

How to Generate Good Public Relations and Publicity

Remember that Public Relations is not about the public.

It's about how you deal with the media in order to generate interest in your event, project, business, or non-profit organization....so they can deliver your message to the public.

I try to follow ten basic rules:

Rule #1 is - It's never about us

Rule #2 is - It's always about the people we want to reach

Rule #3 is - The media owes us nothing

Rule #4 is - We need to make it easy for the media to tell our story

Rule #5 is - We need to make the media look good for telling our story

Rule #6 is - You can never say "Thank You" too much

Rule #7 is - Stay away from the negative about your competitors.

Rule #8 is - Be the "Good Guy" for all of your industry and be a resource

Rule #9 is - You're only as good as your last story

Rule # 10 is - Keep it simple and interesting / informative / funny / heartwarming

We'll talk about these things then discuss how to write an effective News Release and how to get your story told.

* **Rule #1 - It's never about us**

In my position as a Public Relations and Marketing Director for an animal shelter I describe my job as, "Furniture." If you see a dog or cat on TV...I'm what it's sitting on. I am furniture."

As PR / Marketing people and writers, reporters, editors, etc. our jobs are to promote the event, product, story, or person. Remember...this is "business." We might take it personal....but it's usually not.

This can help to make us more bold. I never ask for anything for myself, but I never hesitate to ask for something that will help others. Keep that in mind. It can be empowering.

* **Rule #2 - It's always about the people we want to reach**

Unless you are writing an "opinion piece" your opinion doesn't matter. Your political affiliation, religious preference, dietary preferences, etc.

But if you are writing an opinion piece....make it clear that it is your opinion.

We are here to represent the readers, listeners, viewers, website guests.

What do THEY want to hear about? What will impact their lives?

If you are writing for a black audience, ask the questions and give the answers that will interest them.

Same with sports fans, parents, car buyers, people looking for a restaurant.

Its' not about us or what we want.

Our job is to represent the viewers, listeners or readers and what they want.

* **Rule #3 - The media owes us nothing**

A working news room receives hundreds of news releases (NEWS or MEDIA....not "Press" releases) every day. They have the entire community laid out before them. Politics. Crime. Schools. Business. Sports. Entertainment. It's there for them to pick and choose what they want to share with their audience.

Why should they choose to share our information?

They owe us nothing. We might be nice people...but there are a lot of nice people. We might have good intentions...but lots of people have good intentions.

Just because we want to do a good thing doesn't mean that it's interesting. Think about "What" is interesting. Think about "Who" is interesting. A city council member may be there to cut the ribbon to open a new playground, but realistically.....how many people really care?

There are 3.1-million people living on 4,200 square miles of land in San Diego County.

What is it about a little community park and playground that would make it News - WORTHY?

It's up to us show the media "WHY" our NEWS or MEDIA release is interesting to their audience.

It's not up to them to see our release and figure out why they should tell their audience.

* **Rule #4 - We need to make it easy for the media to tell our story**

So now we have their attention. What can we do to make it as easy as we possibly can for them to tell our story?

Why do we want to make it easy for them to talk about us?

Again....they owe us NOTHING! And if they want a story about animals or home sales or surfboards or ANYTHING....they have dozens or hundreds of thousands of choices about where to get the information.

We want them to know that, when they come to us, we will do everything we can to make it easy for them to get the information, photos, video, audio, and interviews they need.

We want to help them reach their deadlines.

One guy told me, "I like to make them work for it, so they never come to me more than once." And he thought that was cool. He laughed about it.

Another guy told me, "I never talk to reporters. The only time they ever talk to me is if they have something bad to say." So I assured him that, if that was the case, the only time they would contact him was if they had something bad to say. Because that was all he was willing to give them.

Be ready when they get there.

Ask the photographer what he or she wants in the shot.

Have props.

If you're a reporter, tell them what they can do to make things go smoothly. Give suggestions. A lot of people just don't know.

Remember that, usually, when reporters work with the public....both "sides" are out of their comfort zones.

Remember what our kindergarten teachers told us. "Play well with others."

Let's work together to produce great stories that will interest the audience and reflect positively on the reporter and the topic being reported.

* **Rule #5 - Make the media look good for telling our story**

We all enjoy working with people we like. We want to work with them over and over again. The best way to do this is to make sure we make each other look good.

One of my closest friends is a news producer. In some ways we're very much alike and in other ways we're very different. Some people have commented that it's strange that we're such good friends.

Our friendship is based on mutual respect....and the fact that we make each other look GREAT!

When my friend's TV station reports on one of our animal stories, they're flooded with positive comments. They have never forgotten that their job is to represent the viewers.

San Diego has twice been voted "Dog Town USA." It's considered the best city in the United States for a dog to live.

The media outlets that thinks animal stories are "Fluff" are missing a prime audience.

What are we concerned about?

Our Health

Our Money

Our Kids / Family

Our Homes

Our Appearance

The top three things that attract attention are:

Kids

Sex

Animals

Give the media what they need to tell your story....and make them look good.

* **Rule #6 - You can never say "Thank You" too much**

Again....they owe us nothing!

I sent a dozen roses to a producer for a network TV show. She called me, crying, and said nobody had ever sent her roses. She seldom had anyone say Thank You.

I sent a dozen cookies to a TV News photographer. They were shaped like horses. I had them delivered when he was going to be out of the office....so they sat in the middle of the news room all day. Pretty soon photogs from other stations wanted to know what they had to do to get cookies.

They owe us nothing! Say thank you. Ask if they need the restroom or a bottle of water. Make sure they have directions so they don't get lost leaving your establishment. Give them a "White Balance."

* **Rule #7 - Stay away from the negative about your competitors**

You never make yourself look better by making someone else look worse.

When someone asks you to make negative comments about the competition, remember that next week the tables could be reversed.

In this day of Craig's List and Facebook and Twitter you can be the hero one day and the villain the next day.

One of my friends likes to point out when someone else is getting bad publicity. That usually comes back to haunt her.

It's okay to tell a reporter "I'm working on doing the best I can for my company. I'm not informed about what XYZ company is doing. You'll have to speak with them." And leave it at that.

NEVER give, "No Comment."

*** Rule #8 - Be the "Good Guy" for all of your industry...and be a resource**

When you have the opportunity to get in front of a camera, go on a microphone, or have an interview in a newspaper, magazine, or on the internet....Keep in mind that your entire industry is being judged on what YOU are saying.

Don't just be a spokesperson for your company....be a spokesperson for your industry.

If one of us looks good we all look good.

And if one of us looks bad....we all suffer.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is to refer a reporter to one of your "competitors."

If there's an opportunity for good publicity....and you can't help....you might consider referring the reporter to someone else that you respect.

Then contact that person, let them know that you are referring them, tell them what the questions will be, what their answers should be, and be sure to follow up afterward with the reporter and the person you referred.

This can be tricky....but remember that we want to help make their job easier....so helping a reporter to get the information they need will reflect well on you in the long-run.

Be a resource. And if you do this.....you have to "mean it." You can't tell a reporter "Call me first," then not answer your phone, not return their call, tell them "I'm off work," etc.

Weekends, holidays, evenings.

NEVER say, "I can't help you."

If you don't have the answer....tell them you'll call back in 20 minutes. And make sure you DO call back in 20 minutes...even to say it will be another 20 minutes. But be a resource.

* **Rule #9 - You're only as good as your last story**

You can never rest on your laurels. There is always someone else who wants to have the success that you have.

Don't be a "One Hit Wonder."

A good point to mention this....Don't lie. If you lie once and you get caught, you will always be a liar.

Tell the truth....even if the truth is bad. But also tell what you're doing to make sure the mistake is corrected and not repeated.

* **Rule # 10 - Keep it simple and interesting / informative / funny / heartwarming**

First...ask why anybody would be interested in your release

Does anybody (other than you) care?

How will the information in your release benefit anybody?

Will the public learn from what you're saying?

Will it have an impact on them? If so....what impact will it have?

Happy, funny, heartwarming?

People like happy endings.

Frank Zappa had a song, "Dead Puppies are No Fun."

So let's be honest as we tell interesting stories, in a way that they're easy to report and make the reporters look good....and motivate the public to react.

NOW.....HOW TO WRITE A "NEWS" OR "MEDIA" RELEASE:

- #1: One-page news releases
- #2: Always direct reporters to the same person in your organization
- #3: Interesting, catchy Headlines (You have my permission to be creative!)
- #4: The most important thing in the first words of the first sentence. Don't bury the lead-line
- #5: Tell your story in the first paragraph
- #6: Quotes, identifications, sponsors, and details in the middle
- #7: "How to get more information" in the last paragraph

A reporter should be able to "tell your story" by reading the first and last paragraphs

The purpose of a release is to attract interest....not tell the whole story

Hold something back for the reporters who cover your story. (Dog wedding)

DO NOT require a specific number of releases. That just teaches the media to ignore everything you send.

Timing. Never send a release on a Friday afternoon or a weekend.

Sound Bites: Repeat the questions, answer the question, and mention the name of your organization is 12 seconds or less. (Who should do it...)

Everything we do is not going to work. When that happens...move along.

Whether we're on the end that is presenting the stories to the media, or the people receiving the releases and reporting the stories....remember that it might be personal to us, but in the long run the news media is "Business."

It's about ratings / readership / viewership and revenue.



For Immediate Release
August 31, 2011
Photos and Puppy Kisses Available

For More Information
John Van Zante
760-753-6413

Perfectly Good 6-Pack Nearly Washed Down the Drain!
"Drain Pipe Puppies" Available Wednesday at Rancho Coastal Humane Society

Encinitas, CA -- **A, "6-Pack" of perfectly good puppies and their mommy dog rescued from a drain pipe a few weeks ago are about to become available for adoption at Rancho Coastal Humane Society (RCHS) in Encinitas. "Seven-Up" and her puppies, "Barqs, Fresca, Shasta, Dr. Pepper, Sprite, and Squirt" were in good health when they were discovered. Now the mom, three girl and three boy puppies are ready to mix in their new homes.**

"One light rain shower and these babies would literally have been washed down the drain," says RCHS spokesman John Van Zante. "We suspect that the mommy dog gave birth in the pipe. It wouldn't have taken much for them to drown or be swept away."

Seven-Up appears to be a Shepherd - Dachshund mix. Van Zante says, "In the photo that we received from our friends at County of San Diego Department of Animal Services she looked larger. But when she and the puppies were transferred to RCHS she reminded us of the song, 'Get a long little doggie.' Her pups will probably be about the same size, but with longer fur."

Van Zante says that, "Seven-Up and the 6-Pack" are perfect examples of why it's so important that owners spay or neuter their pets. "They were lucky! The litter was hidden from the coyotes and when they were found they were taken to a medical facility. Unfortunately, this is probably an exception. In most cases it would have been six innocent little lives lost."

Seven-Up, Barqs, Fresca, Shasta, Dr. Pepper, Sprite, and Squirt (the "runt" of the litter) are expected to become available for adoption when Rancho Coast Humane Society opens on Thursday morning. Adoption fees will be \$125 for Seven-Up and \$175 for the puppies. This includes spay or neuter, up to date vaccinations, and microchip identification.

For more information or to find **your** new best friend visit Rancho Coastal Humane Society at 389 Requeza Street in Encinitas, call 760-753-6413, or log on to www.sdpets.org.

(RCHS will be closed on Monday - Labor Day September 5.)



For Immediate Release
September 14, 2011
(Photos attached)

For more information:
John Van Zante
760-753-6413

Animal Neglect Weighs Less Than Six Ounces

Encinitas, CA -- **Animal neglect can carry the weight of a mountain. In purely scientific terms neglect can weigh as little as 5.25 ounces. But when the medical team at Rancho Coastal Humane Society in Encinitas shaved just more than 149 grams of dirty, flea and tick-infested fur from a small dog named, "Dusty" it changed his world forever.**

"Dusty was a dingy, brownish-gray mess when he was transferred to Rancho Coastal Humane Society (RCHS) from another Southern California animal shelter," says RCHS spokesman John Van Zante. "**It was impossible to feel his skin because his entire body was covered with matted, dirty fur. It was like a combination between dread locks and steel plating.** When we shaved him his entire coat came off in one piece. It's like he was wearing a body cape."

Van Zante says that, in spite of the neglect that led to Dusty's appearance, the 1-1/2 year old Miniature Poodle has a loving personality and positive attitude. "Once he was shaved the first thing he did was roll around on the ground. He was so happy to actually feel his skin. Now Dusty is basking in the attention he's getting, a steady diet, and the loving hands of our Rancho Coastal Humane Society staff and volunteers."

Oh. And another thing. "**He's a white dog!** When he first got here, we thought he might be. Now we know that, under all the matted, dirty fur there was a bright, white, 13 pound dog that needs a new home with a loving family. Dusty shivers a bit without his protective armor. But he's going to be just fine."

The public is welcome to meet Dusty along with the other dogs and cats, puppies and kittens available for adoption at RCHS. For more information visit Rancho Coastal Humane Society at 389 Requeza Street in Encinitas, call 760-753-6413, or log on to www.sdpets.org.



18 dogs, 1,847 miles, Light Years from Where They Began.

Encinitas, CA -- **Chaos...controlled, but still chaos...erupted this morning at 10:00 when a van bearing Mississippi plates pulled into a parking lot in Encinitas, California. The 18 puppies and dogs on board had just completed an 1,847 mile journey from St. Francis Animal Sanctuary (SFAS) in Tylertown, Mississippi to Rancho Coastal Humane Society (RCHS). The new arrivals are expected to pass through health and temperament exams then become available for adoption at RCHS.**

"The Southern California dog population is different from Mississippi and Louisiana," explains RCHS spokesman John Van Zante. "Our kennels have lots of small dogs. St. Francis Animal Sanctuary receives lots of medium to large dogs, but rarely gets smaller breeds."

Van Zante recalls that the rescue program between SFAS and southern California started in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina when SFAS President Pam Perez was flooded with pets displaced by the storm. "Pam, with the support of Texas oil executive T. Boone Pickens and animal shelters across the country, began relocating pets that no longer had homes. For us here in California the Katrina disaster is a memory. But for Pam Perez it's still very much alive."

This most recent van load of dogs includes various mixes including retrievers, hounds, and Catahoula Leopard dogs. Perez says, "It's hard to tell exactly what breeds they are. But really, it doesn't matter. They need families and this is the time of year when more people bring new pets into their homes than any other time. If your family is considering adding a pet, this is a perfect time to visit RCHS."

All pets adopted from RCHS are spayed or neutered, have passed health and temperament exams, vaccinations are up to date, and come with microchip identification.

Van Zante adds, "Don't be surprised if you see some of our kennels taped off these next few days while we're processing the 18 new arrivals. It's all part of the plan to make sure that you and your new dog start off on the right paw."

For more information visit RCHS at 389 Requeza Street in Encinitas, call 760-753-6413, or log on to www.sdpets.org. Adoption hours are 11 am to 5 pm Wednesday through Monday.