

Media Relations Basics

What is the Inverted Pyramid?

Start with the conclusion and put the most important information at the top. News stories are often cut for space. Journalists place the most important information at the top of their stories so that lesser details can be cut out of the story without losing important information.

Fiction writing often starts out in the middle of something and then additional details are added as you move through the piece to add to the suspense. Journalistic writing lays all the important details down in the first paragraph. If a reporter reads only the beginning of your release they should be able to understand the 5 W's.

What are the 5 W's?

This is the important information that journalists are looking for to determine if something is newsworthy.

Who: Who is involved? What person or people is this story about?

What: What is the action? What will occur? What has already occurred?

Where: What is the location of the action, event or story?

When: When is this or did this happen? If it's an event in the future, timing information should be prominent upfront.

Why: Why is this relevant to readers of this publication?

What is newsworthy?

Relevance to Readership: This varies based on the publication you're targeting. A publication dedicated to professional beer making will define newsworthy differently than your local city newspaper. Your job is to target the right message to the right reporter at the right publication. If your book deals with themes related to the paranormal, you might target a journal of an organization dedicated to ghost hunting. If you're a teacher or a university alumni, you might tap into related publications by prominently featuring your connection.

Local: Reporters are always searching for a local angle. For example: If your book is set in a park in Miami, you might target the local newspaper in the city.

Events: Reporters like featuring upcoming events that the public could choose to attend. Make sure the event is relevant to the publication. If it's a local paper it needs to be a local event. If it's a beer making publication, it needs to be a beer making event.

Animals and Children: Reporters love human interest stories. The old adage in journalism school is that you can always get coverage of animals and children. It holds for anything unique, cute or fuzzy. Maybe everyone is going to wear costumes or kittens will be in attendance. Photo opportunities are important for most publications, so try to make things visual when you can.

Causes and Calls to Actions: Asking the public to take a step, sign a petition, join a group, donate to a cause or feel like they can participate in any way ups the newsworthiness of your work. So, if your book touches on a domestic violence theme, why not partner with the local shelter? Do some good for the world while upping your publicity.

Contests and Free Stuff: People respond to opportunities to participate and they love things that are free. It could be a free kindle download, a short story on your website, an opportunity to compete for a book. It needs to be relevant and it needs to be important enough to cut through the clutter for that publication. If a million other people are doing it, it's not newsworthy, so try for a unique angle. For example, maybe, you're giving out free kits to teachers to use in the classroom. They could be downloaded at your site and your targeted teacher publications. Keep in mind that contests that require entrants to make a purchase may not be legal. Consult an attorney if you're unsure of the law.

Contact me at jennagrinstead@gmail.com or visit www.jennagrinstead.blogspot.com for more tips.

Media Relations Plan Worksheet :

Author and Book Name:

Objectives (Specific, Measurable, Realistic and Timebound):

News Hooks:

Publication Targets:

Reporter Targets:

Key Messages:

Action Steps:

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Media Relations Sample:

Name: Jane Doerraine, author of *A Romantic Story*

Objectives:

- Garner media coverage for the release of *A Romantic Story* on Aug. 1, 2012 in local media
- Garner media coverage for the release of *A Romantic Story* on Aug. 1, 2012 in publications
- Drive pre-purchase of *A Romantic Story* from website aromanticstory.com prior to Aug. 1, 2012

News Hooks:

- *A Romantic Story* is set in downtown Town City, New Jersey
- *A Romantic Story*'s heroine's hobby is needle point
- The author graduated from the University of Anywhere
- The author is Jewish
- The author is a talented needle pointer
- The author's hometown is Catalina, CA
- A series of book signings are planned in seven towns at independent bookstores
- The release of the book will coincide with Memorial Day and the heroine is a military wife

Publication Targets:

Town City Local Paper
University of Anywhere Alumni News

Reporter Targets:

Key Messages:

Action Steps:

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