

Business and Professional Women's Foundation

Media Toolkit

The BPW Foundation media toolkit is meant to be a guide on how to interact with the media to garner attention and interest about your event or activity. The ideas in this toolkit can be applied to any occasion, but to provide you with concrete examples for further clarity we have used the WOMENomics® forum as an example throughout this document.

Working with the Media to Gain Attention and Credibility

No matter what your goals and objectives are getting coverage can help you promote and gain support for your organization and ideas. While most organizations develop a media plan when promoting an event, it is important to maintain relations with members of the press throughout the year.

Here are some ideas on how to develop an ongoing media strategy and plan:

Devise a Strategy for Positive Media Coverage: Develop a calendar of media events to highlight your projects using ready-made news hooks like a WOMENomics® Forum, Equal Pay Day or International Women's Day. Research reporters' interests and past articles. Cultivate relationships with members of the press, suggesting ideas for feature stories, "expert" responses to breaking news, and guests for their shows. Write and submit opinion columns to newspapers and magazines. Be on the look-out for creative opportunities to link your group to other activities in your community and state.

Attract Editorial Endorsements and Columnist Support: Set up meetings with editorial boards of local papers to encourage them to take a stand on your issues. Send columnists ideas for op-ed pieces. Encourage local newspapers and TV stations to endorse events that bring publicity and funding to your issue.

Build Media Skills of Spokespeople: Train your spokespeople by practicing and honing your message and image into a persuasive, articulate presentation. Develop profiles of members willing to share their stories with the press—have guidelines to protect their privacy.

Include Evaluation Methods: Make sure your communications plan includes mechanisms to evaluate your media activities and goals. Evaluation methods might include: measuring increases in membership, funding or visibility.

Tips for working with the Media to Promote an Event

1. Understand your issue and goals; you want a clear and concise message.
2. Create a list of journalists who are interested in the topics you will be discussing. Read the newspaper, watch television and listen to the radio to determine who is interested in your issues. Gather addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers and e-

- mail address for those reporters you want to contact. When compiling your list don't overlook neighborhood papers, and other organizations' newsletters and publications (i.e. the Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, churches, League of Women Voters, and community bulletin boards).
3. Issue news releases for the announcement of an event, such as the formation of an organizing committee or confirmed speakers. Circulate newsletters and leaflets in high circulation areas such as community bulletin boards, sports clubs, restaurants, doctor's offices, etc.
 4. Consider using alternative media such as window signs, posters, websites, email listservs, etc.

Quick tips for using a Media Advisory

A media advisory is one page that simply states the facts about the activity or detailed subject matter information. It is used to tell assignment editors the essentials of your event, for example the time, place and participants. The advisory should be followed up with a press release and phone call.

- List the event, its participants, the date and location. Be sure to include the name and phone number of a contact person for the press. Briefly spell out the purpose of the event. Are you releasing new research findings? Protesting government actions? Let broadcasters know if you'll have video or a live feed. It should be short.
- Write a strong headline and lead sentence that peak reporters' interest. Don't reveal the news you'll be releasing, but do provide a tantalizing glimpse that gives them reason to attend.
- Fax or e-mail your advisory to reporters who cover the issue, and to editors, news directors, bureau chiefs and TV/radio producers. Also send it to the daily calendars (daybooks) or wire services.
- Follow up with a phone call giving the essential details of your event—make sure your pitch is tight and persuasive. Leave a message if the journalist isn't there.

Writing and using a Press Release: Some Things You Should Know

In addition to the following suggestions, please be sure to check the sample press release provided below.

What is newsworthy?

- The announcement of the upcoming event.
- The announcement of an advisory committee planning the WOMENomics® forum.
- The announcement of who the WOMENomics® speakers will be.
- Information about the topics being discussed and why they are important to your community; is there something happening in your community that you can tie the forum to?

What will get a reporters attention?

- Make it unusual; such as pronouncing that it's the first forum of its kind in the community
- Emphasize how the issue affects people in your community
- Tie it to a theme or issue already in the news
- Try to find a human interest angle

What is a good format to follow?

- A press release should include all the facts necessary for reporters to file a story, so that reporters will rely on your release as they write their stories. Write in a fluent, newsy style that conveys authority.
- Your headline should grab reporters' attention, and your lead sentence should summarize what's most newsworthy or the news 'hook'.
- First paragraph should contain the five W's (who, what, when, where and why).
- Second paragraph should expand on the information provided in the lead paragraph.
- Third paragraph should include a quote from an organization representative.
- Final paragraph should include information about your organization.
- Print the news release on organizational letterhead. Include contact information and your website if you have one.
- Send to reporters who got the media advisory.
- Send out the press release on letterhead stationery of the sponsoring group.

Pitching Your Stories by Phone

- Follow up your press release with a phone call and "pitch". Be ready to resend the release, since the reporters often will say they haven't seen it.
- Make your calls in the morning. This gives you a better chance of talking to reporters instead of their machines. It's also when most editors and producers decide what to cover in their evening news or next-day's paper.
- Avoid sending advisories or releases starting on Thursday afternoon and Friday, and instead aim for Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday mornings.
- Use pitch calls to build relationships. Get to know the journalists who cover your field. Make a habit of calling them with your group's response to breaking news and with quotes for their stories. Suggest possible interviews with experts, as well as "ordinary" people who give a human face to complex issues. You can also suggest getting together to discuss additional story ideas and angles.

The Press Kit: Things to Include

At the event or meeting provide a reporter with a press kit. This allows you to give her/him information in addition to the details about the forum. Items you might include are:

- Press release on the event
- Fact sheet about the WOMENomics® Forum
- Fact sheet about BPW Foundation
- Fact sheet about your local organization
- Fact sheet on issues about workplace equity and work-life balance
- Biography on officer/s or speaker/s
- Business card with contact information including phone, address, e-mail and website

Taking Care of the Reporter

- When reporters come to your event welcome them and, if possible, have an escort who is knowledgeable and friendly.
- Introduce the reporter to the key participants and provide them with relevant materials.
- If an article appears about your event you may write the reporter a note thanking him/her for their interest and reminding them of other topic areas BPW can provide information about.

Op Eds and Letters to the Editor

Op-ed columns and letters to the editor give you the opportunity to communicate directly to the public including influential decision-makers, and shape or frame a debate in your own words.

Op-Ed Quick Tips

An op-ed is a column or guest essay published in the opinion section of a newspaper (“Opposite the Editorial” page). Most are between 500-750 words, and most outlets will take submissions by fax, e-mail or mail. Here are some of the criteria for the top 100 newspapers. But check your papers website or call to find out the specifics for that publication. After your WOMENomics Forum you could write an op-ed on findings, points of agreement, results and the like.

- Op-eds should be timely, lively and present strong arguments. They are looking for an unusual or provocative opinion on a current issue, or a call-to-arms on a neglected topic. Op-ed editors are not looking for event announcements, promotional materials or generic ideas.
- Determine your goal and audience. It could be summarizing your forum, starting a grassroots campaign, passing legislation, increasing funding, or educating the public on an issue.
- Figure out what you want to say and in your best “voice” be able to summarize your point in a single, clear sentence. For example, "By ratifying CEDAW, the U.S. can become a full partner in the effort to secure basic human rights of women and girls everywhere." Use your local president or a member expert to sign the column's byline.
- The first sentence should get the reader's attention.

BPW Foundation

www.bpwfoundation.org

3/2011

- Be timely. Link your op-ed to a holiday or anniversary, a newly-released report, or your forum.
- Be short and specific. Eliminate unnecessary words, repetitious or stray ideas. Have others read and critique it for you. Restate your key point or argument at the end.
- E-mail and/or fax are fastest methods. Include a short cover letter with your name and title, affiliation, address, e-mail, and day and evening phone numbers.
- Once it's been sent, don't call the newspaper or magazine repeatedly but do check to be sure they received it. Be ready to make updates and revisions just before publication.
- If your op-ed is rejected, don't be discouraged. Send your op-ed to another news outlet. Keep writing and submitting pieces. Often it is just a matter of your op-ed being at the right place at the right time.
- If your piece does get published, send copies to partners, supporters, funders, reporters, elected officials, colleagues and other allies. An op-ed can serve as a springboard to talk-show appearances, panel discussions and a host of other opportunities.

Letters to the Editor Quick Tips

Letters to the editor allow you to offer a short rebuttal, enhancement or missing perspective to an article or commentary in the paper. Most letters should be 150-250 words.

- Respond quickly to the article you've read (note the headline and date it ran).
- Make your points short and specific.
- Point out something they didn't cover and report on the importance of event or activity
- State important facts that back up your point.
- Identify the author and their affiliation. Include full contact information and day and evening phone numbers.
- Respond quickly. Send it by e-mail in the body of the text, not as an attachment. Check on the paper's website for specific submission rules.
- Many media outlets have online reader forums and interactive online discussions with reporters. Some news magazine shows encourage viewers to respond while a show is on air, and then read selected e-mails in real time. These e-mails should be short, clear and punchy—only a few sentences should be used.

Public Relations on the Internet and Social Media

- Use the Internet as an enhancement, not a replacement for personal contact. Even though you may e-mail your press release still follow-up with a phone call. Leave complete but concise messages on the reporter's voice mail.
- Do not send attachments by e-mail unless requested. Keep all information in the body of the e-mail.

- If sending the same press release to multiple recipients, be sure and put the addresses in a "Blind Copy" line.
- Utilize your website, blog or Facebook page to promote your events and post your press releases.
- Share information on local community listservs.

Press Materials

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

(Use your letterhead)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(DATE)

CONTACT: (BPW CONTACT)
(PHONE NUMBER)
E-MAIL ADDRESS

LOCAL WORKINGWOMEN DISCUSS WORKPLACE EQUITY AND THE WAGE GAP AT BPW WOMENomics® FORUM

- At the current rate of change, the wage gap will not be eliminated until 2039.
- Over the course of her career, the average woman loses \$250,000 to the wage gap.
- In 1998, top-earning female in line (profit and loss) positions earned \$60,000 less annually than males in top earning staff positions.

Participate in a forum dedicated to learning how to climb the corporate ladder through networking and mentoring as women who have been through it before tell their stories of how they were successful at “playing ball with the old boys club.” Also learn about how the gender wage gap affects you.

(Your town) residents interested in participating in this forum should contact (your contact).

(Name noted participants)

Sponsored by BPW/(name of Local Organization) as part of National Business Women’s Week™, the WOMENomics® Forum is a program of the BPW Foundation.

(Date, Time and place of event)

###

BPW Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) research and education organization. BPW Foundation empowers working women to achieve their full potential and partners with employers to build successful workplaces through education, research, knowledge and policy. Through its work, BPW Foundation supports workforce development programs and workplace policies that recognize the diverse needs of working women, communities and businesses.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

What:

- WOMENomics® forum hosted by (name of partners)
- Community leaders will discuss issues affecting workingwomen to gain a better understanding of what workingwomen need and want in the workplace.
- WOMENomics® is a grassroots initiative developed by the BPW Foundation to bring together local business, government, educational institutions and civil organizations in the community to identify, act on, and resolve the everyday issues challenging workingwomen.

Why:

- Women are a central force in our nation's economy and now make up half of the workforce.
- The economic and social health of communities increasingly depends upon identifying and addressing problems and obstacles facing workingwomen and their families.
- By bringing together the key players, WOMENomics® helps communities address these issues.

Who:

- Name dignitaries and participants.

When:

- Date and time information. Be sure to include particulars such as press conference at (time), luncheon at (time), and dignitaries available for interviews at (time).

Where:

- Include the address.

Contact:

- Name and phone number, daytime and evening. Website if there is information about the program listed.