

Engaging Local Media in Your Mission

Overview

Broadcast media is an important channel to incorporate into your walk marketing strategy. While social media is an integral driving force for how the world consumes news information, local news stations are still an effective avenue for reaching thousands of people at the same time with information about your walk event. This document is designed to be an outline and idea generator for engaging new media relationships with your organization.

Find Common Ground

When starting to look for potential media relationships, a great place to begin is reviewing the stations' websites. More often than not, there is a bio section on each of the public facing team members, which includes their history with the station, professional background and personal interests. It is here you can likely find common ground with a media personality that likes to "give back" has an interest in "local nonprofits" or supports "humanitarian efforts in the local community." When you can find common ground, it becomes an opportunity to open the door for more conversations.

When you find an anchor/reporter with a shared interest, reach out to them via email or leave them a message on their station voicemail. Acknowledge you are aware of their interest in "XYZ" and share with them briefly how your organization aligns with their interest. Then ask if they would be willing to meet with you for "coffee, lunch, etc." to talk more about your organization's work and potential opportunities for them to become more involved.



Photo courtesy of WTTE FOX 28 Twitter

The First Meeting

Once you have secured a meeting with a media personality new to your organization, we recommend putting together a packet of information for them on your organization and signature community events where there is opportunity for them to provide support. The packet can include documents like your organization brochure, annual report, a flyer on your walk event, testimonials from those your organization has served, etc.

One tip to remember is this first meeting is an introductory meeting to your organization. An easy misstep to make is going into the conversation with expectations for how you want this media personality to support your mission. Instead, treat this meeting like you would when you meet with a potential donor. Go in with the goal of them walking away with a better understanding of what your organization does and the options available for how they can support your efforts.

It's also important to keep in mind shared value. By this, we mean presenting them with opportunities that also help them. For example, media personalities look for opportunities where they can be in the public eye to further their roots within the community. Event emcee positions are usually a great fit for

anchors/reporters, because it gives them public exposure and ties their “personal brand” to a worthy cause doing good work in the community.

Steward the Relationship

Ongoing communication is key to developing media relationships and keeping your media contacts engaged in what you do. Be mindful of the number of asks that you have for your media relationships. Be sure you are sending them “non-ask” communications in addition to the opportunities to support you. For example, if you have a hard copy newsletter, mail one to their news address. As you thank donors for their support or send them a holiday card, drop one in the mail to your media contact. When you add a new testimonial to the website, share it with your media contact so they feel a part of the work that you do. It’s important they continue to feel appreciated, just like all of your regular supporters.

Recognition

If you do have a media personality agree to emcee an event, include them in your pre/post event promotion communications (social media posts tagging them, recognition on website event information, etc.) and any day-of event materials (brochure, flyers, etc.). Also, don’t be afraid to ask them to promote the event as well. More often than not, your media contact will happily oblige.

What is a News Release?

A news or press release is a document that can be faxed or emailed to a news outlet to make them aware of a certain event (like your Down syndrome walk) or other announcement on behalf of your organization. News releases traditionally are formed for the media to pull information from to write a story. For walk events, we recommend sending a news release to your local media outlets 2-3 months out from your event to help alert the community to your event.

What is a Media Alert?

A media alert is structured just like a news release, but it serves as an invitation for the media outlet to cover the event in person. The document should list all of the location information and the time of the event for the media outlets to place on their planning calendar. Traditionally, with a walk event, media alerts are sent a couple of days before the event. It also doesn’t hurt to call the newsroom directly as a follow up to confirm they received the news release and ask if it is on their calendar to attend.