

Publicity Dos and Don'ts

- * **Don't send inappropriate or late releases.** Target the right media and contacts. The food critic doesn't need a release about a new robotics manufacturing facility. And the business correspondent doesn't either, if the facility opened two months ago.

You need to build up an accurate database of media contacts, and to mail your press release first class on occasion to validate it (with first class mail, you get envelopes back if addresses don't work). Faxing or e-mailing your release is often sensible because journalists work on tight deadlines, so include fields for fax and e-mail numbers in your database. But I recommend developing a list by identifying authors of stories you like and think are similar to your own stories. That way you get a smaller list, but one that is a much tighter match with your content and target audience. Commercial lists and directories of journalists are readily available from mailing list vendors.

- * **Don't make any errors.** At all. Typos throw the facts into question. And don't include any inaccurate facts. You want the journalist to trust you to do his or her research, which is a big leap of faith. Prove that you are worthy.
- * **Don't give incomplete contact information.** Be sure that you include names, addresses, and phone numbers that work. Brief the contacts as to when to be available and what to say so that they will be cooperative. Also, brief the switchboard or give journalists instructions for how to navigate through the computerized voice mail system. You don't want gatekeeping to prevent a reporter from making that interview!
- * **Don't ignore the journalists' research needs.** The more support you give them, the easier they can cover your story. You can include photos of the expert you've quoted in a mailed release (date, name of person, and information about the supplier of the photo to be included on the back or the margin). Also consider offering plant tours, interview times, sample products, or whatever else may help journalists cover your story.
- * **Don't bug the reporters.** Journalists don't want to send you clippings of the articles they write, so don't bother asking. Nor do they care to discuss with you why they didn't run a story, or why they cut off part of that quote when they did run a story. They are busy with the next story. Forget about it. You should focus on the next story, too.
- * **Don't forget that journalists work on a faster clock than you do.** When a journalist calls about your release, return the call (or make sure that somebody returns it) in hours, not days. If you handle their requests slowly, they will have found another source or written another story by the time you get back to them.