



Creating Your Media Image

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ **Undrstand what is media and how it is linked to PR**

Unit 2

Creating Your Media Image

When people think of a media image, they think about wearing the right clothes and saying the right things. These are important, but only part of what contributes to your media image.

What is the Media?

Communication channels through which news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, direct mail, telephone, fax, and internet. Media is the plural of medium and can take a plural or singular verb, depending on the sense intended.

Test Your Knowledge

What kind of relationship do you/your company have with members of the media today?

Do you have a media strategy?

When was the last time you read or saw something about your company in the news? Was it good news, or not? Was it well written?

Managing your image is about how you present yourself and your company, and about being congruent in the way you do so. The way that you present your company to the public has to be carefully managed.

Getting Clear on Your Message

What are the mission, vision, and values of your company? What is your strategic plan? Does the way you talk, dress, and present yourself in public make you a good representation of what you stand for? If so, great! If not, why not? What are you willing to do to make yourself congruent with what you say you stand for?

Test Your Knowledge

Take a few moments to write down your typical work dress.

Then decide if what you are wearing is congruent with your role.

Write out any changes that you need to make, and then commit to doing so.

Test Your Knowledge

Do you think a PR consultant's personal image needs to reflect the company image, or not?

Why or why not?

Media Kits

A media kit, which can also be called a press kit, is a carefully compiled package of information about your company. A good media kit is a great help to journalists, because it helps shorten their research time and answer their questions. A PR person's job can be very demanding, and by having a general kit that is suitable for the majority of the time, you can easily avoid having to put one together at a moment's notice. Preparing packages ahead of time allows you to have a standard kit available and to make sure that you present a consistent message. If you are planning a special event like a press conference, trade show or award ceremony, for example, you can add a few additional items without having to start from scratch.

A media kit can include a variety of items, including:

- Photos and captions of company leaders, community involvement, or other positive messages, which must also include copyright/attribution information
- Q & A (Question and Answers) about the company
- Previous news releases
- Copies of articles previously published
- Biographies and backgrounds about key stakeholders
- Photos of executives or products
- Product or service listing
- Achievements/awards received
- Books, movies, or films
- Annual reports, brochures, or publications

- CD's, DVD's, or MP3 files with previous media coverage, or video clips of company headquarters that a media outlet can use to complement a story

For an award ceremony, your media kit might include some of the following:

- Background to the awards.
- List of sponsors.
- Biographies of the award winners.
- Samples of the products or ideas that led to the award. This might include photos, artwork, posters, or whatever else you can think of!

During a crisis situation, the media kit should also include reports, photo or video samples, police or investigative reports, witness statements, court or safety investigation documents, and whatever else relates to the event.

Here is an example of a media kit that would apply to a company when they are redesigning their logo:

- A press release with a catchy title, like: "Coffee Company Claims Cup"
- A tip sheet for attendees to make the most of an upcoming party celebrating the new design
- A "History of the Cup" that provides full color, glossy posters placed throughout the room and highlighting the 50-year history of this great company
- A well written corporate "backgrounder" on the company owners, from inception to today
- Biographies of the current owners and top executive
- Photo quality copies of the new logo

Attention to Style

Items in the media kit need to look like they are all part of the same brand to give them a professional look. In addition, when you are sending information to a news service, it needs to look like it was written for a journalist. In order to do that well, most people use The Associated Press Style book and Briefing on Media Law as a standard resource, but it is always a good idea for you to see what the standards are in your region.

Creating Strong, Positive Messages

Before you start creating messages with a goal of getting them to the media, we have some guidelines for you to consider. Our goal is to help you create messages that catch the attention of the media as well as your customers. People are bombarded with advertising and media messages now that everyone is on some kind of electronic device (such as tablets, smartphones, and computers). They may even be watching television in the background! You have to craft a message that gets heard through the fray.

Your messages should follow the **MEDIA** model.

Make it Positive

Always release messages that are positive. You can put a positive light on anything, even a disaster, and positive messages put your organization in the best light. You also need to make sure that anyone who is involved in delivering messages to the public (including the people standing near you in a public meeting or press announcement) have confident postures, don't roll their eyes, and they know how to speak clearly and positively as well.

Elaborate on the 5 W's

Your messages need to be complete. Refer back to what you learned about writing in school, and leverage the who, what, where, when, why (and how) so that you do not miss any important details.

Draw an Image

People may not remember what you say, unless you do it in a way that touches them on a level that is beyond the words that you speak or write. Create messages that connect to their emotions and engage them in creating a picture in their mind, so that they are more likely to remember at least the important aspects of your message.

Influence

Your message has to have a purpose, and often that will be to exert influence or persuade someone to take action once they have internalized the message. You may want them to try out your product, or say something positive about your latest invention. Whatever it is, your own talent can be honed by studying powerful messages from negotiators, mediators, and sales professionals.

Announce

So you've been busy for months working in secret on the newest, greatest product your company has ever developed, when WHAM! A disgruntled employee releases the news far before you are ready. In that kind of case, you need to make an announcement to the public and mitigate any damage or rumors circulating. The best thing you can do as a PR specialist is to craft your messages, set up press releases, or respond to a crisis as soon as possible so that you control the timing, impact, and format of any announcement.

Test Your Knowledge

What additional aspects would you add to the MEDIA model?

Establishing Media Guidelines

Defining Guidelines

Depending on the size of your company, you might be the only person answering the phone and thereby responsible for any media or public inquiries. Or perhaps a journalist calls you but has to go through someone else first. Either way, everyone in your organization needs to know how to best respond to those inquiries, who to direct a call or foot traffic to, and how they should reply to a persistent individual.

Media guidelines can take care of all of that. They explain your company's approach to relationship building with the media, how information will be shared, and how much.

Your media guidelines could include things like:

- All media inquiries and inquiries from people you consider could be media (bloggers, citizen journalists, etc.) must be directed to the Communications Officer.
- Media inquiries must get a response within six hours.

There are plenty of options when it comes to media guidelines. It all depends on what your goals are and what your public relations plan looks like.

Test Your Knowledge

Two Groups are Better Than One

Develop a list of media guidelines.

Selecting a Spokesperson

In a small company, it's probably the CEO who will do most announcements and have most interactions with the media. As the company gets larger, a CFO (Chief Financial Officer) may be the person who speaks to financial matters, while the CIO (Chief Information Officer) speaks to great technological work the company does. In a crisis, there may be a Communications Officer who becomes the liaison between the company and the media, allowing the CEO time and space to focus on the actual crisis. In a large company there may be several spokespeople who can each speak about their areas of expertise.

There are some essential elements to consider in determining who the spokesperson will be.

Select Great Communicators

If you are the CEO and you know you are not a great communicator, then you need to sharpen those skills. Your credibility is increased when you speak well, when you can listen to questions and answer thoughtfully, and when people believe what you say. These skills can all be learned. In fact, most of us can improve our communication skills.

Find Ambassadors

Your spokespeople need to be positive supports for the company. They need passion as well as expertise and they need to be able to communicate that to their audience. Their body language, facial expressions, and overall attitude need to support the message, and it also helps if they can build relationships with members of the media rather than simply make statements. Relationships will lead to more thorough understanding by members of the media. It can't hurt to make a few friends!

Interpersonal Counts

Some people are not great spokespeople, no matter how fantastic they are technically. If you have people on your team who are not cut out to withstand the media frenzy, cannot think on the spot, or are not easily likeable, have someone else deliver their message. In the spokesperson role, it's vitally important to find people who are easy to get along with, outgoing, and can develop relationships easily, not technical experts.

Strong Insight is Important

A spokesperson needs to hear what is behind a reporter's question, and to try to understand the intent behind it.

Approval Process

As part of your creation of guidelines, you also have to create (or be a part of) an approval process. A series of approvals is often necessary before a news release, marketing campaign, or annual report, for example, are released to the media and the public. This helps stop any errors of fact or release of information prematurely, and to prepare for any questions that come as a result of that information.

There are often several rounds of approval required, so it's a good idea for you to develop patience and not be too invested in the copy that you write. You will fret, re-work, and redesign a release only to have it go through several layers of approval and come back to you looking quite different. Let go of any personal attachment you have to the work and focus on the process of creating information that works for the people you work with, and that is useful, accurate, purposed information for the media and public.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Mixed-Media Books*, By Gabe Cyr, (2009)
- ✓ *Image and the Media*, By Michael R. Frontani, (2009)