



Be a PR S.N.I.P.E.R.™



Local Clubs and the use of Public Relations

Public Relations for individual Lions Clubs while maintaining International mandates is a hard ideal to incorporate. With that said, a PR committee is necessary to a successful Lions Club. So how can a club maintain its own personality, fall in line with LCI requirements, and uphold the brand all while creating awareness of its own unique club? By understanding the function of PR, how to create a PR plan, and how to implement the plan.

What is the Function of PR:

PR is not free advertising; by definition PR is: “the practice or profession of establishing, maintaining, or improving a favorable relationship between an institution or person and the public.”

PR is a means to tell the community how an entity (ie the club) is benefitting them. It is self-serving only to the point that it is bringing awareness to who you are and what you are doing.

If a club tries to use PR to get people in the door for an event, they are using the process incorrectly. Remember advertising is how you bring in the BIS (Butts in Seats), not PR.

What can be done to help our organization do better?

Remembering PR is a tool that has a specific job function. Think of using PR in the same manner a sniper is used--to hit a very specific target for a very specific reason. In most cases the club's target is its immediate community. Rather than hitting them with a bullet the local club will hit them with specific messages that are of importance to the community at a specific time.

S.N.I.P.E.R.™ is a great acronym to remember: A club's PR sniper uses

Socializing

Networking

Internet (community calendars)

Papers

Emails

Radio

to communicate the club's message.

How to use PR in Your Club:

Main Communication Methods

Media Alert

The number-one tool for a PR Plan. This is what is used to gain attention for an upcoming event. A newsroom person should be able to scan it quickly and have it answer the questions: who, what, when, where, & how much. It should be simply written and very brief. Media alerts and community calendars are the best approach for event publicity.

The basic components include:

- Top Left corner or center LOGO
- Right Corner, in line with logo, Media Alert, Bolded and Italics
- Left Corner, Contact Information
- Headline- Name of Event
- Body, simple statement of 1-2 short sentences regarding the event. Can be something like: Dear editor, below please note all the information regarding the Lions upcoming event. Our goal is to raise \$\$\$ to assist with our mission to serve this community.
- Who, What, When, Where, What else is literally written out bolded, followed by a colon, and a brief answer
- Solid Line to separate alert from the boilerplate (if you choose to use a boilerplate- it isn't necessary)
- Boilerplate Statement (optional)
- ### three marks indicates end of release

Press Release

When writing a press release, the PR chair should always ask her- or himself:

Is this newsworthy?

Will this help the club reach its target audience?

Will this be beneficial to the readers/watchers/listeners of this medium?

And the big one- is this totally self serving?

The last question is a doozy. Most editors will not print something that is "ad" like. Again, that is why they have an advertising department. When a club wants the public to know about an event they are hosting, they should use community calendars and send out a simple media alert.

A press release tells a story; the lead states what the club has done for the community. The following paragraphs would have quotes from both Lions and other community members. Adding a photo to a press release is a great idea.

Press releases are a more formal communication with the media. It is to be written in Associated Press (AP) Format (Google or check online for tips and examples). It should state a contact, and it should have a newsworthy story. The bottom of the press release should include a boilerplate.

The basic components include:

- Top Left corner or center LOGO
- Right Corner, in line with logo, *For Immediate Release*, Bolded and Italics
- Left Corner, Contact Information
- Headline- A catchy and pithy title is a good idea, Bolded and font slightly larger than body of release
- Date, City, State In Bold followed by lead statement
- Paragraph 1: Clarifies your news. It states the main point.
- Paragraph 2: Provides additional detail and a quote
- Paragraph 3: Contains ending remarks and further call to action
- Solid Line to separate release from the boilerplate
- Boilerplate Statement
- ### three marks indicates end of release

Tips:

- Use active voice
- Stick to the point
- Don't overload with words and adjectives
- Don't use jargon
- Proof, proof, and then have someone else proof.

Uses:

This is very important. The following is a list of release worthy articles:

- Announcing new board
- End of year reports
- Major awards
- Significant donations
- Partnerships
- Major event (note the word major)

Boilerplate

A boilerplate is a brief statement about the club & its history. Usually two sentences and can have the club's website for more information.

NOTE

Most club events will require only a media alert. Press Releases should be few. Use the odd factor in your planning of releases. If you send a press release to the media every month, your news becomes routine to them. If you send a handful a year- your news

holds more credibility in the mind of the editor. So again, media alerts and community calendars should be your club's main focus when implementing your PR plan.

How to Contact the Media

Remember that editors receive hundreds of emails a week--in some cases, a day. They are busy professionals dealing with daily deadlines. When sending out a media alert or press release, make sure it is timely--meaning it is sent in a timeframe relevant to the news. Example: Do not send a year-end report two months into the new fiscal year--it is no longer relevant.

Develop a Contact Sheet:

1. Pay attention to what you watch, listen to and read--chances are your neighbors are using the same media outlets.
2. Make a list of the media that you want to use; this is usually your local newspapers, television networks, radio stations, and Internet community calendars.
3. Research the media outlets that cover your area
 - a. Look at newspaper masthead, look online by searching the call letters of your local tv and radio stations, search outlets such as Mondotimes.com, epodunk.com, and world-newspapers.com.
4. Decide on the best contact person
 - a. Target community editors, weekend reporters, local editors-- be specific to your news. If you are reporting on your year-end contributions you would target either the community editor or the business editor--depending on the angle of your story.
5. Send the correct contact information in the way they prefer
 - a. Some media outlets prefer story ideas through email in the email body, others like an emailed attachment, while some have online fill-in formats and some still want faxes. Whatever it is, make sure you are sending it in the format the outlet prefers.
6. List phone numbers
 - a. You will eventually want to make a follow up phone call. Even if you leave a voice mail, it's good to have that personal contact and to know that someone will hear what you have to say.

Timing:

Announcing advanced ticket sales

Send a media alert 6-8 weeks before event

Announcing fundraiser or event

Send a media alert 2 weeks prior and *again* a few days prior, can also follow up with a phone call

Thanking the community for participating in an event

Can be a short press release with photo stating how much was raised, etc

Send out 1-2 days after event

Announcing major club news

Press Release Timely to when this news happened, follow up with a phone call to the editor

Note

It is a good idea to have sets of “press tickets” at all of your events. Let the editors know that if they come to your event with their press pass that there will be free tickets (2-4) waiting for them. Or just let them in when they present a press pass, if they don’t come you won’t have unused tickets left over. This is just good business!

Build a Press Kit

Now that you know how to communicate with the media, develop your club’s Press Kit.

This kit should include:

- Cover Letter from Pres or PR Chair
- Fact Sheet
- List of Board of Directors and contact info for Pres, Sec, PR Chair, etc.
- Q&A (as written by LCI)
- Event Calendar for the year
- Business card(s)
- Additional brochures your club may have on hand

Putting the kit together:

- Print documents on heavy weight paper
- Use the color logo
- Place information in a clean pocket folder
- You may choose to print a Lion logo sticker to put on the front of the folder
- Print business cards and place a few inside the kit

Mailing the kit:

Mail the media kit before your next event and include a cover letter stating press is always welcome to come for a meeting and to an event (free of charge). Then, each year when there is a new board, send a revised kit and cover letter to your contacts.

Importance of a Brand

Branding is important because it establishes top of mind awareness in three ways:

1. Logo: Visual Recognition



2. Motto: Audible Recognition
“We Serve”

3. Connection: Mental knowledge--knowing who you are and what you do

How the brand becomes diluted:

1. Logo: Use of wrong colors or multiple designs causes confusion
2. Motto: Not used correctly by adding to or taking away wording
3. Connection: Dilution of the brand weakens the foundation of Lionism

Where Can You Find More Information about the Lions Brand Renewal? Go to LionsClub.org, Member Center, and download the Brand Book We Are Lions