

SECTION 7

COMMUNICATIONS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

PUBLIC RELATIONS

WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATIONS?

- Public Relations or PR deals with all “publics” including employees, consumers, board members, etc.
- All businesses have between three and twenty different “publics” to whom they send messages and build relationships
- Keep in mind that the media is simply *ONE* of these numerous types of publics

WHY IS PR IMPORTANT TO TRA?

- Strengthens reputation and brand recognition
- Improves community and government relations
- Facilitates employee and volunteer recruitment and retention
- Boosts profitability
- Increases earned media opportunities and exposure

HOW IS PR SIMILAR TO ADVERTISING?

- Both Reinforce Key Messages
- Both Brand Product/Service with an Organization
- Both are Consistent
- Both Create a Positive Image
- Both are Results Driven
- Both are Valuable

HOW IS PR DIFFERENT FROM ADVERTISING?

- Cost: PR is earned and advertising is purchased
- Reach: PR builds relationships and takes longer, while advertising influences choice immediately
- Value: PR has a longer lasting influence on direct markets while advertising is catchy and short lived
- Media: PR is earned recognition through mindful relationship building, while advertising is paid media

MEDIA RELATIONS

Daily interaction with your community, friends, colleagues, family and chapter members is the most effective and straight forward form of PR. The Media is only *one* of numerous different publics influenced through consistent and mindful relationship building. It is very important to remember that MASS MEDIA is not the most influential source of opinion. The public looks to trusted sources first and foremost before relying on the messages coming from the media. However, the media can and does reach a broad audience and often influences the choices and behaviors of the public.

WHEN IS MEDIA APPROPRIATE?

Use of media relations is appropriate when you have a story to tell. If you are hosting a

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community event, raising money for charity, working with your local school lunch program to develop menu ideas, etc. The media is interested in timely stories and real events. There has to be an angle, something that tells the journalist why they should be interested and why their readers and viewers would be interested as well.

HOW TO REACH THE MEDIA?

Press releases give the specifics of a story, beginning with the most important details and ending with the least important. Always include important information in the title for attention. Keeping a press release short and concise is essential.

Always give the Who, What, Where, When and Why of your news item. The reporter decides from the release whether or not the information is newsworthy and reporters receive hundreds or even thousands of press releases every day. It is crucial to keep written items short and to the point and make sure it is worthy of the reporters time and energy as well as appropriate to the media outlet. Reporters say press releases starting with the “why” first are often the most effective. The “why” is the story and tells the journalist why they should be interested in the event and write a story or send a reporter.

Writers, editors and newsroom managers change jobs frequently. It is always a good idea to call the local news outlets you plan to send releases or photo opportunity alerts to ensure you are sending the release to the appropriate person. Ask if the journalist prefers email, fax or mail so you know how to best deliver the information. Also, be sure to call the journalist you send the release and follow-up. Make sure they got your information and see if there are any questions and personally invite them to attend. The personal touch helps build that relationship and allows the journalist to know they can contact you for any future stories.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH REPORTERS, WRITERS & MEDIA OUTLETS

Establishing a positive, ongoing relationship with local reporters and editors is invaluable...

1. Know your media and be familiar with their work
2. Be mindful of deadlines
3. Establish yourself as a reliable resource
4. Limit mailings and phone calls.
5. Localize, localize, localize
6. Send only news, not fluff
7. Practice good, concise writing and avoid gimmicks
8. Avoid attachments when using email
9. Be available and return requests in a timely fashion
10. Be honest, never lie, it's okay not to know everything
11. Answer questions (I don't know now, but let me get back to you or I know but that information is not available for public release....)
12. Protect exclusive stories
13. Always correct errors promptly
14. Explain! Never assume the reporter knows what you mean
15. Avoid irritating, unnecessary phone calls
16. Remember, it is always “on the record”
17. Use non-technical, non-industry language to avoid confusion
18. Be patiently firm
19. Always ask for and write down reporters' specific questions to be answered, keep detailed notes
20. Don't volunteer information or guess on answers. Answer only questions asked.
21. Maintain professional composure if a reporter is being aggressive
22. Use approved statements, information & facts
23. Get correct spelling & affiliation of reporter
24. Use the association's name as much as possible to continue the message and validity

IF YOU ARE SENDING A PRESS RELEASE

It's best to assign someone in your chapter to write and disseminate news releases to your local media.

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Please send a copy of releases and chapter news items to the TRA Communications Director, Wendy Saari, when faxing, emailing or mailing releases to the press. It is important TRA is informed of what your chapter is doing and we can include the news and information in publications as seen appropriate.

Sample Press Release:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (bold caps)

Date: MM, DD, YY

Contact: Name, Phone #, Email Address

Headline

(CITY, STATE), The (Chapter name) of the Texas Restaurant Association will hold its annual "Taste" on (date, time and place), featuring an array of food and drink samples from more than (#) local restaurants.

(follow with lead sentence)

This year's theme will be ("The Fabulous 50s") and entertainment will be provided by (band, performers, etc.).

"The Taste is a worthwhile event for the community," says (Name, president of Local Chapter and owner/operator of restaurant). "Not only does it give citizens of our community an opportunity to sample cuisine from our best restaurants, it also helps support (name charities). Last year we donated (\$ to charity) and this year we hope to raise a lot more."

This year's proceeds will benefit the (name charity or foundation). For details on the event or information on how to get involved, please call (phone #).

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(This symbol signifies the end of the press release)

INVITE PRESS TO CHAPTER EVENTS

Having the local press attend your chapter events can increase attendance and your chapter's profile in the community. What attracts the press are *statistics, interesting personalities,*

local business concerns, legislative concerns, etc. If you are having a well-known speaker or will be addressing a local issue, that's the hook that could get a reporter interested in your event.

- Play up the most important aspect of your event in your news release
- Always end a release with the event place, time and any details.
- Press is always allowed to attend events free of charge since they may give the chapter and/or speaker free publicity
- Email or fax the event release two weeks in advance to local media.
- Email a Media Alert (Who, What, When, Where) a day or two prior to the event, particularly with broadcast television stations, they assign reporters the day of, so keep reminding them of the event
- Follow-up with a phone call the day prior to the event to extend a personal invitation.

If a reporter, photographer or television camera crew arrives, make sure they are greeted promptly and given free access to the meeting room to set up their equipment. Introduce them to your speaker or chapter officers and make them available to the media for quotes before or after the event. Make sure you leave your name and number with the press so they may contact you later if they have questions.

Please contact TRA if you have any problems or questions about dealing with the press and let us know about the coverage you are getting.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Another way to get your issue before the public is by writing a letter to the editor. Letters to the editor are structured much like letters to officials, but their purpose is different. They aim to build awareness and gain the support of the general public for a particular issue.

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Letters to the editor should address a specific issue while it's hot. The more timely and newsworthy they are, the more likely they are to be published.

Pay attention to what's going on locally and in the state. Is an ordinance on the agenda at the next city council meeting? Is your state legislature undertaking a study of a controversial issue? Is Congress due to vote on a tax hike? In writing the editor, keep in mind that you must have a balanced discussion while promoting the association's cause.

Date: DD, MM, YY

Dear Editor:

As the owner of a small chain of restaurants in the Houston area I would like to take exception to a statement made in the (**date**) issue of your newspaper in an article entitled (**headline**).

The article states that (**regulation or legislation in question**) is beneficial to the economy because (**reason**). However, if that (**issue, legislation, regulation**) is passed, it will put my restaurant out of business and our employees will be out of jobs. The reasons are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

It is detrimental to the city's economy because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

(**Conclude with a strong statement, for or against**): The future of our city's economy depends on (....).

PUBLICIZING EVENTS

While PR is a day-to-day endeavor, you will particularly want to publicize an event. Following are some guidelines for publicizing a special event.

Media Sponsor

Joining forces with a media sponsor is an essential way of publicizing an event free of charge. Negotiate a trade of advertising spots on radio and TV in exchange for a dinner gift certificates, etc. Negotiate TV production of public service announcements that also can run on other stations. The media will be most interested in sponsoring events raising money for local charities and those that have wide public community appeal.

Press Conference

Consider organizing a press conference for public awareness. You could hold one before the event and one as a follow-up on the results of the event. A press conference should be created and staged in a high profile location ideal for press/TV/photo opportunities.

Press Releases

Press releases should be written in a timely manner to attain as much publicity as possible. Please, always send the release to the TRA Communications Director as well as the media.

Setting up Interviews

Each chapter must select a spokesperson or committee to interface with the media. These people should be available for radio, television and/or newspaper interviews and be comfortable talking to the press on subjects pertaining to your chapter. Set up photo opportunities for the press, always taking video into consideration. Please remember to mention your association as much as possible during any interview.

Public Service Announcements

Publicity can also be attained through a joint effort with a charity. Use the charity's letterhead for PSA's. For TV production remember to use members at the location, using props and costumes relating to the event.

CHAPTER NEWSLETTERS

One of the best ways to keep membership informed about your chapter is to produce a newsletter. By doing so, you can communicate not only where the next meeting is, but also what other chapter activities are coming up, who's joining, who's leaving, what's on the agenda, etc. *If your chapter publishes a*

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newsletter, please include TRA on the mailing list.

How often to publish

It might be a good idea to start four times a year and move toward publishing more often if necessary.

Creating a deadline schedule

The most time-consuming part of creating a newsletter is assembling the text and copy. The layout and printing of a newsletter can be done relatively quickly.

Information to include

Following are some suggestions.

- Include dates and information on upcoming events. (Make sure you give yourself enough time to layout, print and mail the newsletter so the dates have not passed by the time your readers see it.)
- Re-cap the last event(s) to generate future event attendance and interest.
- Include regular columns, which can be written by the chapter president, president-elect or newsletter editor to communicate chapter goals, and name the columns (examples: "Spotlight" for member news, "At the Capitol" for legislative news).
- Highlight awards received by local members.
- Announce new restaurants opened by members.
- Interview new members.
- Feature innovative products offered by associate members.
- Provide a summary of the state board of directors meeting.
- Communicate the results of special events in which the chapter participates.

Proofing the newsletter

Articles should be kept short and to the point. Proofread each issue for grammar, spelling and correct information for meetings, etc.

Production

- Number of pages: Your newsletter can be one page, front and back, or in any multiple of two. Multiples of four works best as you

won't have a loose page floating in the middle of the newsletter.

- Design: Hiring a graphic designer on a one-time basis to design your template would be ideal, or you may be able to have a college/high school graphic design student work on the design as a school project.

Make sure your graphic designer creates the newsletter template in a compatible format so you can use it on your computer (PC or MAC)

Layout

If someone in your chapter is familiar with desktop publishing and has access to a computer with desktop publishing software, then you have an advantage. TRA has provided a newsletter template that chapters can easily use to produce their newsletter.

Printing and Mailing

- Use white or light-colored paper to print your newsletter, preferably a 60 lb. or 70 lb. stock. The lighter the paper weight, the easier it is to fold.
- There are several options available for printing your newsletter:
 - using a traditional printer.
 - going to a copy center for clean-looking copies.
 - copying it yourself.
- Mail in an envelope or make into a self-mailer, which saves the cost of the envelope. A self-mailer is a folded piece that has one panel with return address information, room for an address label, and, if applicable, postal information required (i.e., bulk rate indicia).

If you have a large chapter, you may want to invest in a bulk mailing permit through your post office.

TRA can assist you with mailing labels for your chapter. Advance notice for these labels is of utmost importance. Consider occasionally sending non-members your newsletter to boost membership. Call TRA's product and services department for a mailing list to incorporate with your own prospective member mailing list.

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Soliciting Advertising for Newsletters

Selling advertising space in a newsletter can produce revenue. However, the decision to sell space involves careful evaluation. Some advantages and disadvantages include:

- Advantages
 - Revenue
 - Increased perceived value of membership to associate members
 - Forum for equipment exchange
 - Advertisement of management employment opportunities
- Disadvantages
 - Assigning someone to sell ads
 - Paperwork, contractual agreements
 - Accounting
 - Labor costs
 - Competition with other TRA publications
 - Additional tax forms to complete at year-end
- Other things to consider
 - If selling, consider a standard advertising contract to prevent miscommunication.
 - Getting a company, such as an associate member, to sponsor your entire newsletter may be the easiest route.
 - Classified advertising is an easy way for members to buy/sell used equipment, advertise management positions or even advertise services. Charge by the word or by the line and have the advertiser pay up front.
 - If you decide to accept ads, are you going to recruit advertising or just accommodate whoever expresses an interest in advertising?
 - Advertising probably will not make the newsletter a profit maker but can help offset production cost.
 - If you do advertise, try to have the client provide camera-ready artwork.

TRA WEBSITE— RESTAURANTVILLE.COM

www.restaurantville.com is the Texas Restaurant Association web site designed to address the comprehensive needs of restaurant and foodservice professionals. TRA has invested significant resources toward the creation and maintenance of this web site. **Restaurantville.com** provides content for a broad audience, attracting new customers and members to TRA and serves as a key communications element, supporting the mission of the Association.

Listed here are just a few of the features designed to support TRA Chapters:

- Industry Events Calendar – submit details of your event online
- Chapter Officers Directory – contact info of each president
- Chapter Management – a handy stash of downloadable forms & resources for your chapter