



How to Generate Publicity

Publicity is the communication that a post produces or attempts to get in connection with an event or activity. Publicity can be in the form of a talk, special event, dinner, demonstration, exhibit, interview, conference, news story, feature story, or photo essay. The list is limited only by each post's imagination and industriousness.

Using News Releases to Gain Publicity

News releases from organizations, business firms, and public relations agencies are a vital part of any newspaper. The goal of an Explorer post is to develop a news release that gains the attention of the editor for that section in a newspaper.

An editor wants *news*. What is news? News is a timely, informative, unusual, interesting, or entertaining summary of something not seen or heard. It may have the element of conflict, report on progress or change, provide human interest, or be unusual, offbeat, informative, amusing, or helpful.

Editors judge news on the following points:

- **Timeliness**

Nothing is *deader* or less interesting than yesterday's news or events. Exploring events should be reported promptly.

- **Proximity**

Is an event or news item close to home? Does it have a local frame of reference? Can an Exploring event in another part of the country be tied in with the activities of a local post?

- **Importance**

Is the event or news item of some importance or benefit to the community?

- **Prominence**

Are prominent people in the community involved in any way? The involvement of a prominent person will more readily catch the reader's attention.

Writing News Releases

Every news release must be written to answer the essential

questions of any news item, commonly called the "five Ws plus one":

- **Who** will do it?
- **What** will they do?
- **When** will they do it?
- **Where** will they do it?
- **Why** will they do it?
- **How** will they do it?

The structure of the news release is important. It must be written so that the reader has the essential information at the outset. The *lead*, usually the first paragraph or two, should summarize the "five Ws" to give the reader an overview. The subsequent paragraphs will specifically answer the six questions.

Details should be given in descending order of importance. Information that is useful but not essential should be at the end of the release. Editors often cut from the bottom up, and this information likely will be the first to go.

The following rules should be observed in any news release: Be accurate, factual, brief, informative, and objective. Use active words. Mention the subject first. Be specific. Avoid

repetition. News releases should be typewritten or computer printed on 8½-by-11-inch paper, centered and double-spaced. The top of the page should include a title, contact name, and telephone number. The post number and participating organization are also needed. Do not use the reverse side of the page, but continue to another sheet of paper.

Here are a few examples of news releases that an Explorer post might use.

News Release Sample 1: Election of Officers

Participants of (participating organization) Explorer Post (number) elected officers for the coming year at their meeting (date) at (place).

Newly elected officers are (list names, ages, schools attended, and offices).

Post (number) is part of Learning for Life, and is made up of young men and women, ages 14 through 20, who are interested in (post specialty).

At (date) meeting, post participants also (give summary of other actions taken, activities planned, or invitations to participate).

News Release Sample 2: Special Post Trip

(Location) is the destination of (number) participants of (participating organization) Explorer Post (number). The local Explorers will be in (location) from (date) through (date).

Making the trip will be (give names, ages, and schools attended). They will be accompanied by (give names of accompanying adults and titles). While in (location), the Explorers will (give general itinerary of trip, historic sites to be visited, and other activities planned).

The trip is planned as one of the post's special activities for

this year. Post (number) is part of Learning for Life, and is made up of young men and women, ages 14 through 20, who are interested in (post specialty).

News Release Sample 3: Parents' Night

Parents of participants in Explorer Post (number) have been invited to attend the post's meeting, (day and time), at (place). Parents have been invited to attend the (month, date) meeting to observe the workings of the post and become familiar with the post's special-interest activities. Post (number) is made up of young men and women, ages 14 through 20, who are interested in (post specialty). The post is part of Learning for Life. At (day's) meeting, (give summary of guest speaker scheduled or other planned activity or event).

News Release Sample 4: Explorer Open House

Young men and women, ages 14 through 20, who are interested in (post specialty) are invited to attend (participating organization) Explorer Post (number's) open house program (day, place, and time). The purpose of the open house is to encourage high school-age young people to participate in the program developed by the post.

Potential participants are being contacted as a result of a career interest survey administered in local high schools through Learning for Life. These survey forms pinpointed specific career choices of high school students. At (date) meeting, (give summary of scheduled activities). Representatives of (participating organization) attending the meeting will be (give names and positions held).

News Release Sample 5: Social Activity

A (social activity) will highlight the (month) programs of Explorer Post (number). The (activity) will be held (date, time, and place). Post (number) is part of (participating organization) and is also part of Learning for Life. Post (number) is made up of young men and women, ages 14 through 20, who are interested in (post specialty). Highlights of the (activity) will be (give summary of planned activity, listing important events, reasons for holding the activity, and invited guests). Representing (participating organization) will be (list names and professional positions).

News Release Sample 6: Service Project

(Participating organization's) Explorer Post (number) will hold (service project) on (day and time) at (place). The purpose of the (service project) is (give specific reasons for project).

Explorer Post (number) is made up of young men and women, ages 14 through 20, who are interested in (post specialty). Post (number) is part of Learning for Life. (Give schedule of activities planned in connection with the service project.)

Radio and Television as Sources for Publicity

Local radio and television stations are another source for placing news items and stories. As with newspapers, it is important to know the media and the types of stories in which they might be interested. The following suggestions are helpful in trying to place stories.

• Make contacts.

Staff members of radio and television stations are usually too busy to spend time

with someone who drops in with vague ideas. Come prepared with written proposals or ideas. Know whom you want to see, and call in advance for an appointment. Possible contacts include:

- *News director or assignment editor.* Present ideas for straight news coverage of an event, an unusual feature, a humorous story, or a documentary program.
- *Program director.* Get ideas on local programs and how an Exploring story might be included.
- *Public service director.* Find out how to place an announcement or a story; the public service director is responsible for balancing the competing demands for free air time.

- **Draft proposals.**

Before trying to promote an idea or a story to a station, watch or listen to the target program on a regular basis. Become familiar with the type of program it is and with the style of materials presented. Write a specific proposal for a program or for program participation.

- **Get professional help.**

Seek professional help in producing radio and television programs. A professionally trained voice and professional recording equipment will make an effective presentation. Television presents its own specific requirements:

- Develop graphics that are not lost on screen. Television cuts off about 15 percent of the edges of a color slide, so copy and graphics must fit.
- Write copy that “sells.” Ten words is about all that can be included on a slide.

- Check color quality. Make certain the colors are defined. Washed-out color is not acceptable.

- **Evaluate news subjects.**

News directors have an abundance of news assignments, so an Exploring event must have widespread interest to merit coverage. Short features, humorous stories, or presentations of useful information are more likely to be used.

- **Consider the production of programs.**

Some posts might have their own show, but more likely, a post will have a segment on an existing program such as a talk show, sports program, or community activities program. Whatever the case, these points are important to remember if you make a presentation on television:

- Check with the producer in advance. Determine what materials are needed: audiotapes, still photos, color slides, or film.
- Make suggestions as to the types of questions an interviewer might ask.
- Avoid simple yes or no answers. Be prepared to respond fully, but do not ramble. Get in the most important points first.
- Check clothing. This is important for television. Avoid bright, flashy colors or sparkling jewelry. Wear appropriate clothing; look your best.

Advertising as a Means of Publicity

Advertising, both in print and for electronic media, is an effective means of communication for an

Explorer post, but it is important that materials be professionally produced. For a post’s advertising to be effective, some professional assistance is advised. Almost anyone can write a classified ad, but developing successful advertising for print and broadcasting calls for expert help in design, layout, writing, production, and media selection.

Seek the assistance of potential volunteers such as local advertising agencies, advertising departments of commercial organizations (manufacturers, department stores), university instructors, and advertising clubs. Freelance artists, photographers, illustrators, and copywriters also might be willing to help. Use the talents of retired people.

Preparation is essential. Before seeking professional help, do the following:

- **Determine your target audience.**

Which group or groups within the community are you trying to reach with the message? This needs to be determined before any other action is taken.

- **Determine the purpose of the advertisement.**

What action do you want your audience to take? Do you want young people to join an Explorer post? Are you seeking members of the community to serve on a special post committee?

- **Determine how to match the purpose of the ad with the needs of your target audience.**

What appeals or messages can be used to meet the needs of your target audience? How can the programs and activities of the post be tied in with the needs of an organization within the community?

After making these determinations, research the circulation or audience of the newspapers, magazines, or broadcast stations that are being considered for placement of an ad. Research might indicate that their respective readers or listeners are not the group the post wants to reach with its message.

Two Categories of Advertising

Advertising for the post can be broken down into two basic categories: public service advertising and public service announcements. Public service advertising refers to ads placed in newspapers or magazines, while public service announcements refer to announcements made on radio and television. Each form has its own requirements.

Category 1: Public Service Advertising

All print ads, ads placed in newspapers or magazines, contain the same elements:

- **Headline**

The headline attracts attention and involves the reader by promising a benefit, filling a need, providing news or information, or satisfying a want. (Example: YOU CAN EXPLORE TOMORROW TODAY!)

- **Text or Copy**

The copy continues the idea from the headline by explaining how the service or product can benefit the reader, or how Exploring meets the needs of a potential participant or participating organization.

- **Illustration**

Use a photo, artist's conception, line drawing, or other art to demonstrate the idea,

show benefits, or appeal to wants and needs. Exploring ads are people ads, so use photos. A good photo with an appealing headline might be all that is needed.

- **Command**

Advertising should motivate the reader to take some action, so the urgency to do something must be there. As a result of the ad, the reader should be motivated to call, write, phone, join, support, or mail in a coupon.

- **Layout**

The message must stand out, so the layout must be pleasing to the eye and easily understood.

Category 2: Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements (PSAs) are also called *spots*. By either name, they are great for informing listeners about a post's programs and activities. Because public service time is made available at no cost, any announcement about post activities likely will be included in a listing of various community events. A short, concise announcement that gives the viewer or listener all the pertinent information is most likely to be used on the air. Special post activities may also afford opportunities for submitting public service announcements.

It is important to be as concise as possible. The following format is useful in preparing a PSA:

- **Opener**

The first line must act as an intriguing headline, one that will catch the attention of the listener. Attention-getters are a challenging question, a statement of fact, a

promise of some benefit, a contrast of two ideas or products, or a quotation from a prominent person.

- **Message**

The message must "sell" the product or idea. An Exploring spot can ask for support, stimulate recruiting, announce an event, invite the public, or provide information.

- **Command**

The spot must motivate the listener to take action.

Public service announcements can vary in length. They are 10, 15, 20, 30, or 60 seconds in length. The 30-second spot is the most common. Typewritten copy can be delivered to the station to be read by a staff announcer, or it can be recorded in advance and delivered to the station on audiotape or cassette. If this course is taken, professional announcers and technicians should be used to ensure good quality. Typed copy should be on a standard 8½-by-11-inch page, in a form similar to that used for news releases. The following examples of public service announcements indicate the format to be used:

PSA Sample 1: Participant Recruiting

Who has fun trying out new careers? The Explorers, that's who. You may join if you are interested in (post specialty) and if you are of high school age and under 21. (Organization) Explorer Post (number) gives young men and women the chance to learn about opportunities in (post specialty). Phone (number) for information about this program. That's (phone number) for Exploring. (30 seconds)

PSA Sample 2: Post Advisors and Volunteers

Young men and women in this community want to learn about (post specialty), but they need Advisors. If you are a (profession or job description), you can help form an Explorer post. Call (phone number) for details. *(15 seconds)*

PSA Sample 3: Special Event

Waterskiing season is almost here, and if you'd like to see a demonstration, come to (location) this (day and time). Explorer Post (number) will show you how to ski, exhibit new equipment, and conduct a safety clinic. That's this (day) at (time) at (location) for a water-skiing demonstration by Explorer Post (number). *(20 seconds)*

PSA Sample 4: Parents' Night

Parents of young men and women in Explorer Post (number) are invited to attend the post's meeting (day, place, and time). Parents are invited to attend the meeting to observe the operation of the post and to find out more about the programs and activities that are planned. That's Explorer Post (number), hosting parents' night (day, place, and time). *(20 seconds)*

PSA Sample 5: Explorer Open House

Young men and women, ages 14 through 20, who are interested in (post specialty) are invited to attend an open house of Explorer Post (number) at (time, day, and place). The Explorer program of Post (number) is offered to high school-age young people by (participating organization). For more information about this meeting, phone (number). Take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about Exploring and opportunities in (post specialty). *(30 seconds)*

PSA Sample 6: Service Project

Participants of (participating organization) Explorer Post (number) are (service project) on (day and time) at (place). Phone (number) for further information. *(10 seconds)*

Photo Publicity

Editors generally like photos of youth events because they rate high in readership studies. People, regardless of age, enjoy seeing young people in print. If an event is newsworthy, the local paper might send out a photographer. However, newspaper staff photographers usually are busy with coverage of general news assignments. Therefore, an editor might be grateful for a good picture of a post event that can be used.

Although it is not necessary to use the same equipment a professional photographer might use, it is important to have a camera that will give a sharp, news-quality print. A 35mm camera or larger works best. Instamatics and Polaroids generally fail to give a sharp enough photo, but small daily papers or weeklies might use them. Exploring photos include a number of possibilities:

- Spot news—get a picture of an unplanned happening.
- Feature photo—cover a planned event or situation, usually arranged in advance.
- Mood or emotion—capture a mood or an emotion.
- Record photo—identify people, places, and things.
- Photo story or essay—submit a series of photos on a central theme or subject.

It is essential that photos of post events show Explorers wearing the post uniform or other identifying clothing. Otherwise, nothing in the photo will distinguish the activity as an Exploring event.

An editor decides whether and where a photo is to be used. A number of factors influence this decision:

- **Technical quality**

The photo should be sharp, in focus, and precisely developed, with a good balance between black and white areas.

- **Composition**

Emphasis should be on one idea or subject, with proper lighting and an uncluttered background. Unwanted areas should be cropped out. Move in close to the subject. An average distance of five or six feet is best.

- **News value**

The photo should inform, interest, or entertain a majority of the readers.

- **Subject**

The subject should be prominent.

- **Action**

The photo should show or imply physical action.

- **Good taste**

The photo should conform to ethical and moral standards of propriety for the public.

- **Freedom from clichés**

Avoid photos of handshaking, crowd scenes, subjects staring at the camera, subjects looking at a piece of paper or pointing, ceremonial groundbreakings, and ribbon cuttings.

Photo Essay

A photo essay or story is a great device for gaining Exploring publicity. A photo essay is a planned and organized sequence of photos telling a story of an event, personality, or single

subject or idea. Emphasis can be placed on words, with photos used to illustrate the text, or the pictures can tell the story with few words accompanying them. Many types of photo essays exist. The following list provides some examples.

- **Theme**

Photos are arranged in a logical sequence to present a theme, such as an Explorer post traffic safety demonstration.

- **Repetition**

A person, idea, or object is shown in a series of steps. One person or idea is best. An example of this type of essay would be an Explorer riding along with a deputy sheriff.

- **Chronology**

A series of photos can be based on time alone, with no narrative or story line, such as photos of a post social event.

- **Narrative**

A story line series consists of a beginning, some elements of suspense, and a conclusion. An example would be a post exploring the inner depths of a cave.

- **Contrast**

Contrasting photos are used mainly in instructive photo essays, such as how to and how not to put out a fire.

- **How to**

A how-to photo essay presents a series of steps showing how to do something, such as waterskiing.

To avoid wasting time and film, plan a photo essay in advance. Shoot the photos from a sequence known as a “shooting script.” Make a penciled layout, and take it and the photos to one of the newspaper’s editors

for the best advice on how to proceed.

Using Exhibits to Generate Publicity

Exhibits, including displays and demonstrations, are a useful publicity tool. Exhibition spaces are common in shopping malls and office buildings; many opportunities exist for a post to be creative and imaginative in setting up an exhibit. The following suggestions provide some guidance.

- **Theme**

The starting point of every exhibit is its central theme or message. All elements must relate to and carry out the theme.

- **Impact**

Lead the viewer’s eye into the exhibit, and focus it on a single impact device. Do not clutter the presentation with unnecessary material; otherwise, the viewer will miss the point.

- **Identification**

All exhibits need a sign to identify the participating organization, state the theme, and provide other information. If a commercial artist is not available for lettering, press-on letters or other commercial lettering aids can be used.

- **Security**

Eliminate the possibility of pilfering and vandalism by using guards and securing all items.

- **Motion**

Many simple electronic motors and turntables can be used to give an exhibit movement.

- **Regulations**

Be alert to local fire regulations and do not use flammable materials.

- **Props**

Props can help to dramatize a display or demonstration, but they also can clutter it. Use them only if they contribute.

- **Photos**

Photos are good for an exhibit, but they must be blown up large enough for the casual observer to see.

- **Professional assistance**

Department stores are good sources of help in designing and mounting exhibits. Personnel know how to display merchandise and decorate for various promotions. This same skill can be applied to an Exploring event.

- **Location**

If given a choice of locations, select the area with care. Check traffic flow, lighting, security, and other desirable features.

- **Cooperation**

Shopping center managers are eager to stage events that will attract people to the center. Meet with the manager and the public relations representative, and work out procedures for staging the event in the mall or parking area.

Again, it is important for people in the community to see young men and women wearing some form of Explorer identification, such as a post jacket, T-shirt, or post uniform. Otherwise, a vital recognition of the post as an Explorer unit may be lost.