



PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDE

**Building Relationships with Your Local Media &
Securing Publicity for Your TSS Photography Franchise**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS

1.1 Defining PR

Public relations activities aim to influence how the public views your business. One of the most important aspects of PR is media relations: activities that result in positive editorial coverage about TSS Photography in newspapers, business journals, magazines, online media, radio and television. PR is an important part of any business' marketing strategy.

1.2 Advertising vs. PR

Advertising:

- You purchase space in a newspaper or magazine or air time on the radio or television.
- You have control over the content and timing of the ad.

Public Relations

- Coverage is FREE.
- The public views these third-party, objective endorsements as more credible than advertising, because the message is not paid for.
- The message is not controlled, but can be influenced.
- Coverage is never guaranteed.

1.3 Franchisee's Role in PR

We understand that you are busy running your TSS Photography franchise, but it is important to take advantage of the PR tools we've developed for you. Editorial coverage of your business in the local newspaper, magazine or on the evening news can create awareness, educate the public, and ultimately drive new customers to your business.

Just with any other aspect of your business, begin by setting goals for your PR activities. We recommend that you start out by submitting a press release to your media once per quarter. Don't get discouraged if you don't receive coverage right away. It takes repeat phone calls to reporters and editors to convince them to do a story about your business. The process can take days, weeks or even months. But persistence does pay off – even a small article in your community newspaper can have a powerful impact on your business!

2.0 LOCAL MEDIA RELATIONS IN YOUR MARKET

2.1 Developing and Maintaining a Media List

The first step in the media relations process is developing a comprehensive media list. This is a contact list that includes media outlets that serve your local market, and the reporters that cover certain topics that pertain to TSS Photography, specifically business and features.

- Newspapers (daily and weekly) – Business editors, feature reporters and local news reporters who cover your community.
- Weekly Business Journal or Monthly Business Magazine – Business editor or writer who focuses on small businesses.
- Television – News desks and assignment editors at local TV affiliates (i.e. ABC, CBS, FOX, CW and NBC)
- Radio – Producers and newsroom.
- Bloggers – Bloggers who write about photography, or mom bloggers in your area are good targets.

The following websites can help you identify media outlets in your area and the appropriate contacts.

- www.mondotimes.com/world/usa.html - Navigate by state and then by city to find local outlets.
- www.epodunk.com – Type in state and city, then scroll to find media outlets in the community profile.
- Website of the media outlet – Sometimes, the best way to find an appropriate media contact is to simply Google the media outlet name, and look at the website to find a staff list.

Your media list should include the following information for each reporter or contact person.

- Contact Name
- Topic(s) the journalist reports on (i.e. business, community news, features)
- Email Address
- Phone Number

It will also be important to keep your list up-to-date, since turnover at newspapers, TV stations, and local magazines is high. Before you send any information to the contacts you find, be sure to call and verify that they are still at the media outlet. If not, ask who took over their position and update your list with his/her contact information.

2.2 Establishing Yourself as the Photography Expert

Even before you “pitch” a story idea to the media contacts on your list, be sure to introduce yourself via email, and then by phone, and explain how you can serve as a source for future stories. Here is an example email:

Hello [INSERT REPORTER’S NAME]

My name is [INSERT YOUR NAME]. I am the owner of TSS Photography in [INSERT CITY], part of the nation’s leading youth sports, school and event photography franchise.

I’ve seen some of your stories, and I wanted to provide my contact information in the event that you are looking for an expert source on any of the following:

- Photography tips
- Fundraising for schools and sports organizations
- Business trends in the [INSERT COMMUNITY] area

Please feel free to email me or give me a call if there is anything you’re currently working on where I can be of assistance. Thank you, I look forward to working with you.

It is important to follow up with the reporter with a phone call so that you can begin to build a relationship. Mornings are usually best to call to avoid catching them on a deadline. Remember, reporters, producers, and bloggers are always looking for sources for their stories, so you are doing them a favor!

2.3 Sending a Pitch Letter and Press Release

When sending a press release to the media, remember that the media needs a “news hook” in order to consider a story. For example, you are most likely to be interviewed for a story on “How to Take Stunning Vacation Photos” during the summer, when most families are taking trips.

After you develop your press release, you’ll need to “pitch” it to the media outlets on your media list. There are a couple of do’s and don’ts to be aware of when sending a press release:

DO include a short and concise “pitch letter” in your email to briefly explain the content of the press release and what you’d be able to speak to in an interview.

DON’T include the release as an attachment – many people won’t open them because of spam concerns. Instead, paste the pitch letter and press release in the body of your e-mail.

DO include a clear, concise e-mail subject line (i.e. Story Idea: Tips for Taking Photos Outdoors).

DO follow up twice with the reporter.

- **First follow-up:** Wait two days after sending your initial email to follow up with a phone call to the TV news desk or reporter. Confirm with them that they received the information, and ask if they'd be interested in pursuing your story idea. If they do not remember receiving the email, use the time on the phone to briefly explain the story. Offer to resend the email.
- **Second follow-up:** If you do not receive a response after your initial follow-up, it is appropriate to make another phone call to your contact. Try to follow up once every week until you receive a concrete response. Take notes on the feedback you receive in your media list.

3.0 CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW

Sometimes, the media will use information directly from your press release, and attribute it to TSS Photography in their story. However, if you are able to secure an interview over the phone, or in-person, make sure that you are well prepared!

3.1 What to Expect When Working with the Media

- **Responsiveness is key:** Journalists and TV reporters work on deadline, and it is critical that you respond to them quickly so you do not miss out on an opportunity to secure positive publicity for your TSS Photography franchise.
- **Ask questions first:** If the media approaches you for a story, it is OK to ask: "Is this going to be a positive story?" If a media outlet is doing a negative piece, you'll want to steer clear.
- **Publicity is never guaranteed:** It is appropriate to ask a reporter when they plan to publish or air a story you were interviewed for. However, breaking news or an editor's decision may postpone a story, or prevent it from ever running.
- **Use your interview as a networking opportunity:** Make sure that you keep in touch with reporters who agree to speak with you. Follow up with them every two months to see if they are working on a story that you could be a source for.

3.2 What to Wear

If you're going to be on camera or photographed, we recommend the following to make sure you look professional:

- The TSS Photography logo should be clearly visible on the shirts of all staff members!
- Bright, solid colors work well on TV.
- If you typically wear glasses, keep them on for the interview but you may try tilting them slightly to avoid a glare.
- Keep jewelry simple. No sunglasses on the head as a headband.

3.3 Content and Preparation

When speaking to a member of the media:

- Speak slowly and clearly. Use descriptive language and real life examples to bring your interview to life.
- Remember to repeat TSS Photography several times during the interview.
- If you're on-camera, use natural hand gestures, but avoid distracting movements. Avoid fidgeting or touching your hair or face.
- If seated during the interview, sit on the front edge of your seat and lean slightly towards the interviewer.
- Try not to "think" on TV, such as looking at the ceiling or placing your hand on your chin.
- Maintain eye contact with your host rather than looking directly at the camera.

3.4 Preparing for a TV Interview

During a TV interview, you'll want to be relaxed and let your personality show. For most people, that requires a little bit of preparation:

- Try watching a few TV interviews with the sound off and notice what the body language projects.
- Think about your top key messages that you want to get across during the interview.
- Practice in front of a mirror or record yourself on your computer, phone or camera.
- Review main talking points as a guide for your interview. You don't need to memorize them verbatim – put them in your own words!
- Depending on the topic of the interview, be prepared to bring in props that can show the viewers photos/events/etc.

3.5 Preparing for a Print or Radio Interview

Newspaper and magazine reporters will request either an in-person or a phone interview depending on their location and deadline schedule.

- Keep the interview conversational, but remember that everything is on the record.
- If you are doing a phone interview, keep a “cheat sheet” in front of you with key messages that you want to get across in the interview.
- For radio, try to speak in “sound bites” or short quotes that communicate the story effectively and don’t take up too much airtime.
- If you have called into a radio show and are on the air live, keep a “cheat sheet” of potential questions and answers in front of you.