

The Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee

Public Relations and Media Handbook



Elks Care - *Elks* Share

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The Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee wishes to dedicate this handbook to one of its own, Past Grand Est. Leading Kt. William Hansch. During his tenure as a member and chairman of the GL Public Relations Committee, Hansch distinguished himself as the moving spirit behind the Elks' modern public and media relations efforts. His dedication, creativity, and deep love of the Order have served both as model and an endless source of inspiration for this committee. It is our hope that, in some small way, this handbook will serve as tribute to him.

Public and Media Relations

Implementing successful public and media relations initiatives requires planning and an understanding of your audiences, and the media and its audiences. Fortunately, the programs and activities of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks offer many opportunities for you to promote your Lodge or state association to the media, thereby strengthening in the public's mind that "Elks Care—Elks Share."

Our members and the people they serve—from our young Elks "Hoop Shoot" and "Soccer Shoot" athletes, amazing scholarship recipients, handicapped children, veterans, emergency service personnel, community service leaders, educators, and parents—each has an emotionally appealing story with the potential to affect a wider audience.

This handbook, developed by the Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee, will help your Lodge or state association better tell the stories of Elks' activities and programs, position your Lodge or association to gain favorable media coverage, build an awareness of the B.P.O Elks, and even create a greater interest in joining our organization. Your efforts are key in encouraging a positive image of the Order.

Good luck in spreading the word.

Goals of Public Relations

In the most general terms, the goal of public relations is to establish and maintain a relationship between an organization and its public. As PR chairperson, you will find that you have a number of methods to help you establish and maintain the Order's relationship with the public. These methods often involve:

- *Community Relations*: enhancing your Lodge or state association's position and participation in the community through outreach efforts mutually benefiting your Lodge and the community.
- *Crisis management*: maintaining your relationship with the public and media during a crisis setting.
- *Government relations*: representing your Lodge's interests and activities to governing bodies and elected officials.
- *Internal relations*: serving as the conduit for information amongst your Lodge's membership.
- *Media relations*: conducting outreach and responding to the media on behalf of your Lodge.
- *Publicity*: furthering your Lodge's interests through target-media coverage of your Lodge's messages and events.
- A mixture of sales, marketing, advertising, and journalism.

Your Duties as PR Chairperson

As the PR chairperson for your Lodge, your basic duty is to oversee the gathering of information with potential for positive publicity and to distribute such information to all appropriate news media in a timely fashion. Other duties include:

1. Train members of your Lodge in public relations
2. Develop media releases for Grand Exalted Ruler visits to your Lodge
3. Help with Lodge newsletter
4. Help other Lodge committees with media coverage
5. Help your Lodge on anniversary years (25th, 50th, 70th, 100th)
6. Advise your Lodge of ongoing current information on Grand Lodge policies
7. Develop media contacts
8. Develop Lodge public relations activities and programs
9. Prepare and publish a Lodge brochure to be used by your Lodge
10. Develop a manual that describes the controls and procedures to be used by your Lodge in public relations
11. Maintain a continuing 12-month calendar to anticipate activities occurring in the next 12 months
12. Send monthly reports to your district committeeman
13. Keep Lodge informed about public relations supplies kept at Grand Lodge supplies/shipping department
14. Keep reminding Lodge to send fraternal news items to *The Elks Magazine*
15. Send all gender issues to Grand Lodge chairman of the Advisory Committee. Only he or the Grand Exalted Ruler may address subject. Also send a copy to the chairman of the Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee and to your state sponsor and president
16. Create media releases regarding all information sent to you by Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee Chairman on Elks disaster relief
17. Provide assistance to Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee or state chairman when needed

Goals of Media Coverage

Developing a working relationship with the media will be key in keeping your community informed about the Elks. By identifying your Lodge's most positive programs and getting the word out, you can not only meet some of your duties as PR chairperson, but also:

- Recruit new members, volunteers, or sponsors
- Reach potential program participants or donors
- Educate the community about Lodge programs
- Highlight Lodge programs that are improving the community
- Raise the Lodge's visibility in the public eye

- Provide recognition for volunteers

How the Media Works

To get media coverage for your Lodge you need more than a good story. You need to understand both how the media works and its goals. Knowing the role of the media in your community will increase your effectiveness in promoting the news of your Lodge. In most cases, the goals of media outlets are to *inform, advise, entertain, and make a profit*. By keeping the media's goals in mind, you place yourself in a better situation to tailor the news of your Lodge to a media outlet's needs.

Each day, news agencies are inundated with stories about events, people, organizations, and corporations. Most of these stories don't make the paper or the broadcast. The ones that do invariably are items deemed to be newsworthy. By giving your Lodge's story the right angle, you will improve the chances of the media viewing your story as newsworthy.

Typically, editors, producers, and reporters use similar criteria to judge if a story is newsworthy:

- Proper timing
- A local angle
- Widespread interest
- Well-known people
- Human interest/emotional appeal

One of the best ways to make your Lodge's story meet a media outlet's needs for newsworthy material is by providing your story with a "hook"—something that will tie your news to their needs.

With some creative thinking on your part, you will find that news hooks for your story aren't difficult to come up with. Some of the best news hooks involve:

- *Presenting a local angle to breaking news of interest.* For example, if Congress were to sign legislation concerning veterans, you might contact media outlets and provide a local angle on how your Lodge plans to assist area veterans in light of the new bill.
- *Presenting an education or community service award.* Frequently, many media outlets honor local heroes of community service and by honoring these individuals you may be able to garner both them and your Lodge additional media coverage. In the past, some Lodges have presented awards to reporters and editors as well for their excellence in community reporting.
- *Involving the media as a partner in one of your Lodge activities.* Consider having a local media outlet cosponsor an event or invite representatives of the media to attend awards banquets as guests of honor.

- *Arranging for testimonials or guest speakers at appropriate events.*
- *Explaining local implications on national reports or surveys.* Suppose a study is released detailing the problems facing homeless single parents. If your Lodge sponsors a shelter, you may be able to generate a news story about how that national study relates to the community and what your Lodge is doing to help.
- *“Tie-ins” with holidays, anniversaries, previous news reports, or news reports on current trends.* Perhaps your story can be tied to something other than just your Lodge. The Lodge’s scholarship program may be considered more newsworthy if the local paper or television station recently reported on current educational trends. Be creative when looking for tie-ins, but be sure that your news item and the one that you are tying it in with are both newsworthy.
- *Creating the unexpected.* Novelty attracts attention and media outlets are often on the lookout for it. Ask yourself if you can bring something unexpected to your Lodge’s event or story to make it stand out.

Identifying Your Audience

The most important thing to remember as you work with media outlets is that, in terms of public relations for your Lodge, the media is not your audience. The residents of your community are. The media is just the messenger and that is why it is vital for you to identify your target audience, tailor your message for them, and use the media outlet that will best help you reach that audience. Your audience can be parents, students, teachers and school administrators, business leaders, government bodies or officials, other community associations, or some other group.

Some Hints on Best Reaching Your Target Audience:

- *Audiences want to hear about themselves.* People seek news that relates to their lives in an immediate fashion. With this in mind, many media outlets cater directly to these specific audience interests. Newspapers are divided into sections on lifestyles, sports, business, farm reports, and health sections so that a target audience can reach the news it wants as quickly and easily as possible. Television and radio stations make programming choices in a similar manner. Magazines, especially, increasingly target a niche audience. As a PR chairperson, make sure that your message is relevant to the audience you hope to reach or it will go unnoticed.
- *Audiences prefer news involving people over statistics.* Too many facts, figures, and numbers can quickly bore an audience. Be sure that you are reaching your target audience by including people in your message. Saying that your Lodge annually contributes \$7,500 to local handicapped children isn’t as engaging or impressive to an audience as explaining how one of one of those children has been helped by the Lodge.
- *Audiences can sense self-promotion.* Audiences tend to shy away from a shameless self-promoter. To reach your audience, you will need to be certain that your message is about the people your Lodge helps and not that your Lodge helps people. The difference is slight, but it can make a big impact with your audience.

- *Learn about your audience.* Advertising and marketing professionals go out of their way to familiarize themselves with a target audience. It's up to you to discover the things your target audience reads, what television programs and stations they watch, radio stations they listen to, and what interests and concerns them. By understanding these things, you can hit your audience where they live. The advertising department at a media outlet can often provide you with valuable demographic information about their readers, listeners, or viewers, but don't stop there. Examine the style of the media outlet to get a feel for its approach to the audience, and then make sure your message mimics that style.

Reaching the Media

Before going to the media with a story, it is extremely important for you to be sure that you are beginning with the strongest possible start. To do this, you will need to formulate a media plan that can answer three basic questions:

- *What do we want to accomplish? (Goals)*
- *How will it be accomplished? (Strategy)*
- *When do we accomplish it? (Timing)*

Although there is really no media plan that works for every situation, as PR chairperson you will need to keep your eye on the goals, strategy, and timing with each plan you create.

In setting your goals, make sure that you have decided on the audience you want to reach and how to best create excitement through news hooks or other means. Make your goals as specific and tailored as possible. This will help determine the media outlets you will need to provide your message to. A goal to generate 50 media impressions with one story might seem like a good idea at first, but having five extremely well-placed media impressions may be ultimately more beneficial to your Lodge and its programs. Remember, it's difficult to gauge your success if your goals are general.

Your strategy is the approach you will take to meet your goals. While some approaches will be simpler than others, no strategic plan should ever be just releasing your message as soon as it is ready. A strategic media plan should include:

- Your newsworthy message
- A target audience
- A list of media outlets reaching the target audience
- Contact points and deadlines for those media outlets
- An approach to getting your message to the media in a timely manner

Because all media outlets operate on a deadline, the timing of your media plan is crucial. Missing a deadline may mean that your message does not get coverage.

As your media plan gets under way, make sure you monitor it. This allows you to verify that you are on the path to meeting your goal, make any revisions, and see if anything has passed unnoticed. Without a way to monitor your media plan, it can almost be as if you never had one.

Your Media Lists

A media list contains the carefully selected names, addresses, phone and fax numbers, E-mail addresses, and deadlines of every news organization, reporter, and editor who will be likely to use the material you send.

The main types of media are:

- *Print*: Newspapers (daily and weekly), magazines, *The Elks Magazine*, church bulletins, education and business publications, industry trade papers, college and high school newspapers, brochures, and community calendars
- *Television*: News and locally produced talk shows, community-access cable
- *Radio*: News and locally produced talk shows, high school and college radio
- *On-line*: Your Lodge's website, community websites, chat rooms, message boards, mailing lists, and association and business websites

Your list doesn't need to be very long, but it is important to keep it up-to-date and accurate. Be sure to review the list and correct any changes to it every six months.

Resources for finding media contacts in your area, some of which can be found with the media directories at your local library, include:

- *The Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*
- *Bacon's Publicity Checker*
- *The Broadcast and Cable Yearbook*
- Local professional associations (Public Relations Society of America, Women in Communications)
- Local civic groups (Welcome Wagon, Junior League)
- Local chamber of commerce
- Media Post: www.mediapost.com
- Newspapers.com: www.newspapers.com

Be sure your list includes not only general media outlets, but also specialized media such as African-American and Hispanic newspapers and radio stations, shoppers' newsletters, and organization or corporate newsletters.

Print

Newspapers

Despite the technological changes that have created new media outlets, newspapers still remain a place that people turn to for news. When the public wants the story beyond the video clip or sound bite they turn to newspapers.

When trying to place your message with a newspaper, there are many people whom you may find yourself dealing with:

- *City editor*: makes the assignments for local news stories.
- *Reporters*: There are many types of reporters, so as PR chairperson it will be your responsibility to identify the reporters who can best serve your Lodge. Pay particular attention to beat reporters, who cover various social issues, and other reporters that handle volunteer activities.
- *Editorial editor*: chooses guest editorials and opinion columns
- *Feature editor*: who assigns human interest stories
- *Advertising manager*
- *Community calendar editor*

At least once a year, you should plan on meeting with the principal editors of your local newspapers. This is called an editorial board meeting. This meeting doesn't need to be formal, but you should be prepared to represent your Lodge. Before the editorial meeting prepare a leave-behind packet containing:

- Background information on your Lodge
- A list of available spokespersons, their area of expertise, and their availability
- Your Lodge's mission statement
- Brief biographies of key participants in your Lodge's programs
- Clippings of recent media clippings

By scheduling an editorial board meeting early you will not only be able to inform local newspapers about your Lodge, but will also be able to learn the needs of the newspaper. Plan on discovering the editors and reporters preferred:

- *Photographic content and format*: Be sure to ask for the newspaper's photographic guidelines. Since pictures can play a vital role in telling your Lodge's story, you will need to know what kind of photographs the local newspaper accept and in what format. Ask if they need color or black and white photographs, glossies, negatives, matte-finish, and/or digital images (and in what file format and size, e.g. TIFF, JPEG, BMP). Be sure you note the preferences of each newspaper and respect them.

- *Contact method:* Editors and reporters are very busy, so ask them their preferred method of being contacted. Find out if a phone call, fax, a personal visit, or an E-mail is the best way to give them the news that they will need from you.
- *Deadlines:* By knowing a reporter or editor's specific deadlines for going to press, you can be sure that your message is presented in a timely manner.

Weekly newspapers

For people residing outside of metropolitan areas, weekly newspapers are often the primary source for people to gain information on local events. Generally, it is easier to place news items with weekly newspapers. Keep in mind that since they are weekly newspapers, the editors and reporters will need more lead time in preparing a news item for print. As with daily newspapers, it will be in your Lodge's best interest if you schedule an editorial board meeting to learn the needs of your local weekly newspapers.

Wire Services

Nearly all newspapers and broadcast media subscribe to news wire services. Each day, reporters and editors read the news wire "daybooks," which list upcoming newsworthy events. Additionally, these wire services continually gather other news and electronically provide stories to the media. The major news wire service companies maintain state and area offices, usually offering statewide listings of events and activities. "Stringers," or local reporters, typically cover news items outside of major metropolitan areas. Having your news item placed with a wire service has several advantages:

A wire service story can appear in print or broadcast throughout your area or across the country. Radio bureaus affiliated with the wire services frequently broadcast news items that they receive. Stories can be filed with a wire service by telephone for announcements or brief comments about a story. (Remember to make your announcements short and simple. Include only the most essential facts.)

National wire services include:

- The Associated Press (AP): www.ap.org
- Reuters: www.reuters.com
- Various PR wire services: They will charge you a fee to use their service.
- Various business and special-interest wire services

In most cases, it is best to concentrate your story placement on local, state, and regional publications rather than with the wire services unless the story is potentially of national interest.

Magazines

Magazines offer many of the same advantages of newspapers, but most magazines seek news items that are "evergreen," and won't be old news by the time publication is

printed. Magazine editors tend to look for stories with greater perspective and analysis than straight news reporting. If you have a story that will benefit from a unique angle, a magazine may be the perfect media outlet for you to use.

Keep in mind that magazines frequently have a lead time of several months. Also, be aware that because of the nature of their production, many magazines are unable to use certain photographic formats. Be sure to contact each magazine for its own photographic and story guidelines.

Stories that generally interest magazine editors include:

- Profiles of local officials or leaders
- Trends
- Exceptional performance in some area

The Elks Magazine

Established in 1922 to promote the charitable and civic activities of the subordinate Elks Lodges, *The Elks Magazine* is the official organ of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. The editors of *The Elks Magazine* seek news of the Lodges that is:

- Charitable and/or civic in nature
- Timely (sent to the magazine within four weeks of the event described)
- Lodge-focused and not focused on an individual (The Lodge's activity or program, not those of individual Elks members)
- Above and beyond Grand Lodge-mandated activities (What a Lodge does in addition to the GL programs it is required to fulfill)

The Elks Magazine prints photographs that:

- Feature charitable recipients
- Feature activities and not check presentations
- Glossy. *The Elks Magazine* prefers glossy color photographs, but black and white are acceptable. At this time, *The Elks Magazine* cannot use digital images in any format, negatives, Polaroids, matte-finished photographs, and/or panoramic shots.

A more complete list of guidelines can be requested by writing to:

The Elks Magazine
Editorial Department
425 W. Diversey Parkway
Chicago, IL 60614-6196

Or viewed at www.elks.org/elksmag/fraternalguidelines.cfm

News items can be mailed to the above address or, if they do not include a photograph, E-mailed to magnews@elks.org.

A Final Note on Print Media

It is always a good idea to save a clipping of any news items about your Lodge. You can make photocopies of these clippings for editorial board meetings, to show potential members, to inspire your current membership, and in various Grand Lodge contests.

Just as coverage in the local press can tell your community about your Lodge, you can use *The Elks Magazine* to tell the story of the Order as a whole. After you and members of your Lodge have read your current issue of *The Elks Magazine*, be sure to pass it along to a neighbor or friend or ask if it can be left at the local barber shop, medical office, or automotive repair shop. It's a great way for you to help spread the word that "Elks Care—Elks Share."

Television

For your message to be used on television it needs to be short and simple. Television news tends to reduce stories to 30 seconds or one-minute segments. Long explanations often end up as short sound bites or quotes. There are a number of people whom you may come in contact with when trying to place your message on television:

- News assignment editor: makes decisions on where to send news crews
- Talk show producers/hosts/schedulers
- Public Service Director
- Reporters who frequently cover social issues

A visual component is crucial to all television news stories. Color photographic slides of your Lodge logo, a graph, or guest of honor can provide still images for news reports, but getting a news crew to your event is the ideal. To do this, you need to keep in mind television's special requirements:

- *News stories need to be prepared and edited quickly to make that day's newscasts.* By informing news assignment editors of your events well in advance and, whenever possible, holding an event before 1 P.M., you stand the best chance of getting your Lodge same-day coverage.
- *TV news must be condensed to sound bites.* Prepare the message you wish to send before ever getting in front of a camera.
- *TV news likes action.* Television reporters would rather cover a story that depicts a story rather than interview someone who just talks about it.

Some other considerations with television:

- *Live coverage.* Experienced event planners know the importance of reserving parking for the media, especially if they expect live television coverage. Make

sure that you have a place for microwave or satellite trucks to park and run their cables if you expect live coverage. In order to encourage and prepare for television, make sure that on all media advisories, you include the phrase, "Please advise if you are planning live coverage."

- *Your logo.* If it is possible, make sure that your Lodge's logo is prominently displayed during events receiving television coverage. Place your logo directly in front of or behind the spot where guest speakers, honorees, or activity participants will be filmed.
- *Public affairs and cable programming.* These television formats are often overlooked, but, with some creative thinking, can be great ways to promote your Lodge.

Public affairs programming is usually a combination of news and community service-oriented materials and can take the form of interviews, documentaries, panel discussions, or editorial comments. You might consider:

- Preparing an editorial on the need for community service
- Asking the station to sponsor a community service segment during a portion of their local news programming
- Submitting a response to an opinion expressed by the station or another community group

Radio

Radio stations tend to tailor their programming to specific audiences--Top 40 to country to rhythm and blues to classical. Recent changes have led to even more stations expanding their news coverage and providing more airtime for call-in programs on issues of interest to the community. When contacting radio stations you will frequently deal with:

- News director
- Public Service director
- Talk show producers/hosts/schedulers

This provides you the opportunity to match your Lodge's message to the station's audience. Be sure that you:

- *Send news releases to notify radio stations of events of interest to their audience.*
- *Create news releases in a style that is easy to use for on-the-air delivery.*
- *Use radio stations' public affairs programming.*
- *Consider talk radio.* As one of the most rapidly growing forms of communications, talk radio programs offer a chance to reach a wide audience. Most towns have at least one station featuring a talk-radio program devoted to issues facing the community. As PR chairperson, you should consider the potential of having a Lodge spokesperson participate in one of these shows.

On-line

Since the advent of computer networking, the growth of on-line media, and web-based communities, the Internet has become one of the most vital tools in public relations. Whether you use the Internet to contact reporters and editors or to develop your Lodge's own website, on-line public relations can provide you with a valuable new approach to your public relations efforts.

Reaching the Media On-line

For many reporters, E-mail has become the preferred means of receiving news releases, pitches for story ideas, and background information on your programs and events. Since many news agencies accept digital photographs, too, you may find that an E-mail account is something that you can't afford to be without. As you begin to develop relationships with reporters, editors, and producers, make sure that you ask if they accept electronic submissions and give them your E-mail address as well as the address of your Lodge's website.

If your Lodge hasn't done so already, you should consider creating a website. A service of the Grand Lodge allows you to establish a virtual homepage for your own Lodge at www.elks.org. Additionally, most Internet service providers (such as America Online) offer free hosting of websites as well as the software needed to design the sites. With tools like these at your disposal, creating a website for your Lodge is far easier than you might have imagined.

A recent survey conducted by PR professionals indicated that most reporters were disappointed with corporate and association websites. What reporters indicated they most hoped to find on websites were:

- Easy to navigate homepages with direct links to a section for the media
- Access to the most recent news releases as well as past news releases
- Names of spokespersons and best methods of contacting them
- Addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and E-mail addresses
- Download-friendly photographs of relevant events and people
- Succinct mission statements and easy to find backgrounds on organizations or corporations

In the same survey, reporters indicated that if a website was friendly to their needs they often spent more time exploring the site to get a more in-depth understanding of what they were writing about.

Reaching the Public On-line

Another reason to consider developing a website for your Lodge is that it is a way to reach your community 24 hours a day. Many associations have found that by putting the

Internet to work, they have been able to expand their audience and their potential. Depending on your technical abilities and your goals, your website can be used to:

- *Promote the Elks.* One association found that a large percentage of people first learned about their organization through the Internet. A website can be a means of introducing your Lodge and the Elks to new audiences.
- *Promote events—both off-line and on-line.* Increasingly, websites are used to promote actual events as well as host on-line conferences and chats.
- *Recruit volunteers and sponsors.* Many organizations such as Youth Service America have used the web to promote volunteerism and provide links to volunteering opportunities.

Once you have a website for your Lodge, see if it is possible for you to have your site linked to the city's official website if it has a links page for volunteer organization or the area chamber of commerce's page. This can increase local traffic to your website. Additionally, have your site registered with some of the web's more popular search engines such as Yahoo and Alta Vista.

With some research and effort on your part, you can also use the Internet in other ways for your Lodge's public relations efforts. You can promote your Lodge through:

- On-line chat rooms
- Community based message boards
- Service- and charitable-based newsgroups
- Mailing lists that reach members of your community
- Web banners on sites visited by your target audience

Check with the moderators of newsgroups, chat rooms, and message boards to see if your message is acceptable.

Building Positive Relationships with the Media

One of the main difficulties facing people working in public relations is establishing and maintaining positive relationships with members of the media. Facing strict deadlines, media professionals often bristle at unsolicited phone calls and E-mails regarding story ideas or events that are not newsworthy. As PR chairperson, you can overcome these obstacles and build a relationship with media members by doing a few simple things:

- *Have a good story.* Reporters and journalists recognize strong stories. If they know that you can provide the media with solid, succinct news items that can capture the imagination of their audience, the reporters will take notice.
- *Know the audience.* If you are trying to convince a media outlet to use a news item that isn't of interest to its audience, you're wasting someone's time. Doing this repeatedly can jeopardize your credibility.

- *Build trust.* Media members will respect you for delivering what you promise in a timely manner. Be honest and upfront about what you can and cannot do. Your candor and professionalism will be remembered.
- *Be responsive.* Return calls as soon as possible. Because of reporters' tight deadlines, news can die if it isn't reported quickly.
- *Be helpful.* If it is warranted, do a little research, suggest other credible sources on a story, and let the reporter know about your willingness to help.
- *Be brief.* Respect a reporter's time by not running on with lengthy details. State the facts in a straightforward manner and let the reporter get to work.
- *Be realistic.* The news isn't something that you can control. Even though you may have put a lot of work into a story, you still cannot control whether it runs, its timing, placement, tone, headline, or content.

Developing Media Contacts

Getting that initial introduction to members of the media may seem like a daunting task, but it need not be difficult at all. In fact, there are quite a few simple techniques that PR professionals use to develop their media contacts, some of which have already been mentioned in this handbook:

- *Congratulating a reporter on a recent piece.* Whether done by phone (make sure to call in the morning when the deadline pressure isn't so great), E-mail, or a personal note, reporters like to hear that they have done a good job. Be sincere in your praise and your relationship will start off well.
- *Editorial board meetings.*
- *Invitations.* Invite local media representatives to attend your Lodge functions. If you know that the local news anchor is a golf enthusiast, provide him with complimentary tickets to your annual golf outing. Don't necessarily expect him to cover the event, but do take the time to bend his ear a little and explain your Lodge's programs. You can do the same thing with many of your Lodge's social functions.
- *Host a luncheon for media representatives or take a reporter to lunch.*
- *Recognize a reporter with an award.* Just as your Lodge recognizes outstanding citizens, you might consider recognizing journalists, editors, or reporters who have done excellent work covering community issues.
- *Pitch a great story.* Tips on preparing media pitches will be covered in the next section.

Don't get discouraged if you don't see immediate results after you've met with members of the media. Powerful relationships develop over time. Remember, your public relations campaign is working for long-range goals and not short-term, quick fixes.

Placing Your News with the Media

By now, you've probably already done a great deal of legwork—researching local media outlets and determining their target audiences while developing relationships with reporters. Now it's time to capitalize on your work by placing your message with the media.

Think of your message as a story. The media is expecting a story, so you should be prepared to craft your message as a story. A story:

- *Involves things happening to people.* Editors and audiences quickly tire of news items that don't involve people involved in some kind of action. Look for the programs in your Lodge that involve things happening to people. For example, if your Lodge gives a police officer of the year award, make sure that your story includes what the officer did to earn this distinction. Compelling stories have heroes, themes, and action. Be sure to include these elements in your stories whenever possible. The media will definitely take notice.
- *Is either timely or timeless.* If your story is about a current event, then it is timely. If your story is an "evergreen," it is timeless. Knowing whether your story is timely or timeless can help you decide what type of media outlet is the best place for you to send it.
- *Have a reason for being told.* Typically, people tell stories to entertain, to educate, or both. Your story (e.g. the donation of a wheelchair lift to a disabled child's family) and its theme (e.g. overcoming adversity) often reflect the reason for the telling, just as your goals for media coverage also can reflect the reason for your story being told.
- *Has a form.* Throughout history, stories have been told in many forms—through letters, as folktales, etc.

In terms of public relations, there are specific forms for telling your story to the media:

- Media releases
- Media advisories
- Media pitches
- Media kits
- Letters to the Editor and op-eds
- Bylined articles
- Public service announcements

Media Releases

Editors and reporters are reluctant to admit that many news stories (whether in print or broadcast) originated with media releases. Media releases can publicize an issue or a story, provide background information on a news event, or announce a future event.

Effective media releases generally follow specific guidelines:

- An attention-grabbing headline

- A lead paragraph explaining the who, what, where, when, how, and why of a story.
- The body of the release resembles an inverted pyramid with information appearing in the order of its importance. This allows a reporter or editor to shorten a release without cutting any of the important details.
- Includes exciting and pertinent quotes from relevant people
- Is no more than two, typed pages—preferably a single typed page
- Is factual and spelled correctly
- Avoids jargon or technical terms. Referring to the Lodge’s Exalted Ruler as Lodge president in a media release may help you to reach a wider audience.
- Doesn’t use initials or abbreviations without identifying their meaning first.

Media Release Format

- Type the release on one side of 8-1/2”x11” letterhead. At the top of the release include:
 - 1) The name and telephone and fax numbers and E-mail address of the contact person whom reporters can call for more information.
 - 2) The date and time for the story’s release (“For Release, April 21, 2008” or “For Immediate Release”).
 - 3) A short headline that describes the release’s content at a glance
- Begin the first paragraph with a dateline indicating where and when the story was released.
- If there is more than one page, type “MORE” at the bottom of each page except the last one. Include the page number and identifying line on each additional page (“Hoop Shoot” Awards, Page 2).
- End the release with the marks “# # #”.
- Include any appropriate photographs along with a caption, identifying people left to right and describing the activity.

When drafting your media release, remember to:

- *Eliminate padding.* As you read what you’ve written, check to see if any words or sections can be eliminated or rephrased. Instead of saying “Due to the fact that we have met our fund-raising goals,” try “Since we met our fund-raising goals.”
- *Stay focused.* If you’re writing about your Lodge’s scholarship winners, stay focused on them. Don’t yield to the temptation of including all of your Lodge’s recent accomplishments.
- *Cut back on modifiers.* Adjectives and adverbs may set the tone of a piece, but too many of them can confuse a reader. Remember, less is more.

An example of a media release is included on the next page.



Lodge Letterhead

CONTACT:

(Person's Name)

(Person's Title)

Phone: (555) 555-5555

Fax: (555) 555-5555

For Immediate Release

July 11, 2001

Elks "Hoop Shoot" Free Throw National Champ Honored in City of Brotherly Love

Effingham, IL, Resident Taylor Worman Receives Trophies, Praise from Elks

PHILADELPHIA, PA. July 11, 2001—A standing ovation made up of nearly 10,000 cheering Elks members, their spouses, and guests greeted Effingham, Illinois, resident Taylor Worman as he entered the Pennsylvania Convention Center to receive one of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks' prestigious Getty Powell Awards, which are given to the top boy and girl free-throw shooters in the nation.

Since planting a perfect 25 out of 25 free throws in the Boys 8-9 Division at the national championship competition held this past April in Springfield, Massachusetts, nine-year-old Taylor has deservedly become a hometown phenomenon in his own right. And as Taylor addressed the audience from the dais, Elks from across the nation got to see what the folks back in Effingham already knew--that besides being an amazing athlete, Taylor is a gracious and charming young man. After joking about how competing in the district championship meant having to postpone the family vacation to sunny Florida during the dead of a chilly Illinois winter, Taylor thanked his family for their unflagging support and acknowledged the many Elks who worked hard to make the "Hoop Shoot" contest, "better than Disney World."

"The 'Hoop Shoot' program," said Taylor, "not only provided me with hopes and dreams, but also the opportunity for hard work, discipline, competition, sportsmanship, and the chance to make new friends. These are traits I can carry over into school, work, and other parts of my life, not just in sports."

The Elks were thrilled to have Taylor and his family as their guests during the Convention. Leading the way in philanthropy and patriotism, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is a fraternal organization comprised of nearly 1.2 million dedicated men and women in more than 2,000 communities.

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Media Advisories

A media advisory is a separate, single-page document that alerts reporters to an event. Your media advisory should focus on making it easy for reporters to find and cover your event. The advisory should include a brief description of the event, time, location, participants, and a contact name and phone number.

Media advisories should be sent to media outlets with daily deadlines three to five days before the event. It is also a good idea to send the advisory to television stations again the morning before the event.

Media Advisory Example:

[Lodge letterhead]

[Contact Person and numbers]

Media Advisory: Elks National “Hoop Shoot” Free Throw Competition

WHAT: The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is hosting its annual Elks National “Hoop Shoot” Free Throw Competition, which is the final round of the nation’s biggest coeducational sports program for youths ages 8-13, and will determine the six top free-throw shooting youngsters from across the country.

WHO: The BPOE, one of the nation’s oldest and largest charitable and patriotic fraternal organizations, and the 72 top free-throw sinking youngsters in the U.S.

WHEN: Saturday, April 21, 2001 at 8:30 A.M.

WHERE: Western New England College Gymnasium

[Street Address]

[Springfield, MA (Zip Code)]

Note: Please advise if you are planning live coverage.

Media Pitches

A media pitch is just like a sales pitch. It’s an excellent way for you to get someone (in this case, a reporter) interested in what you are offering (a news story). Sure, it may seem nerve-racking to make a cold call to a journalist, but don’t worry. Not all pitches need to be made over the phone, and many reporters prefer to receive pitches via fax or E-mail.

Some strategies for pitching reporters include:

- *A laser-like approach.* If you’ve developed a highly accurate media list, you should be able to directly target specific reporters with tailor-made pitches that are sure to be of direct interest to them and their audience.

- *A more creative approach.* Perhaps your media list includes a lot of feature reporters or other journalists who, if given the right “spin,” might be interested in your story. For instance, a pitch about your Lodge’s programs for veterans might seem like a natural for a beat reporter, but with the right angle, you might be able to interest the features editor of the paper’s lifestyles section. Be creative and play the angles.
- *A shotgun approach.* Pitching everyone in sight from the lowliest reporter to the editor-in-chief can be annoying to media professionals. That said, PR professionals do exactly this at times. Why? Because it sometimes produces results. Oftentimes, you will be able to find a reporter interested in your story who might have otherwise been overlooked.

Pitching by Phone

To make phone pitches easier, follow these suggestions:

- Introduce yourself by saying, “We haven’t spoken before.” You’ll earn a reporter’s respect by not pretending to be his best friend. If you mislead the reporter into thinking that he should know who you are, he’ll probably try to remember how he knows you and miss the beginning of your pitch entirely.
- Always ask if the reporter is on a deadline. If he is, ask when it would be a good time to call back and do so.
- Hone your pitch to a 15-second speech. Pretend that you bumped into the reporter in an elevator and only had a short time to interest him in your story. If your pitch can be made in the time it takes to ride an elevator you’re doing very well.
- Know your story inside and out. By knowing your story, you can revise your pitch if the reporter voices any objections instead of instantly throwing in the towel. By knowing your story, you’re also better prepared to pitch other reporters. If your pitch doesn’t fit with one reporter, it might with another.
- Follow up. Potential leads can be lost if you don’t follow up on them. If a reporter asks you to call him back, be sure that you do.
- Be persistent. Don’t cross the line from being persistent to being annoying, but if you are sure of your story, keep calling until you get the reporter on the phone (just don’t keep leaving messages).
- Be enthusiastic. If you don’t make your story sound important, the reporter probably won’t think it is.

Pitching by Letter

If your story is not breaking news of great immediacy, a reporter may prefer to receive a pitch by letter (regular mail, fax, or E-mail). A pitch letter:

- Explains the purpose of the letter concisely
- Summarizes the most important information in one paragraph before giving details
- Is no longer than one page

- Explains why the media outlet’s audience would be interested
- Includes a few eye-catching details
- Suggests possible approaches to the story

After sending your pitch letter, follow up with the reporter in about a week’s time to see if he is interested.

Media Pitch Letter Example:

[Reporter’s Name]
[News organization]
[Street Address]
[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Reporter]:

Sports luminaries such as former Indiana University standout Steve Alford, Duke University’s amazing Trajan Landon, Indian Pacer Chris Mullin, North Carolina State star Jennifer Howard, and Portland Fire guard Jackie Stiles were all participants in it before becoming the great athletes they are today.

In fact, the Elks “Hoop Shoot” Free Throw Contest has opened up the exciting world of free-throw shooting to more than 91 million young boys and girls in the last 30 years. And the talented youngsters, ages 8-13, competing in this year’s national finals have accuracy from the charity stripe that would make many in the NBA and WNBA weep with envy.

The Elks "Hoop Shoot" is the largest coeducational sports activity in the country, and the national championship, to be held in Springfield, Massachusetts, on Saturday, April 21, is already shaping up to be an exciting and dramatic contest among the 72 top free-throw sinkers in the U.S. And it’s not a stretch to think that one of this year’s national champs may be a star of tomorrow. Hoop dreams indeed!

I’m sure that your audience would be interested in profiles on these gifted kids, the volunteers who’ve made this program work, the results of this year’s competition, or an overview of the “Hoop Shoot” contest’s history of success. I will contact you in the next few days to see if you might be interested in arranging interviews with some of the participants as well as seeing the national contest.

Thanks in advance for your time and interest.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[Title]

Media Kits

A media kit is an attention-grabbing folder containing information on your Lodge or one of its programs that you can distribute at editorial board meetings, give to reporters, or leave with school or city officials. Media kits often contain media releases, media advisories, media pitch letters, information sheets, program backgrounders, biographies when appropriate, and/or photographs.

Since media kits can be costly to produce, distribute them only when requested or when the media is attending a Lodge function.

Letters to the Editor and Op-eds

An overlooked way of reaching your public is through the editorial pages of your local newspaper. Although the op-ed pages aren't as well read as other sections of the newspaper, decision makers frequently consult the letters and articles of the op-ed pages.

Letters to the Editor should:

- Be short—no more than 400 words. The shorter it is, the more likely it is to appear in print.
- Make your point in the first or second paragraph.
- Not be about potentially controversial issues. Avoid taking a stance on any potentially controversial issue. Remember, you do not want to alienate your community or make the Elks look bad.
- Be infrequent. Save letters to the editor for important occasions for the highest impact.

You can best use letters to the editor to remind your community about important patriotic holidays, thank volunteers and program participants, and highlight the volunteer spirit of particular community residents.

Op-eds should:

- Try to avoid taking a controversial stance, but still offer a persuasive argument or speak to an important community issue. A call for volunteerism or a piece praising the value of a college education will benefit your Lodge more than taking a position on a local zoning issue.
- Be thoughtful and well written.
- Be relatively short—800 words is ideal.
- Signed by the Lodge's Exalted Ruler.
- Be written if you can offer expertise on a specific subject.

Editors will accept your op-ed articles based on the relevance of your organization or the issue to the community.

Bylined Articles

Somewhat similar to op-ed pieces, bylined articles can help your Lodge gain greater recognition. By writing an article on an area of expertise for your Lodge and having an editor publish it, you can advance your Lodge's goals while arranging for your contact information and a few sentences about your Lodge to appear at the end of the piece.

Public service announcements

Public service announcements (PSAs) are brief television or radio announcements aired for free on behalf of community organizations. They must contain information that is of benefit to the community and should not be controversial or self-serving. Producing a television PSA is normally more difficult because of the nature of the medium. When trying to place a PSA you should:

- Contact the public affairs directors at TV and radio stations. If possible, meet with them personally to find out their requirements for PSAs (preferred format and length), and stress why your PSA is important to the community.
- Ask if the station would be willing to help produce the PSA.
- Keep in mind that cable stations may be more willing to broadcast PSAs than local network affiliates.
- Remember that a station may request that you write the announcement yourself.

When writing a PSA, be sure that it is *clear, concise, conversational, and correct*. Whenever possible, use the active voice and present tense. Be sure to call the viewer or listener to action and if appropriate, have them contact your Lodge. Additionally, PSAs are typed in all capital letters and double-spaced. Write your message to fit the time slot.

As a rule of thumb:

- 10 seconds = 25 words
- 30 seconds = 75 words
- 60 seconds = 150 words.

PSA Examples

Thirty-second spot

Announcer: THIS NOVEMBER, JOIN WITH ELKS USA AS THEY PROUDLY SALUTE OUR NATION'S VETERANS. THEIR BRAVERY SHAPED OUR NATION. THEIR SERVICE BOUGHT OUR FREEDOMS. AND THEIR SACRIFICE HAS EARNED OUR PRIDE AND GRATITUDE. WE OWE SO MUCH TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR ARMED

FORCES. IN NOVEMBER, PLEASE JOIN WITH THE ELKS IN REMEMBERING OUR COUNTRY'S VETERANS. LET'S TELL THESE MEN AND WOMEN, "AMERICA SALUTES YOU!"

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Sixty-second spot

Announcer: ON FORGOTTEN BATTLEFIELDS IN FOREIGN LANDS, AMERICA'S VETERANS MADE SACRIFICES FOR ALL OF US. THROUGH THEIR SERVICE, THEIR PRIDE, AND THEIR PATRIOTISM, THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR ARMED FORCES MADE OUR NATION WHAT IT IS TODAY. THEY DEFENDED OUR FREEDOMS. THEY FOUGHT FOR JUSTICE. THEY PRESERVED OUR IDEALS. AND THROUGH IT ALL, THEY FORGED OUR CHARACTER. OUR VETERANS ARE OUR REAL HEROES. OUR NATION WAS BUILT BY THEIR ACTIONS. EACH NOVEMBER, THE ELKS OBSERVE NATIONAL VETERANS REMEMBRANCE MONTH. THIS YEAR, JOIN THE ELKS AS THEY THANK OUR VETERANS. LET'S ALL DO OUR PART TO REMEMBER THESE MEN AND WOMEN. LET'S GIVE THEM OUR HEARTFELT THANKS AND SAY, "WE SALUTE YOU!"

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A Final Thought on Placing Your News with the Media

Whenever possible, it is ideal for your Lodge to have one individual designated as spokesperson. They should be responsible for representing the Lodge to the media and responding to all media inquiries in a fast, honest, effective, and courteous manner. Prompt professional responses to media inquiries will go a long way toward developing lasting relationships with the media.

Interviews

If your public relations efforts have been successful, then it won't be long before you have requests from the media for interviews. It's rare for a story to make the news without someone being interviewed.

Interviews are:

- Interactive: you and a reporter
- Extemporaneous: you probably won't have a script or a list of questions being asked
- Fluid: like any conversation, interviews can change direction very quickly

Because of their nature, interviews tend to be where most mistakes are made, so be sure to prepare for interviews with the same care used in creating your media releases and other media materials. After all, being interviewed presents a wonderful opportunity for you to promote your message.

When a reporter requests an interview, remember that you can ask him questions before agreeing to the interview. You have a right to know what the story is about. Be friendly when questioning the reporter, letting him know that you're asking questions because you want to assist him.

Before you agree to be interviewed or arrange for someone in your Lodge to be interviewed ask the reporter:

- What their story is about?
- Who else have you spoken with?
- What did they say?
- What's your deadline?
- Can I get back to you?

Asking these questions in advance will allow you to do two important things. First, you will be able to gauge the angle or slant that a reporter may be planning to take on their story. Second, you will learn what information you need to gather to make the interview a success by getting your message to your audience.

By asking questions of a reporter up front, even if you know the answers, you give yourself the time to prepare the best answers.

Preparing a Message for an Interview

Once you know what a reporter's story is about you will need to prepare for the interview. This means gathering the information you need and planning your agenda.

You should never agree to an interview without having a message that you wish to convey to your audience. This is the most important rule of interviews. Your message is the focus that will keep you firmly anchored in any interview situation. Conveying that message to your audience should be your one goal for the interview.

- Make sure that you can state your message in ten seconds and that it can be easily understood by just about anyone. By doing this, you will have not only created a sound bite, but also defined your message with the focus needed to make the interview work on your behalf.
- Memorize your message and rehearse giving it. Just as actors and professional speakers rehearse, you should practice stating your message. Practice giving your message until you've memorized it and can give it without it seeming rehearsed.
- Be sure to give your message verbatim during the interview. You've worked hard to prepare this message and made sure that it's the best version, so say it.
- Know how to "flag" your message. Use phrases like "The one thing your audience will want to know . . ." or "Your readers should know that . . ."
- Above all, stick to your message and be able to guide the interview in the direction of your message.

You can rehearse sticking to your message, too.

One media training professional developed an excellent way to do this with a game he calls "I Own This Conversation." There are two players—the interviewer and interviewee. Each player picks a topic to talk about—the topics don't matter, but each player needs to have a different one. The game starts with the interviewer asking questions about his topic. The interviewee needs to answer the question in such a way that his answer incorporates his own topic and makes it interesting to the interviewer. The game ends when the interviewer asks a question about the interviewee's topic. The game isn't about winning as much as it is about learning to stick to the message and making the interviewer interested in your message.

Getting an interviewer to drop his line of questioning to one that better suits your message is known as "flipping." One of the best ways to flip an interview is to make a statement so tantalizing that the reporter just has to ask the question you want asked. Some statements that can hook a reporter include:

- Answering a reporter's question and then adding a statement such as "But that's not *really* what's at stake." Stop, and then wait for the reporter to ask his next question.
- "Of course, but there's one thing that is far more important." Stop, and then wait for the next question.

- “That opens the door for a great new opportunity.” Stop. Wait for the next question.

Another way to practice your ability to stick to the message is by having a colleague or Lodge member participate in a mock interview with you. By having someone ask you questions that you expect a reporter to ask, you can go into an interview knowing how to make your version of the story the most interesting.

Interviewing Styles of Reporters

Television shows featuring investigative journalism have left many people with a fear of Mike Wallace and the impression that reporters are out for blood when they ask questions. To be fair, this is rarely the case, but you should always remember that whenever you’re speaking with the media there’s a chance that they’re searching for a story. There really isn’t such a thing as “off the record.” Always be careful what you say. A reporter’s first loyalty is to getting the story, and they can use a variety of tactics to get it, including:

- *Playing dumb.* A blank stare or questioning expression can prompt an interviewee to provide more information, often more than what the reporter expected. The results could change the subject of the story.
- *Being your friend.* If you feel the reporter genuinely cares about you and has your best interests in mind, you might end up revealing more than you should.
- *Begging and pleading.* Sometimes a reporter may say that his job is on the line if he can’t get the information. He may promise not to quote you, and probably won’t, but the information will still be out there.
- *Saying “Another source said . . .”* If a reporter tells you another source said something that you feel to be unfair or not true, you may jump at the chance to correct it. There may not be another source, and now you’re being quoted.
- *Asking for your opinion.* As the spokesperson for your Lodge, you are speaking for the Lodge. Your personal opinion isn’t relevant.
- *Either/Or Scenarios.* Sometimes a reporter will frame a question or statement as an either/or premise. For example, “Either your Lodge did it or it didn’t.” Don’t repeat the reporter’s words. Just simply say what you want to state.
- *Argumentative.* Some reporters do have an agenda and what you say won’t matter because they aren’t listening. They want to make you angry. Anger is an emotion that sells stories.
- *Subject changing.* Sometimes a reporter will change subjects to throw you off track. You might have agreed to be interviewed about your Lodge’s scholarship program, but the reporter really wants to talk about something else. It’s up to you to stay on message.
- *Hunting expedition.* Sometimes a reporter doesn’t have an agenda at all and is just looking for whatever they can get in terms of story. They may throw a lot of questions at you to see what sticks.

- *Holding you accountable.* A reporter may tell you, “I know X, Y, and Z. Is this true?” or “Can you explain why A, B, and C?” Once again, don’t repeat the reporter’s accusations or assumptions. Stick to your message and what you know.
- *Dealing in rumors.* A lot of stories are generated from rumors. If it’s not a known fact, don’t speculate, no matter how many ways a question may be posed or how many times it is asked.
- *Asking several questions at once.* This often means that the reporter isn’t sure of where they expect the interview to go or they have an agenda. In both situations, pick the one question you want to answer (or the one that’s least objectionable) and answer it. Wait for the next question. More often than not, your answers will set the direction of the interview.
- *New reporters.* They can be your biggest problem. Oftentimes they are still learning and don’t know what questions to ask or how to approach an interview. You will need to feed them your message, but be careful not to say too much.

Successful Presentation in Interviews

Each type of media outlet—print, radio, or television—presents its own unique considerations for having a successful interview.

Print

Most public relations professionals agree that interviews for print are the most difficult. That said, they also offer the potential for the best coverage. Because of the conversational aspect and the lack of intimidating cameras or microphones, an interviewee can be kept chatting for hours, so be careful that you don’t get roped into this situation.

Radio

Radio interviews offer an opportunity to specifically target an audience based on a station’s particular demographics. On call-in shows you’ll have plenty of time to deliver your message, but you will definitely need to be prepared for audience questions that seem to come out of left field. Radio interviews can often be conducted from your own home, but don’t make yourself too comfortable, or you run the risk of losing the focus of your message. Even if you’re giving a radio interview from home, maintain an air of professionalism by dressing up. The clothes (even though the audience can’t see them) will help to boost your confidence and serve to remind you of your goals for the interview.

Television

Since it is a visual medium driven by brevity, television presents its own difficulties for interviews. You will need to make sure that the audience stays focused on your message and not your clothing or body language. If you’re being interviewed for a newscast, it is important that you’re able to give your message succinctly so that it can be used as a

sound bite. Don't look at the camera or other distractions off-camera when being interviewed; look at the interviewer. Also remember that television directors love "reaction shots" of your body language when someone puts the screws to you. Stay calm at all times, because you are always potentially on camera.

One distinct advantage to television (and also radio) is that hosts who do a lot of interviews often don't have the time to prepare and will ask you to provide them with a list of suggested questions. This truly allows you to control your message.

Looking the Part

You'll want to project the image of a clean-cut professional who is enthusiastic about his message, so dress to make the best impression. For television, you should stay away from bright, flashy colors and plaid or checked patterns. Depending on the studio's lighting, the color white might reflect. Shiny jewelry reflects studio lights, too. Microphones might pick up the sound of loose change in pockets. Be aware of your posture and if you are seated in a swivel chair, keep in mind that your nervous energy may cause it to swing back and forth.

Audiences will trust your authority and message if you appear confident and energetic. If you need to take a moment to think before answering, do so. Don't be in a rush to fill "dead air." Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know an answer to a question, but offer to find the answer and get back to the reporter. And never answer a question with "No comment." If you do, audiences will presume you guilty of an accusation or that you have something to hide.

Advertising and Other Means of Promotion

Advertising is bringing a product, service, or message to the attention of the public by paying for signs, brochures, commercials, direct mailings, etc. Since you are paying for the advertisement, you have full control over its content.

Places and Methods of Advertising

- *Newspapers.* Both daily and local newspapers can be great places to advertise. As advertising can get quite expensive, be sure that you time your ad for the greatest effectiveness and with the reading habits of your current and potential membership in mind. Many newspaper advertising departments can assist you the design of your ad, but this service may cost extra.
- *Magazines.* Magazine ads can be quite costly. Since magazines tend to have very targeted audiences, a magazine ad may be more effective than other types of print ads. When considering advertising in a magazine, consider the cost, the production schedule of the magazine, the magazine's ability to reach your audience, and the design of your ad (color, black and white, vertical, horizontal, etc.).

- *Radio.* Radio ads are usually less expensive than television ads, and since many people listen to the radio (especially during commuting hours), they can be a great way to reach a captive and targeted audience. Radio advertisements are usually sold on a package basis that factors in the length of the ad, the number of ads and/or the number of times they are aired, and the time an ad is aired. Be sure that your radio ads air when your intended audience is listening.

Speak with the station's advertising manager about whether they will assist you in producing the ad, have their on-air personalities read the ad, or if you will need to provide them with a ready-to-air ad. Some preproduced radio spots are available through the GL Public Relations Committee from the Grand Lodge. If you need to produce your own ad, ask the radio station's advertising manager if the station can provide production assistance. Local actors can often be hired inexpensively to do voice-over work for radio advertisements.

- *Television.* More often than not, television is ignored as a place to advertise because of the perceived expenses of producing an advertisement and purchasing its airtime. It is true that television is the most expensive advertising medium (and its pricing takes into the same considerations as those of radio), but good deals can often be found, and purchasing television ads for local cable stations can be much cheaper than purchasing ad time on network affiliates. Advertising managers at television stations should be able to provide you with assistance in either producing your ad or directing you to someone who can.
- *Direct mail.* Mail sent directly to your members, individuals who have expressed an interest in your Lodge's programs, or community residents who fit a demographic category that might be interested in a particular Lodge function can be an excellent way to advertise. Direct mail can be extremely customized to suit your Lodge's needs and the needs of your target audience. To avoid high costs, make sure that your mailing list is carefully maintained and never out-of-date. Also, brevity is important both in keeping the attention of the direct-mail recipients and in keeping your expenses low. Do not overwhelm your target audience with too many pieces of information.
- *On-line.* The growth of the Internet has produced a wide range of new advertising possibilities. Web banners resemble print ads, but when clicked on provide a direct link to your specific website. E-mail can be used in the same manner as direct mail. Be sure that you attach a signature at the end of each E-mail (most software programs can automatically attach a signature if you prefer). Obviously, using on-line advertising requires specific equipment and expertise, so do not be afraid to enlist the help of professionals.
- *Newsletters.* In addition to sending the Lodge newsletter to your members, you definitely should consider others your newsletter might effectively reach.
- *The Yellow Pages.* Ask yourself if your Lodge would benefit from an advertisement in the local phone directory. Consult with the advertising manager of your local phone directory about advertising costs, placement, design, and effectiveness.
- *Billboards.* For targeting a specific geographic audience, billboards can be an excellent tool for promotion and increasing an organization's visibility. With a

simple billboard message, a large audience can be reached. Printers of billboards frequently need camera-ready artwork and layout work can be expensive. The GL Public Relations Committee has billboards with the message “Elks Care—Elks Share” available from the Grand Lodge.

- *Posters and bulletin boards.* Posters can be very powerful when you place them where your intended audience will take notice. Some businesses and municipalities have regulations about the number and size of posters that can be displayed, so you will need to make sure that your posters comply with any and all regulations. Community bulletin boards at local businesses, restaurants, and other locations can also be used. Since we frequently see posters, but rarely read them, you will need to pay special attention to creating a visually stunning poster. Some posters are available through the GL Public Relations Committee from the Grand Lodge.
- *Brochures and flyers.* If designed well, brochures and flyers can contain a great deal of information, and they are becoming common advertising tools. Many desktop publishing programs and word-processing software systems can produce attractive trifold (an 8-1/2”x11” sheet folded in thirds) brochures. Some specific types of brochures and flyers are available through the GL Public Relations Committee from the Grand Lodge

Creating advertisements is a definite skill involving graphic design, layout, writing solid copy, and arranging for effective placement. Poorly designed ads can be more harmful than no advertising at all. Consider getting help to create your first ads.

Promotional Ideas

- Entering community parades
- Purchasing a sign for your Lodge to be placed at the entrance to your community
- Elks’ road signs (school zones, etc.), decals, license plates, lapel pins, and other items—be sure to check the catalogs of Elks-licensed vendors
- Flyers and brochures for schools, businesses, city officials, and/or to place on car windshields
- Hosting a booth at community fairs and city celebrations
- Speaking engagements at schools, churches, organizations and clubs, youth groups, city meetings, etc.
- Sponsoring local athletic and youth groups and displaying your Lodge banner at their events
- Attending community shows, exhibits, or seminars
- Applying for local community service awards
- Requesting your Lodge’s event be promoted on placemats of local fast food restaurants, grocery store bags, etc.
- Promotional giveaways (pens, pencils, balloons, stickers, shirts, hats, athletic equipment, etc.)
- Open houses at your Lodge
- Wearing “I’m an Elk” buttons

- Awarding students and community residents

Of course, this is only a partial list of the ways that you can promote your Lodge in the community. By using your creativity you are sure to come up with many exciting promotions of your own that are bound to help your Lodge gain the recognition it deserves. When planning new promotional ideas, ask yourself what audience you wish to reach and what message you want to present to them. By knowing and understanding your target audience, you are sure to come up with imaginative ways of reaching them.

Event Planning and Staging

Whether you're holding an open house, conducting a ground-breaking ceremony, or hosting a special function at the Lodge, careful planning will help make the event an occasion that is sure to make the media take notice and leave your guests truly impressed.

Selecting a Date

One of the most important decisions that you will make as you plan a special event is its date. The date you host your event can affect all of your other decisions, so it deserves careful thought.

You will need to consider:

- *Your guests.* If you want to attract certain people to your function you will need to consult with their schedules.
- *Your preparation time.* Give yourself at least two to three months to make all the necessary arrangements for your function.
- *Major holidays.* To attract the most guests, you will need to make sure that you do not schedule your event on major holidays, and in some cases, too close to them. Additionally, if you plan on inviting government officials, be sure to take note of any special holidays when their offices might be closed.
- *The day of the week for your function.* Events held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays get strong attendance—many people find themselves too busy to leave the office on Mondays and may have left town on Fridays for a long weekend. However, weekend events work well for many Elks functions.
- *Reservations.* You will need to contact the appropriate individual to reserve your meeting site and reserve it on their calendar. By scheduling in advance, you should be able to avoid potential conflicts.

Choosing the Time

Choosing the time of day to hold your function can play an important role in the event's success. The time the function is scheduled for will affect the atmosphere and who will attend.

Keep in mind that:

- Very few successful special events are held in the early morning hours (7 to 7:30 A.M.) unless a breakfast is planned. Otherwise, morning events should begin no earlier than 8:00 A.M.
- Luncheon events are quite popular since most everyone eats a midday meal. To increase the chances of success for a luncheon event, be sure to send out invitations weeks in advance. This allows your guests to adjust their schedules well in advance so that they are free to attend your function.
- Late-afternoon or early-evening functions have high success rates. Since few people will want to leave work, go home, change clothes, and then go out again, events scheduled at this time are often a great success and have a high level of attendance.
- Avoid midmorning or mid-afternoon functions. Many people simply cannot break away from work at these times.
- If media coverage of your event is important, keep in mind reporters' deadlines when scheduling your event.

Developing an Invitation List

Getting the “right” people to attend your event is one way to judge its success. The list of right people may vary from event to event, but make sure that for every function you host you invite:

- Potential and current members
- Friends and family
- Employees and their spouses
- Your volunteers and advisors
- Elks members from other Lodges
- Representatives from your state association and the Grand Lodge
- Key government officials, city council members, and council members in your Lodge's community
- Military dignitaries (especially if your event involves veterans)
- The Media

When creating your guest list, consider the size of the venue for the event. A too small site can leave your guests feeling cramped, irritated, and with a bad impression of the event.

Once you have created your guest list, remember these tips as you invite them to your event:

- Prepare a nicely written invitation that is clear and concise. Preprinted invitations that are also simple and friendly will work too.
- Make sure that all important information is included—who, what, when, where, and why.

- Ask for an RSVP. Have your guests return a reservation card or call by a certain date. This will let you know how much food and beverages to prepare.
- Give ample notice—between six and eight weeks—although more notice is preferable if you plan on inviting government officials, PGERs, and others who have calendars that fill quickly.
- Include a good map with easy-to-understand instructions on how to get to your site. A street address alone may not be sufficient.
- If you chose to do a fancy or elaborate invitation, make sure that you get help from a designer and a proofreader. Errors on invitations are not only embarrassing, but may reflect poorly on your Lodge.
- Indicate the appropriate attire for the event on the invitation.
- If spouses are invited, say so. Otherwise, it will be assumed that they are not.
- Invitations should only be sent by first-class mail. Bulk mail may take too long to deliver, seriously hurting the level of attendance at your event.
- As you send out your invitations, make sure that you have drafted a media advisory and media release to distribute as well. Send these to media outlets as you mail the invitation.
- Make sure that easy-to-find and accessible parking is available for your guests. Absolutely no one enjoys hunting for a parking space.

It may be impossible to predict the number of guest who will actually attend your event, but keep in mind that between 25 and 50 percent of the people you invite will actually attend the function. Friends and relatives will be more likely to attend than the people whom you don't know or sent an invitation to as a courtesy.

Serving Food and Beverages

Most people have come to expect something to eat and drink at functions. It's a tradition that you don't want to break with, because it's yet another way for you to show your Lodge's hospitality.

Consider the following:

- For morning events, offer juice, coffee, fresh fruit, and bagels and pastries. There's no need to go overboard for most morning functions so a full breakfast may not be required or expected.
- At luncheon events, a box lunch or buffet are both perfectly acceptable to and appreciated by guests.
- During late-afternoon or early-evening events, simple finger foods and hors d'oeuvres are the norm. At a function scheduled for this time, just like other times, it is a good idea to avoid foods that are too messy, are very greasy, or spill easily.
- If you are having a formal dinner or late evening party, be sure to go out of your way to make the meal exceptionally nice. Since you are requesting that your guests spend their evening with you, show your appreciation for their time by treating them well.

- Alcohol is a matter that requires some careful thought. Cocktails and beer and wine are appropriate for late-afternoon and early-evening events and dinners as they can add to the enjoyment of an event. However, it is important that you also have nonalcoholic beverages for designated drivers and those who do not drink. Depending on the type of function, alcohol may or may not be appropriate for a luncheon event and is almost never served at morning functions.
- Although “meat and potatoes” may have been the norm for meals for quite sometime, health concerns and changing lifestyles might call for you to rethink some of your menu items. As a considerate host, you might consider including vegetarian dishes (pastas and salads) as well as low-fat, low-sodium dishes. A simple touch like this can go a long way to impressing any guest who has special dietary restrictions or requirements. Additionally, if you are expecting many children in attendance, consider including foods such as pizza, hot dogs, and hamburgers. Youngsters are notoriously finicky eaters, so having foods they enjoy will impress their parents with how accommodating your Lodge is.
- Consider enlisting a caterer for medium-sized or large events or if you do not have the time, manpower, or talent to provide your own food and beverages. Many caterers can offer exceptional food at reasonable prices as can many restaurants. Check with your local chamber of commerce for their listing of caterers in your area.
- Be sure that there is ample food and beverages for your guests and sufficient plates, napkins, cups, cutlery, and trash cans. Running out of these things can create a sour note with your guests.

Planning Your Program

A brief program at your event adds a nice touch and in most cases will be expected. For some events, the Ritualistic Manual should be the first place consulted.

A brief program is an excellent way to bring purpose to your event and provide valuable recognition.

Keep in mind:

- The shorter the program, the better. Your program should not last longer than a half hour in most cases. A ten-minute program is ideal and will help you not to lose a large part of your crowd.
- Your program should be led by an effective master of ceremonies.
- Limit the number of speakers and the length of their speeches. People get bored by long speeches, so as a courtesy to both your guests and your speakers, set a time limit for everyone participating in your program.
- Introduce only those who need to be introduced. You may feel pressure to acknowledge the presence of everyone you know, but this should be avoided. More than likely a long list of introductions will tire your guests, and worse, you may fail to acknowledge someone.

- Conclude your program with an appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity. From ribbon cuttings to blowing out the candles on birthday cakes to curtains falling at the end of the final act of a play, people expect a sign that the major portion of the event has concluded. Additionally, these moments make for great opportunities for photographers.
- If your event includes a tour of the Lodge or an open house, make sure that you have knowledgeable and friendly guides leading your guests. Unguided tours aren't nearly as valuable to your Lodge as guided ones.
- Speakers taking part in any formal program should include appropriate city or county government representatives, state association or Grand Lodge representatives, Exalted Rulers, or appropriate members of your Lodge.
- Be sure to send thank-you letters the day after the event to anyone who played a key role in helping you to plan and stage your event, particularly those individuals who participated in your program or ceremony.
- Microphone systems typically are not needed for indoor events with a group of 50 or fewer people. For more than 50 people or outdoor events, voice amplification may be required. Portable lecterns often include amplification devices as well as being helpful to speakers.
- Always have a back-up plan in case of inclement weather. Be prepared to move outdoor events indoors or consider erecting a tent.
- Door prizes and drawings can add a certain level of liveliness to your function as well as increase attendance.

Getting Media Coverage

Well in advance of your function, you should send advisories to the media outlets in your area so that your event can be noted in their calendars. As the event approaches and you mail your invitations, resend your media advisory and include a media release alerting the public to your function.

Since media outlets are swamped with advisories about special events, you will need to make your event seem newsworthy to reporters and editors. Be sure to refer to the tools outlined earlier in this handbook in creating both a news hook and your media release.

Also, don't be too disappointed if the media does not attend your event. It is not meant as an insult. Be sure to send any media outlet that did not have reporters in attendance a follow-up media release detailing what happened.

Using State Association and GL Public Relations Committee Services

The GL Public Relations Committee and your state association public relations committee will be happy to offer assistance in planning your event, preparing an invitation list, offering suggestions for guest speakers, and making recommendations for media releases and how to gain greater media coverage.

Don't be afraid to ask for help.

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