

# A PRIMER ON COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## How to Place PSAs With Local Media

By Bill Goodwill

### Background

First, it is important for anyone trying to bring about change in their local communities to recognize that is where real change takes place - in ***your community***, not in Washington D.C., New York, London or anywhere else. If you are working in public affairs at the local level, you are the ambassadors of social change in the places where you work and live. It is also important to understand that the media you will be contacting care most about what goes on in their communities as well, because that is where the people they serve are located.



This brief overview of community outreach is designed to share successful tactics that will help you spread the word on the good deeds of your non-profit, recognizing that the media can be your “silent salesman” in your community. When you reach out to the media and they use your materials, you are leveraging all the good work of the national office, and ensuring that the people in your community know about your work.

### The Local Media Landscape

There are various types of media in your community that can use your materials aimed at the broadcast and cable TV, radio, print, and outdoor media. Your first step in media outreach starts with developing a plan. Here are the things you should consider:

- How can I find lists of local contacts?
- Whom do I contact?
- How do I make the approach?
- When do I make the approach?
- What do I present?
- What do I do after I leave?

### Local Contact Lists

Most PSA distributors can either provide hard copy lists of local media contacts by media type, or they will post them to a client reporting portal.

If you do not have a PSA distributor, the best source is Cision, with a media database of 1.6 million records. You can learn more at:  
<http://www.cision.com/us/pr-software/media-database/>.

At our firm, we typically post local media lists to our client reporting portals and there you can see:

- Media outlets to which your PSAs were distributed by media type, or by local chapter, office, affiliate, etc.
- The media outlets that most frequently use PSAs, so you can use that information to develop a priority outreach plan.
- The lists will include complete contact information, including the name of the person to contact, the address of the media outlet, phone number and whether they used your PSAs previously or not.

### **Whom do I contact?**

There is no single individual or department that controls PSA access for different types of media. The decision-making process differs by media type, from one market to another, and by the size of the media outlet.

- At larger broadcast (TV and radio) stations, the person to contact is the **Community Affairs, Public Affairs or Public Service Director**. At smaller broadcast outlets, the title will most likely be **Program Director** or perhaps even **General Manager** for smaller outlets.
- At print outlets you would normally try to contact the **Advertising Director, Production Manager** or perhaps **General Manager** at a smaller newspaper.
- For outdoor companies typically the contact is the **Posting Supervisor** or **General Manager**.

### **When Do I Make the Approach?**

There are certain events during the year that give the media additional reasons to support your cause and if you contact them during these special months, it may result in additional exposure. For a list of special events by month, go to:  
<https://rowman.com/page/ChasesNEW>.

## How Do I Make the Approach?

First, do not be nervous because you are meeting with media executives. Their job is to serve the local community interests, so you just have to tap into their delivery system. However, the most important thing when meeting with the media, is ***Be Prepared***. For example:

### Prior to the Meeting

- Study Their Content. Learn as much as you can about the media organization i.e. program format of radio, coverage area, the kinds of stories they air or print, personalities, etc. and how your issue and their media outlet can mutually benefit from a partnership.
- Develop your "pitch" letter or email with the following points:
  - Here's the problem in our community.
  - This is why we think you should address the problem.
  - Here's how we can help.
  - Here is how I can be contacted.

### At the Meeting

- Depending on your level of comfort, you can present your case to them in different ways, but try to keep it simple. Just present the facts on why your issue is important to ***their*** audience, not your national office. Keep thinking about what is important to ***them***, because that is what will make them want to help. As long as you think about ***their*** needs first, then it is a win-win proposition. .
- For TV, you should be able to show samples of your PSAs via a laptop or tablet, because that permits them to see the quality of your PSAs and if they are appropriate for the station's audience. If that is not possible, then take a storyboard, pamphlets and facts on your issue to be used as leave behinds. If you present the materials in hard copy form, just briefly cover the facts in each piece and let them read them when they have time.
- ***No matter what you present, be very respectful of their time.*** Media people are busy and you have to be able to deliver what many people describe as the "elevator speech," meaning rehearse what you need them to know in a few minutes. If they have more time to chat, fine, but if not, you need to get the important facts to them as to why they should use your materials in a very brief time.

- Be Compelling - Facts alone can be impersonal. Personal stories about how your programs affect people in the local community can be a powerful argument and demonstrate local relevance.
- Engage the Media Outlet. Share materials that will be mailed to people going to your website with your media contact and find out if the media would like to co-brand your materials (adding their name to them). If they ask to see your 501(c) non-profit certificate, you may want to get a copy of that from your national office.

Tagging or co-branding your PSA by putting their name on the materials provides an extra incentive for them to help because it promotes them too. Here is what a TV PSA that has been tagged looks like, and your national office should be able to help you provide locally tagged PSAs.



For Radio, you should:

- Bring your laptop or a portable CD player so the public service director can listen to your PSAs
- Have live announcer scripts for use in live voice over broadcasts, since the station may not use pre-recorded materials.
- If the station serves minority populations, ensure that there are radio versions which reflect the cultural nuances of the audience.

For print media, you should have “hi res” (high resolution) .pdf files in various sizes as well as color and black & white PSAs which are printed out on good quality stock and the leave behind that the media will use should be on a DVD which clearly indicates newspaper and magazine PSAs. For outdoor media, also provide hard copy print outs of various size posters and a DVD with hi-res .PDF files.

In terms of tracking usage, your national office should be able to track usage of your PSAs using various monitoring services and share that data with you. However, there are no tracking services which universally monitor radio and local cable TV.

For these outlets, you should provide the media a brief survey card they can use to record PSA usage that looks like this. It has check-off boxes where the media enters the frequency and duration of use as well as the spot lengths used. On the reverse, it should have a postage-paid indicia and the address of the distributor or national office.

Dear Valued Service Director:  
 Please take a moment to complete the following information. It will help us determine the kind of radio PSA material you want to receive in the future. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Would you like to download digital files from a site?  Yes  No  
 Have digital files emailed to you?  Yes  No  
 Email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 File format is MP3 or 3 – If you cannot use MP3 or 3 files, what format do you need? \_\_\_\_\_

TRF:	# Times Per Week Aired	# Weeks Aired
"America for Veterans" :30	5-3 4-4 7-4 10-12 13+	5-3 4-4 7-4 10-12 13+
"Wacky, Sam, and CoCo" :30	5-3 4-4 7-4 10-12 13+	5-3 4-4 7-4 10-12 13+
"Jim, Julia, and CoCo" :30	5-3 4-4 7-4 10-12 13+	5-3 4-4 7-4 10-12 13+

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Call Letters: \_\_\_\_\_ AM \_\_\_\_\_ FM  
 Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Listeners: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

● **What do I do after I leave?**

- Remember to say "Thank You" and monitor the results of your visit.
- Write thank you letters or notes to all media outlets that took the time to see you.
- Check usage reports provided by your national office, and if you do not see any record of usage from the media you visited, place a follow-up call to see if there is anything else you can provide.
- For the media that are using your materials, contact your national office to see if they have a certificate of appreciation that you can mail or take to the media outlet.



Follow these tips and tactics when making local media contacts and you will greatly increase your chance of getting your PSAs used.

**Resources**

Here are some resources for you to check out prior to visiting with the media:

- Frequently Asked Questions about PSAs  
[www.psaresearch.com/faq.html](http://www.psaresearch.com/faq.html)
- Glossary of Media Terms  
 TV: <http://www.psaresearch.com/glossarytv.html>  
 Radio: <http://www.psaresearch.com/glossaryr.html>  
 Print: <http://www.psaresearch.com/glossaryp.html>  
 Outdoor: <http://www.psaresearch.com/glossaryo.html>

*About the author: Bill Goodwill is CEO of Goodwill Communications, a firm specializing in PSA distribution and evaluation. He has nearly 40 years of implementing local campaigns for non-profit organizations and federal agencies.*