



COLUMBUS PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDE

DEVELOPED BY THE PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF AT EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS

This guide will help you gain more exposure and generate more interest for your meetings, conventions and events in Columbus' news outlets.

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STRATEGY TIPS

Here are 10 public relations strategies that can complement your marketing efforts.

- 1. Create a Top 10 List** — Brainstorm with your staff and the public relations staff at Experience Columbus to identify what is new or different about your meeting. Are you working with a local charity? Introducing new technology? Highlighting a major public speaker? What will your move-in look like? What are the interesting, newsworthy photo opportunities? Whatever your top 10 may be, make sure items have mass appeal so local consumer media, including television, radio, online and print outlets will be interested. There is a story to be told in every meeting.
- 2. Target Your Stories** — Experience Columbus maintains local media lists for your use. As soon as your convention is booked, request lists and add the appropriate contacts to your database. Target stories to specific departments, (e.g. health, science, education or business media) for more effective results.
- 3. Look for Trends** — Is there a trend in your industry that might make a great story? Often, reporters, especially at major daily newspapers, need to see a trend in order to cover an industry convention. Know what the trends are in your industry and you could become a part of a major feature story.
- 4. Make a Strong Connection to the City** — Find a local angle and incorporate this into pitches to the media. Promote your attendance and economic impact projections with Experience Columbus, so Columbus organizations and businesses will see the importance of your convention and help support your efforts. Work with a local charity by donating all extra show food and beverages to a food bank, or promote your efforts with a community program.
- 5. Tell the City's Story** — From the day your attendees learn about the convention program, educate them about the host city. Experience Columbus offers free feature stories about the city and photos that can paint a picture of the destination, keeping your attendees interested and informed and attendance up. If you have an industry publication, you might want to do a feature on Columbus in the publication one month prior so attendees can start planning their visits.
- 6. Staff a Press Room** — If you plan to have media come through your show or your meetings, plan on staffing a pressroom. This room should include up-to-date press releases, photographs, resources, computers with Internet access and at least one phone line staffed to answer media inquiries during show hours. A pressroom also serves as a meeting place for interviews with speakers and executives and a checkpoint for escorting media onto the show floor.
- 7. Promote Only if Prepared** — Plan for media being in attendance at the events that you promote. Get consent from all speakers prior to inviting media and have specific materials prepared, including the agenda, speakers' bios and a schedule of events. Send a media alert out via a newswire service one week prior with convention highlights. Re-release this information on a daily basis and make lots of targeted follow-up pitch calls.

STRATEGY TIPS

8. Be Accessible — List a specific room where your event is taking place. Media who cannot find an event cannot cover an event and sometimes cannot wait until a public relations representative is found on the show floor. If you release information through a press release, be accessible and list phone numbers where interested media can reach you at all times.

9. Keep it Simple — You may know what certain industry terms mean, but that doesn't mean that the media and public do. Media will be more apt to cover your events if news items have mass appeal and can be understood by people outside the industry. Make the connection between your industry news and public interest.

10. Timing is Everything — The key to promoting a convention or tradeshow is an early start. If you are trying to increase attendance, do not rely on the local media. Your best bet for driving attendance is to focus pre-convention efforts on trade magazines and newsletters in your industry, which are more likely to give upcoming conventions and tradeshow substantial coverage. Local media almost always focus on a meeting only after it arrives. Keep current events in mind when pitching stories. Last-minute pitches related to current news items often generate great coverage.

With your strategy now in place, it is time to develop the tools necessary to gain media coverage for your meetings, conventions and events in Columbus.

PRESS RELEASES

A press release is written and distributed to get your message in front of a large public audience through media outlets. A press release should include newsworthy and important information in an organized and concise manner. For examples, visit:
www.experiencecolumbus.com/media-press-releases.cfm

Press Release Elements:

- Issue the release on company letterhead. It looks professional and credible.
- Include a short, descriptive headline to grab the reader's attention.
- Include where the press release was written and date released.
- Put the most important information at the beginning. Provide answers to who, what, where, when, why and how in the first paragraph.
- The remaining body of the release should include further details, background information, quotes and additional relevant information.
- Use a quote by a company representative. This adds credibility to your release.
- Include a contact for members of the media to reach for additional information, or to set up an interview. This person should be familiar with all of the information in the release and be able to answer questions.
- Include a boilerplate. (Information about your company or organization.)
- Center three pound signs (###) or the number thirty (-30-) at the bottom of the page to indicate the end of your release.

***Be sure the release is proofread twice, preferably by two or more people, before sending it out!**

MEDIA ALERTS

If you are interested in having media cover a specific event during your meeting or show, including a press conference, you should send out a media alert. The alert should provide key information about the event and entice media to attend and cover the event.

Media Alert Elements:

- Issue the media alert on company letterhead. It looks professional and credible.
- If there is a photo opportunity, state it at the top of the alert; it is more likely to generate coverage.
- Include media contact information for press seeking additional information.
- Use a short, active and descriptive headline to entice the reader.
- Use a block format for media alerts, so the news desk or reporter can quickly and easily find the specific information they need. Describe what the media will see and hear, where and when it will take place and background details.
- Include a boilerplate. (Information about your company or organization.)

MEDIA LISTS

Now that you have your press release and media alert ready for distribution, it is time to build your media list. A media list includes key contacts who may cover your story, or who would benefit from receiving your press release or media alert.

Effective media list tips:

- 1. Platform and Format** — When laying out your media list, use whatever format is most helpful to you – an electronic database, collection of business cards or a spreadsheet chart. There are also companies that can create media lists for you, primarily if you plan to send out releases nationwide. Next to each medium, note the contact name, phone number(s), fax number, e-mail address and website.
- 2. Other Things to Include** — Also note how each wants to receive information – some prefer fax or e-mail, while others prefer phone calls. Find out when their “crunch” periods are. This is the time just before a deadline when calling would really put you on their black list. This shows you are considerate and interested in making their job easier.
- 3. Keep Good Records** — Also, keep a running log of phone calls and conversations with each publication. It is important to know the media outlets audience and editorial focus before pitching items.
- 4. Be Informed** — If possible, read, watch or listen online to the media outlets you plan to pitch before pitching them!

TIPS FOR PITCHING THE MEDIA

With your information ready to go and your media list developed, you are now ready to begin pitching your meetings, conventions and events to the media. Here's some helpful tips on how and when to outreach to certain Columbus media as well as a list of media including their website's where you can find ways to submit news online.

DAILY NEWSPAPERS

At *The Columbus Dispatch*, coverage of your meetings may be assigned to any one of the paper's many reporters or editors. Unless you have a working relationship with a specific reporter or editor, advances and news releases should be directed to the City Editor. They will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

Deadlines should be kept in mind, both for news releases and scheduled events. In some cases, you may wish to provide the newspaper with an advance release on such developments as awards or speeches that take place on or near the deadline.

You cannot deliver a news release five minutes prior to deadline and expect to see it in the next edition. You'll have a better chance of obtaining coverage if you send your news release to the newspaper early.

Although *The Daily Reporter* concentrates on business and legal news, there is often interest in stories of broader interest. Many of the same criteria listed for *The Dispatch* apply to *The Daily Reporter*.

The Columbus Dispatch

34 S. Third St., Columbus, OH 43215
614-461-5000, www.dispatch.com

The Daily Reporter

580 S. High St., Columbus, OH 43215
614-228-6397, www.sourcenews.com

COMMUNITY NEWS

The key to story placement in a weekly or community newspaper is that it must have local application. Community newspapers do not normally send reporters to cover conventions or statewide meetings. However, the publications are receptive to stories about people in their circulation areas or events that affect these locales. (Stories on individuals should carry a street address.)

More than one weekly or community newspaper may serve a specific area. Usually, news releases must be sent to each newspaper, but sometimes one release to the parent company will cover all editions. In our summary of community newspapers, we have listed multiple editions published by a company.

Deadline for all: noon Fridays prior to Wednesday publications.

Suburban News Publications

5257 Sinclair Rd., Columbus, OH 43229
614-785-1199, www.snponline.com

CNS/ThisWeek

670 Lakeview Plaza Blvd., Ste. F, Worthington, OH 43085
614-841-1781, www.thisweeknews.com

MONTHLY PUBLICATIONS

614 Magazine (Arts, Entertainment)
 P.O. Box 163096, Columbus, OH 43216
 614-488-4400, www.614columbus.com

CityScene Magazine
 4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
 614-572-1240, www.columbuscityscene.org

Columbus Monthly (magazine)
 5255 Sinclair Rd., P.O. Box 29913, Columbus, OH 43229
 614-888-4567, www.columbusmonthly.com

DublinLife Magazine
 4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
 614-572-1240, www.dublinlifemagazine.com

Upper Arlington Magazine
 4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
 614-572-1240, www.upperarlingtonmagazine.com

Westerville Magazine
 4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
 614-572-1240, www.westervillemagazine.com

Outlook Columbus (LGBT)
 815 North High St., Columbus, OH 43215
 614-268-8525, www.outlookcolumbus.com

WEEKLY PUBLICATIONS

Columbus CEO
 5255 Sinclair Rd., Columbus, OH 43229
 614-540-8900, www.columbusceo.com

SBN Columbus
 300B E. Main St., Ste. 254,
 Columbus, OH 43209
 614-237-4469, www.sbnonline.com

Business First of Columbus, Inc.
 303 W. Nationwide Blvd., Columbus, OH 43215
 614-461-4040, www.columbusbizjournals.com

The Other Paper (Alternative)
 5255 Sinclair Rd., P.O. Box 29913,
 Columbus, OH 43229
 614-847-3800, www.theotherpaper.com

WEEKLY PUBLICATIONS, CONT.

Columbus Alive (Arts, Entertainment)
 1079 N. High St., Columbus, OH 43201
 614-221-2449, www.columbusalive.com

**The Minority Communicator/
 The Minority Communicator Times**
 76 Parsons Ave., Columbus, OH 43215
 614-621-8740

Ohio Jewish Chronicle/Senior Times
 2862 Johnstown Rd., Columbus, OH 43219
 614-337-2055, www.ohiojewishchronicle.com

Call & Post (African American)
 750 E. Long St., Ste. 3000, Columbus, OH 43203
 614-224-8123, www.callandpost.com

The Catholic Times
 197 E. Gay St., First Floor, Columbus, OH 43215
 614-224-5195, www.ctonline.org

Columbus Messenger Newspapers
 3500 Sullivant Ave. Columbus, OH 43204
 614-272-5422, www.columbusmessenger.com

The Columbus Post (African American)
 172 E. State St., Ste. 203, Columbus, OH 43215
 614-224-6723, www.columbuspost.com

OTHER

The Lantern
 (The Ohio State University student newspaper)
Publishes Daily
 242 W. 18th Ave., Rm. 271, Columbus, OH 43210
 614-292-5721, www.thelantern.com

Metromix Columbus
 (Lifestyle/Entertainment website)
 614-944-5720, www.columbus.metromix.com

TELEVISION STATIONS

Columbus commercial television stations are WBNS (Channel 10, CBS), WSYX (Channel 6, ABC), WCMH (Channel 4, NBC) and WTTE (Channel 28, FOX). WOSU is a Public Broadcasting System station. The four commercial stations have live broadcast capability for local breaking news such as accidents, disasters or crime.

News conferences or interview sessions should be scheduled for the convenience of news media. For example, a 2 p.m. news conference is more likely to receive same-day coverage than one at 4:30 p.m., because reporters need time to write stories and assist in editing tapes. Certain hours of the day are traditionally favored for news conferences. These include 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Making the event “photogenic” can increase the possibility of coverage. While statistics are not television favorites, the interview can be enhanced with charts or graphics. All graphics illustrating the topic should be in color.

A news crew needs more than just an individual for an interview. It needs visuals for what is known as a cutaway, or film shown while the audio portion of the interview continues.

ONN, Ohio News Network

175 S. Third St., Columbus, OH 43215
614-280-3600, www.onnnews.com

WBNS-TV 10 (CBS Affiliate)

770 Twin Rivers Drive, P.O. Box 1010,
Columbus, OH 43216
614-460-3758, www.10tv.com

WCMH NBC 4 (NBC Affiliate)

3165 Olentangy River Rd., P.O. Box 4,
Columbus, OH 43202
614-263-5555, www.nbc4i.com

WOSU-TV 34 (PBS Station)

2400 Olentangy River Rd.,
Columbus, OH 42310-1027
614-292-9678, www.wosu.org

WSYX-ABC 6 (ABC Affiliate)

1261 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-481-6667, www.abc6onyourside.com

WTTE-FOX 28 (Fox Affiliate)

1261 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-481-6659, www.myfox28columbus.com

RADIO

News operations for Columbus radio stations range from headline services to all news and talk programming. In many cases, a company operates both an AM and FM station with one news department serving both. Normally, the AM station operates the news department. Most stations concentrate their longer newscasts to the morning and afternoon drive times.

Since radio news is the most immediate of all media, including the name and telephone number of a contact person on a press release is essential. The station may want a taped interview on the telephone and the reporters need instant communication. For that reason, the contact person should be near a telephone after a release is delivered. Most stations prefer electronic news releases. However, in the event of a last minute news conference or important news development, the assignment editor in the news department can be called.

RADIO, CONT.

The station's format should be considered when targeting news releases. For example, WBNS is a sports-oriented station and interested in events relating to athletics. WCVO is religion-based, although it carries general news as well.

Often the assignment editor will not have sufficient personnel to cover your event. You may be asked to have the person of interest call the station for a taped telephone interview. A press release of what was said during the event should be delivered immediately following its conclusion.

WBNS 1460 AM / WBNS 97.1 FM (Sports)
605 S. Front St., Ste. 300, Columbus, OH 43215
614-460-3850, www.1460thefan.com

WCBE 90.5 FM (NPR News, Alternative)
540 Jack Gibbs Blvd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-365-5555, www.wcbe.org

**WCKX 107.5 FM / WXMG 98.9 FM /
WJYD 106.3 FM** (Urban Contemporary)
1500 W. Third Ave., Ste. 300, Columbus, OH 43212
614-487-1444, www.power1075.com /
www.magic989.com / www.joy106.com

WCVO 104.9 FM (Christian)
881 E. Johnstown Rd., Gahanna, OH 43230
614-855-9171, www.1049theriver.com

WHOK 95.5 FM (Country)
2 Nationwide Plaza, 10th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215
614-229-3819, www.whok.com

WJZA 103.5 FM (Smooth Jazz)
655 Metro Place S., Ste. 100, Dublin, OH 43017
614-889-1043, www.wjza.com

WLVQ 96.3 FM (Classic Rock)
2 Nationwide Plaza, 10th floor, Columbus, OH 43215
614-227-9696, www.qfm96.com

WMNI 920 AM / WBZX 99.7 FM / WEGE 103.9 FM
(Adult Standards / Rock / Classic Rock)
1458 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-232-0289, www.wmni.com / www.wbzx.com /
www.eagle1039.com

WODB FM OLDIES 104.3 (Oldies)
4401 Carriage Hill Ln., Columbus, OH 43230
614-573-8400 x204, www.b1079.com

WOSU 820 AM / 89.7 FM
(NPR and Local News / Classical)
2400 Olentangy River Rd., Columbus, OH 43210
614-292-9678, www.wosu.org

WRFD 880 AM (Christian Talk)
8101 N. High St., Ste. 360, Columbus, OH 43235
614-848-3108, www.wrfd.com

**WTVN 610 AM / WZNW 1230 AM /
WNCI 97.9 FM / WCOL 92.3 FM /
WFJX 105.7 FM** (News, Talk and Sports /
Fox Sports / Adult Contemporary /
Country / 80's Rock)
1301 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-487-2480, www.610wtn.com /
www.progressive1230.com / www.wnci.com/
[www.wcol.com /](http://www.wcol.com/) www.1057thefox.com

WSNY 94.7 FM (Adult Contemporary)
4401 Carriage Hill Ln., Columbus, OH 43220
614-451-2191, www.sunny95.com

WWCD 101.1 FM (Alternative Rock)
503 S. Front St., Columbus, OH 43215
614-221-9923, www.cd101.com