

How to Prepare a Media Event

Media events are a useful tool, and are an important part of a successful communication strategy.

Media events, beyond news conferences or briefings, include regional visits, street fairs, open houses, the opening of a new facility or school, or any other event staged to attract media attention and promote a message.

They may be focused around the beginning of the school year, the publication of an important document, submission or approval of a bill, or the release of a study.

They generate news coverage and enable the organizers to set and control the agenda. To plan a successful event, view your event from a journalist's point of view. Decide on a news angle—the aspect that will make the event newsworthy and not just an exercise in self-promotion.

Planning a media event:

- * If your event is extensive (an all day, all week, or all month event), it is most effective to establish a planning or coordinating committee involving key decision makers. The committee should be established well in advance of the event, and should develop a strategy to design, implement and monitor the event. The committee is responsible for ensuring that all the financial resources and personnel necessary to stage the event are available;
- * Know what you want the event to communicate; know your message and prepare a news release communicating your message;
- * Prepare a news advisory in advance of the event explaining the event to the media, and describing what they can and cannot cover;
- * Select an easily accessible site which will enable all those interested to attend;
- * Time the event to maximize media coverage (late morning hours are often the best for both television and newspapers), and make sure your event does not conflict with another media event;
- * Make sure your event is visual and attractive for television; be creative and consider staging your story. A government official might take an exam to communicate the new matura; a government official might undergo a health examination to communicate the benefits of health reform; a government official might hold a discussion for the media with parents or children to discuss education reforms;
- * Make it easy for journalists to cover your event; be accessible to them, provide them with a news release, assist them in obtaining interviews and in selecting a location from which to broadcast. Send your news release to journalists who cannot attend the event; they may just print the release.

* Always remember that good planning is your best insurance of a successful event, and that a well – planned event requires a good deal of work well in advance.

If your event involves the public, and the participation of non governmental officials:

* Select your participants or speakers carefully. Know what they will say; obtain their remarks in advance. When they can support your message with the media, help arrange media interviews for them.

* Encourage public attendance. Promote your event to the public most involved in the issue, and encourage their involvement. The Ministry of Education might involve teachers, schools, parents or students in an event; the Ministry of Health might involve doctors, nurses, patients or clinic personnel.

* Consider corporate sponsorship of the event to help defray expenses, perhaps allowing the corporate sponsor to produce souvenirs, such as T-shirts, caps, or key chains which promote the event and the corporation;

* Consider the establishment of contests – among journalists, school children or schools as a method to attract public involvement in the event; government officials or journalists could serve as judges; journalist involvement in the event as a participant almost always ensures media coverage;

* Consider hiring a well - known personality or media personality to participate in your event as emcee, moderator, or panelist. This can make your event more attractive for media coverage