of inside information off the record, so they may feel free to publish all of the information they receive.

Different meanings

Off the record may mean different things to different reporters. To one it may mean that the material is on "deep background" and may not be used in any form in the story. To another it may mean material that may be used but not attributed. If you are willing to reveal information but unwilling to be quoted, you should clearly say so beforehand. The writer will decide whether information on such a basis is acceptable.

Finally, giving off the record information is hazardous because in the confusion of researching, writing and editing, it may end up as part of a story, much to the embarrassment of all concerned.

The best policy, by far, is to simply make all information on the record and to carefully word such information so that a misunderstanding is not likely. The best practice is to not make comments off the record. If you don't want a statement quoted, don't make it.

Conclusion:

- ★ Be clear on your messages
- ★ If you don't want it to appear in the media - don't tell
- ★ No point in blaming journalists after the story is published



HATE GIVING SPEECHES?

“Everyone is ignorant, only on different subjects”
- Will Rogers

In this piece:

- ★ Why speeches are important for your image
- ★ Knowing what to say, to whom
- ★ Speeches that changed the world

Do you know that one day, somewhere, somehow, you’ll end up giving a speech (if you haven’t already).

Be it at your daughter’s wedding, your retirement party, somebody’s funeral, annual general meeting – the possibilities are endless. To most, delivering a speech is the most painful event next to tooth extraction. Be that as it may, to others, to an ambitious CEO (hopefully you are) it’s an opportunity they look forward to with relish.

Public speaking can be an enjoyable experience — if you know how to and you are well prepared. History has proven that people who give speeches are people who gain attention, respect, reputation and have a great following. Leaders and politicians reach out to millions by using powerful speeches.

Speeches have actually changed the world. Remember the Gettysburg address by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 when he coined the famous phrase -- Government of the People, by the People, for the People – that have come to symbolise the definition of democracy itself?

What about Martin Luther King’s “I Have A Dream” or Winston Churchill’s “Their Finest Hour” speech? Opportunities for speeches are everywhere.

Speeches are not given for the sake of speaking, but rather, to inform, convince and persuade the audience to do something. In business, having the CEO give a speech is simply a must — if you are representing your organisation. If you give a bad speech, the audience will think you give bad service too.

Today you may be giving an anniversary speech to your employees, tomorrow you may appear live on TV addressing millions of people at the same time. The numbers may differ, but the rules are still the same.

Are you willing to let go of opportunities to reach out to so many people just because you hate giving speeches? Well, there are many people who are willing to pay money to have that chance. Here are some basic rules of giving a good speech:

Good introduction. Good ending, and very little in between

Avoid long speeches. Always be sensitive to your audience. They can send you indirect signals they are not listening to your speech. These signals include wandering eyes, talking to each other, writing and the clearest sign is of course the classic YAWNING. When you get these signals, do something about it. Cut it short, add humour, give examples, increase the volume of your voice-. Make your presentation more cheerful!

Are you willing to let go of opportunities to reach out to so many people just because you hate giving speeches? Well, there are many people who are willing to pay money to have that chance

Forget the text

If possible, don't read from text. Remember, speeches are DELIVERED and not read! Make use of cue cards. Most people when reading from text will lose eye contact with the audience and this would then result in your audience losing their attention too. How would you feel if someone is talking to you but avoids looking at your face? Well, that's how your audience is going to feel when you practice text reading.

Technology has made it possible for people to look confident by using an electronic prompter. While this gadget makes it look like you're having eye contact with your audience, it still cannot match the spontaneous and authenticity of a fresh original speech.

Respond to your audience

Speeches must not always be a one-way communication. Your speeches should respond to how your audiences react. This won't be easy if you religiously follow the text. You can ask questions too. Give them what they want but at the same time inject your messages with questions too.

If it is a donation drive, your speech should be convincing enough for your audience to part with their money

Do your homework

Before even agreeing to deliver a speech, find out who your audience are — consider their background, their beliefs, age, gender and so on. Any royalty or VIP present? This will decide the protocols that you have to deal with.

Again research is not only confined to who your audience is. It's also about giving new information to them. Relevant facts and figures that can support your speech will make it real, believable and exciting.

Always make sure you read the newspapers and keep up with the latest news. Thorough preparation will avoid you from making announcements that maybe inaccurate or outdated.

What's the occasion?

Is it a product launch? If it is, your speech should be able to persuade people to use the product. If it is a donation drive, your speech should be convincing enough for your audience to part with their money.

Your purpose?

You have to consider what your purpose is. When you start writing or organising your speech, keep in mind there are three goals that you must achieve in your introduction - gain favourable attention, set tone or mood for the speech, provide background for speaker credibility (in this case it is you).

Conclude wisely

Probably the hardest part in writing a speech is the conclusion. Gather the main things you want to talk about, so that it sticks in the audience's mind. Like introductions, there are also goals you must follow to make a well-written conclusion: summarise the main idea(s), reinforce the specific purpose, gain audience acceptance of the ideas.

Practice

Always find the opportunity to practice. Start small. If there is an occasion for someone to speak at a small family gathering— volunteer for it. This will build up confidence because you already know your audience. Work your way up to bigger and more sophisticated crowd each time.

“Do first what you dread the most”

- Anonymous

Some other points:

- ★ Always speak about subjects that you’re comfortable with
- ★ Don’t be frustrated if your first speech did not make an impact - you’ll get it right the next time
- ★ Always be careful when it comes to the subjects of religion, race and politics



SPEECH WRITING FOR PRESS EVENTS

“So many words but I can’t figure out what he said”
- Frustrated Journalist

You will find out:

- ★ Different kinds of speeches for different kinds of media events
- ★ Why you need to create “sound bites”

Speech writing today is not as easy as many would think. The idea of writing a full-length speech will probably send chills through your spine and part of the problem is you don’t exactly know what the speech should say.

Compared to ten years ago, your audience today has a lot less time and in the age of fast-paced TV shows, attention spans are getting shorter. In today’s competitive world, with so many attractions and distractions, writing speeches has become a challenging task.

When speeches are delivered, your image and reputation are at stake. It could enhance or destroy them.

Many CEOs still think that writing a good speech requires a good introduction and the rest will simply follow. The introduction will include gaining favourable attention, setting the mood or tone for the speech and providing background for speaker credibility. Introduction alone won’t get you the commitment and support you want.

When it comes to speech writing that involves press attendance, you are dealing with a two-tier audience. First, there’s the direct audience (in the hall) and second, the indirect audience – made up of the whole nation (sometimes global) through reports of your speech made by the media.

Coming back to the question again — what are you going to talk about? A lot depends on the occasion.

Speech for press conferences

A press conference is one of the best ways to disseminate information to the media, particularly when launching a campaign or providing new information on a previous news story. A good rule to follow is to hold a press conference only when you think your news is important enough to convince even the busiest of reporters to attend.

Always create a few “sound bites” or short, memorable lines that are crisp and conclude the whole press conference

It’s worth mentioning again that TIME is never a friend to the media. Deadlines are always in the way. Since the conference is only for the media, it should be conducted “tailor made” in a manner which helps journalists carry out their duty effectively.

A speech for a press conference should be straight to the point and provide a clear explanation. The basic rule is to write the speech according to the flow of the news release that you’re going to give out to attending journalists. Start by giving a summary of what the press conference is about in the first place. Clearly state the reason behind this, so you will not forget the 5Ws and 1 H. What, where, when, who, why and how.

Always create a few “sound bites” or short, memorable lines that are crisp and conclude the whole press conference. TV stations will need to pick up a few good ones to use in the news bulletin and if you get a 30-second sound bite aired on TV news, you’re on a real winning streak.

Speech for product launches

Product launches, or any launch is usually the grandest of all media events. The audience consists of not only the media, as there’s also invited guests. This being the case, your speech should touch everyone in the audience — investors, management, workforce, business partners, clients (current and potential).

However, there is also the “other audience”, which is even larger compared to the group in front of you – the print and electronic media audiences. Don’t forget this huge media audience may not be physically present, so your speech should also be able to explain what they did not see at the launch.

A product launch speech should never be technical or filled with jargons. Instead of telling the audience in detail the process of manufacturing the product, try explaining the benefits of using it. This will prevent them from dozing off.

When a few journalists were asked to rate the speeches delivered during launches, they clearly prefer those written out in “journalistic” form — making clear the important points the speaker wishes to convey. This goes to prove again that a speech which runs in tandem with a news release is highly appreciated by journalists.

Timing your speech

Good speeches need not be long. The longer your speech, the lesser the attention and it will tax the audience’s endurance. The easiest way to time your speech is to read it the way you feel comfortable and see how long it takes you to finish a page. A good speech period is between seven and ten minutes and this lets you know how many pages you need to limit yourself.

If there are many important points you need to convey to your audience, be economical in words. Slash those repetitive words so that it will fulfil the speaker’s purpose and the audience’s needs.

Example: We need higher quality education. We need lower cost education. And we need a wider approach education. This can be simplified by writing something like this: We need higher quality, lower cost and a wider approach education.

Are all these cramping your style?

Many agree that it’s not what you say — it’s how you say it. But inappropriate style can damage your messages. This does not mean that you should deliver a speech without any human emotion – like a robot.

A good speech is clear about its purpose. Think again, why are you standing at the rostrum? Is it for your glory or your company’s?

Conclusion:

- ★ Speeches for media must be concise and specific
- ★ Do not deliver too many messages in a single speech



FORGET THE GIMMICK, GO FOR THE MESSAGE

*“If everyone is thinking alike,
then somebody isn’t thinking”*

- General George S. Patton

You will find out:

- ★ It’s not necessary to spend a fortune for your events to ensure success
- ★ You need to determine which audience is more important
- ★ The press will not necessarily be impressed

You can tell the difference between the CEO who knows the meaning of “messaging”, compared to those who opt for gimmicks. The two aren’t the same.

CEOs often encourage their in-house PR people to come up with absolutely weird gimmicks (urging them to be “creative”) to give a boost to their product launches, thinking these gimmicks will ensure good press coverage. WRONG!

At one recent product launch, the CEO was so thrilled he had allocated hundreds of thousands of dollars for the launch gimmick. “Just watch” he said. True to his word, it included a noisy smoke-and-fire cracker show, performance by two dolly singers, a laser show, fashion show, balloons and beautiful dancers at a hotel venue.

Amazingly, this is the same CEO who won’t spend a cent on developing a proper message for his target audiences. This is a classic case of public relations and gimmicks getting mixed up.

It's worth remembering the audience you're chasing to buy your product has many choices on what they want to read or watch on TV. Newspaper readers don't have enough time and distractions are at the maximum nowadays. So there's a tendency to turn to gimmicks to create curiosity. Curiosity, so the thinking goes, will create interest and grab attention. WRONG!

The use of public relations has to add up to more than staging a news conference or sending out a batch of news releases. You need to start by planning public relations programmes designed to send clear messages to your target audience.

Even if the event gets some television coverage, it will be only a few seconds on the glitzy "presentation". The newspaper coverage will have only one picture (colour, if you're lucky)

However, sending a message to your audience may not mean they get the information they need. A Harvard researcher found the average TV network sound bites from US presidential campaigns dropped from 41.5 seconds per broadcast in 1968 to just under 10 seconds in 1988. That translates into roughly sixteen words a night with which to make up the minds of Americans on who should be their President.

People seemingly get more information from the media yet understand less than ever before. Not only do we see more media outlets, also the flow of information has likewise increased dramatically. Fax machines, cellular phones, modems, fibre-optic cables, e-mails, snail mails and satellite TV — all have reshaped the way we get our information, when we get it and what we do with it.

Coming back to the issue of spending a "little bit too much" for a launch, CEOs naturally think it makes sense to do something different to get attention. But again, it's not only attention. You also want RETENTION. You want retention of the key messages in the target audiences' minds.

Here are three reasons why flashy launches are a waste of good money:

a) The product your company is trying to sell is not even represented through any of the "special effects" you put on display during the launch. So think again. After all, you are not in the business of selling fireworks, you don't represent famous singers, you also don't provide laser shows for a living or own a fashion house, sell balloons or run a dance school.

b) How many can the biggest hotel ballroom house at any one time? If you have the answer, that's the only number that will ever enjoy the razzmatazz of the launch you just paid for. Even if the event gets some television coverage, it will be only a few seconds on the glitzy "presentation". The newspaper coverage will have only one picture (colour, if you're lucky).

c) The launch is actually an indirect route to gain media coverage for your company and not a means for singers to gain new fans (at your expense) and to sell more CDs (subsidised by you) through their appearance at your event. No doubt, the event management company that helped you stage the glitzy event will be laughing all the way to the bank.

What should be the way?

Your speech, by right should be the main attraction of any launch. This is where the messages are being fed to the audience, which include the media who will later disseminate it to a much bigger national audience via their newspapers, TV, radio, magazines and websites.

Train yourself so you deliver the speech convincingly and confidently. Spend money to provide more information to the media — brochures, fact sheets, manuals, familiarisation trips, product giveaways to the media so that they understand better. If you fancy gimmicks, have those that explain more about your product. Meanwhile, photo opportunities — that moment when news photographers and TV cameramen crowd around you to take the "staged" photo — should represent what you do, what you offer and benefits you provide.

Stage something that can be easily understood when translated to a print medium. If a picture tells a thousand words — create that picture!

Think beyond the walls of the hotel ballroom. Plan your message so that it will reach your target audience — your potential customers, your financiers, the government, the nation and the world — in that order.

Always spend more time assessing how your message can reflect you positively or negatively.

Conclusion:

- ★ You don't need a big budget to ensure success with the media



10 WAYS TO ANNOY THE PRESS

“Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets”

- Napoléon Bonaparte

Learn how:

- ★ Simple actions can jeopardise your media relations
- ★ To be more sensitive to media needs
- ★ To be a media-friendly CEO

It's part of your job as CEO to meet the press and promote your company. So, many a time you will, without knowing, annoy the media until you become a legend in press rooms across the city. You will acquire an unwanted reputation that will be very hard to change. In case this is what you want, here are ten tips to annoy the media to the fullest.

Self-made policy of commenting only in certain circumstances

Never foster this approach. This usually comes from the sales side of the business – senior people only talk when there's good news, when it's about our company or product and we don't talk about the industry as a whole. But it's wrong as a media strategy and shows a lack of understanding of the media and how it works. Some media call it the 'two-faced PR strategy'. If a company only wants to talk about itself, it is unlikely to get extensive media coverage and be portrayed as a leader in its sector.

Let your sales people loose with the media

If you can, never let your sales people meet the media. Sales and editorial are generally not a good mix. Sales people come from a different solar system than journalists. Sales people generally will 'come on' too strong and simply put journalists in an uncomfortable position. If you have no option, then ensure that the sales person is properly briefed

and if possible has undergone some basic media training.

Lunch is media relations?

CEOs may think that by buying journalists lunch, he has accomplished the ultimate exercise in maintaining media relations. Lunch is only one of many platforms to having good media relations. What really counts is the correct information that they and the readers deserve. CEOs must always lend a helping hand to the journalists in writing an accurate story. If you are an expert in an engineering segment, you can help a journalist to write a good story. So when the time comes for you to be interviewed, you are already an established source of reliable information.

*Canceling interviews --
Once is forgivable.
Twice will definitely
strain the relationship.
Third time?
There won't be one*

It's far better to build up personal contacts and a reputation with media over time – but do that primarily on the basis of a professional relationship.

Demand editorial space because you advertise in the publication

Would you believe that there are some sales and editorial departments that are not talking to each other even though they are from the same publication? Most journalists want to treat their editorial work as independent, trustworthy and professional. Attempting to obligate them into giving you editorial space simply because you booked an advertisement shows a lack of respect towards them. In daily mainstream media it's simply unacceptable.

Never read, never glanced

It's always frustrating for journalists when the interviewee have never heard or even seen the publication that his PR guys arranged for. Before an interview, read or get a briefing about the publication. By understanding the publication, you will know how to answer your questions more effectively so that your response will fit in nicely to your advantage.

Ask your PR guy to call the media to see if they got your press release

Just imagine how many of those calls an editor will get. If he receives 30 news releases a day, just multiply the annoyance level by 30.

Your company doesn't have a website

Before a journalist conducts an interview with you, he/she wants to do some research on you and your organisation. A journalist will not just show up at your doorstep without having a clue who you are and what your company is involved in. Ideally your company's website should have a section for the media, with media-friendly information deposited there. This will cut down time that you have to spend to explain about the company. This will minimise inaccuracies too.

Sending out useless news releases

The torture to the media people when they have to figure out the newsworthiness in the news release that your company sent is good enough for them to hate you for a long time. Hard selling, over promoting news releases usually will waste the editors' time. They will/must be thinking that your company is trying to save money and get free publicity.

Regularly cancelling interviews at the last minute

Once is forgivable. Twice will definitely strain the relationship. Third time? There won't be one.

Speak in jargon

Interviews will not run smoothly when you speak as if you are addressing you chief scientist about the latest rocket project. Some journalists may be comfortable with the jargons, but try to consider the ones that aren't.

“In the real world, nothing happens at the right place at the right time. It is the job of journalists and historians to correct that”

- Mark Twain

Points to ponder:

- ★ Journalists have feelings too
- ★ Work better with the media by understanding how they work