



*A Practical Guide
to Communications*

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Introduction

Communications in politics goes beyond just thinking about media and how to use it. However, there is a tendency to only think along those lines. The greatest misunderstanding we can have in this technological age is that most communications is media driven. Often we forget that media is only one part of the communications process, yet to most of us it is the most visible and impactful. As a result, we lose sight of other aspects of communications which are far more local than we realize, and often more important.

When it comes to communications in politics there are a number of points we should realize:

- In a 5-year election cycle, the actual campaign is only about 6 weeks long. Therefore, most political communication is done outside of that period.
- Few of us, whether in an election period or not, will ever have to deal with the national media.
- Most political communication is local in nature. This includes communicating to your local riding association members, volunteers, financial donors and community groups, as well as local media. Therefore, it would be rare that a 'grand communications scheme' would be necessary.

What is Communications?

Communications is simply the process of imparting information from one individual or group to another.

Obviously simple, yet communications is the glue that bonds people together. Whether it is in politics, the workplace or the family, good communications creates a greater understanding of events and activities leading to a smoother functioning organization. However, in any situation, it is an ongoing, strong communications process that makes an organization function, thrive and grow in the long-term.

Communication Breakdown

Even with the most acute focus on detail and the best planning, any activity or event will fail miserably if specific pieces of information are not imparted to the necessary participants in a direct and timely manner.

When failure happens, the most common excuses heard are "I didn't know", "No one told me" or "I didn't understand. In other words, there is a breakdown in communications, often ending in disastrous results.

Avoiding a communication breakdown of this magnitude is often a simple matter involving review of your current practices and techniques, making adjustments to

them and following up. Creating a sound communications process is the best way to avoid a failure. The key to success is in knowing what to look for, and how to implement it.

The Communications Process

Building a strong communications process incorporates a number of essential elements.

The "Rights" of Successful Communications

- Creating the **right** message
- Hitting the **right** target audience
- Using the **right** means of distribution
- Releasing it at the **right** time

Knowing your "Rights" and using them consistently over the long-term will evolve a communications process that builds credibility with the audience you are addressing and often with many others too. For example, if your riding association publishes a newsletter, make sure it has consistency in message tone, visual appeal, timing, and is actually relevant to the activities of the group

Any communications process is best measured by the information it succeeds in 'getting out'. In most instances, the information takes the form of a message or messages that need to be heard. The message contributes to creating an image or impression in the minds of a selected audience. Therefore, it is important to understand how to write and deliver a message to get the greatest impact on those who it is addressed to.

Keys to creating a successful message:

- consistency in the look and tone of the message
- plain language-deliver the message in easy-to-understand terms
- understand the scope of the issue you are promoting
- distribution-assess whether the means you are using to spread message is appropriate

Creating a Strong Message-The 5 "W's" and an "H"

Creating a strong message is easily done when you seek to answer the "5-W". Who? What? When? Where? Why? and an "H" How?

By going through this checklist and asking the questions posed, you can develop a strong communications message.

•WHO?

Who are you speaking to? Who do you want to hear this message? In other words, Who is your target audience?

Communications can take two forms in deciding the "Who?" question.

Internal communications primarily talks to Liberals or "friendlies". Those who work for you or are known to your organization. Included are:

- Association members
- Association executive
- Volunteers & Campaign workers
- Past Donors
- Other Liberal organizations & agencies

Because members of these groups might be better known to you, they might already be familiar with the issues, therefore it might call for a less formal approach in delivering the message.

The means of communicating internally may include:

- Clear and concise details/info given in conversation
- Riding Association newsletter
- Riding internet website
- Party intranet website
- Telephone tree/network
- Community media-local radio/TV/cable channels
- Fax distribution

External Communications is primarily directed to those who are not identified as Liberals and are less familiar the party and its activities. Included are:

- Prospective Donors
- Possible volunteers
- The general public
- Local opinion leaders
- Community groups/associations
- Media (See "How")

When creating a message for these groups, it is advised that a more formal approach be taken. This includes being complete in your information, presenting a message accurately, and being consistent in presentation, format and style.

It is especially important to identify and designate one individual as the contact person on major issues and announcements (especially when dealing with media). Clarification or questions may follow. Have their name and means of contact (phone number/e-mail/address) available on message.

When in an election period it is important to view all communications as external. Confusion or controversy can result when communications is taken too casually. This means all-important announcements, issues and directions should be in writing.

•**WHAT?**

What do you want to say specifically? What is the core message you are developing? What impression/image do you want to create for your audience? What is the impact/reaction you are looking for?

The question "What?" forms the framework of the message. You should be able to summarize the essence of your message in one sentence by answering the question-**What is the point?**

Remember any message should be succinct and direct, and easy to explain. Don't put yourself or someone else into a position where over- speaking a point serves to further confuse an issue, rather than clarify it. Answering the "What?" question is often the most direct way to pinpoint fuzzy thinking in your message's development. This becomes very evident when an explanation becomes too long, too awkward or too confusing.

It is also at this point where a check for accuracy of information should happen. All these can be crucial elements of any message.

- Double check:
- Names (spelling)
- Dates and places
- Addresses
- Times
- Phone numbers
- Emails/website addresses
- Directions and maps

•**WHEN?**

When should we release the message? The issue of timing is crucial to any communications process. The specific release of any message must be taken into consideration. Whether it is a fundraising invitation, a media release or a meeting date, the timing of the information's release is critical to the success of the message's content.

If a fundraising letter/invitation is sent too early or too late it can be an ineffective waste of time. Too early means people forget about it and too late means people are already committed to other things. The same is true for a media release. If the timing is wrong, the issue can be lost, forgotten about or overshadowed by other issues of the day. Likewise, it may not capture enough attention of the specific audience it is designed to impact.

Give careful consideration to the timing of all communications materials to be released.

- Make sure those involved, whether it is your M.P./candidate, riding president or executive member, community group or leader, contact person etc. can be available if needed.
- Make sure enough lead-time is included in preparation of communications message.
- If message is geared to media, be aware of the local news cycle.

•WHERE?

Where do you want your message to go? Where do you want to release the information? Where will release of the message be the most advantageous? Where do you want to have the most impact?

This question addresses the way to release the message. This can take any number of forms and can incorporate a variety of means.

- Media conference-consider site/place to hold it
- Media release
- Newsletter
- E-mail Announcement
- Website
- Party meeting-Executive Meeting or AGM
- Mailer

When planning the release, consider the impact of the message to be released and consider the target audience you are seeking to inform.

- In simple terms, consider where you can get the most effective result for what you are doing.

•WHY? The Final "W" – A Check and Balance

Asking "why" is the review process for communications. Creating a focus in any communications process is important because it identifies the scope and depth of the activities the group will engage in. Having a strong focus enables information to be managed more effectively and credibility established in the eyes of those who receive the information on a regular basis. Constant re-assessment of the communications process demands its review at regular intervals.

Two "Why?" questions to be asked as parts of the review are:

- Why is this information important?

This addresses the creation and use of a strong message. By understanding the information content, it can be utilized in a more efficient manner and maximized in creating a strong communications message each and every time.

The result is consistency and credibility in the long-term

- Why are we doing this?

This addresses why the overall communication process is important. Any group should clearly know and understand why it is doing what it does. Understanding this will make for the more effective running for a riding association, election campaign, family or business. It builds coherence and team spirit ensuring the success of the group.

•HOW?

How to get your message out?

Once an effective message has been created and reviewed, it must be distributed.

(For messages to **internal** audiences see **WHO?** above and means of distribution list)

To get messages out to **external** audiences, media is usually required to do this job. Media can be broken down into a number of areas.

- Print – Newspapers and magazines
- Electronic – Radio
 - Television including cable/satellite
 - Wire Services (CP)
 - Web/internet magazines
 - These can be re-grouped geographically:
 - local (community and cable) media
 - regional media
 - national media.

For a strong media presence, it is important to know who are the influential people (reporters, editors) who can best get your message out to the specific audience.

It is important to create lists of media outlets and those who might get your message out. If at all possible, develop a strong working relationship with editors or reporters at these outlets in an effort to strengthen the chances of getting good placement for your story (print) or positioning during a newscast (radio/TV).

The strongest means to establishing a good working relationship is to develop credible communication practices through a strong communications process. Strong messages, presented to media members in a fair, accurate and concise manner, on a regular basis, will go along way to earning their respect you for you and your organization.

Media Relations

To the uninitiated, the world of media relations can be a complex and overwhelming aspect of public life.

Using the media effectively and thoughtfully can present great challenges for many individuals and groups, even for the experts.

Therefore, a practical knowledge of the media is a necessary tool for riding associations who have news to communicate, but may have difficulty getting their message across. Despite the obstacles, however, improving your communication techniques and your relations with the media is certainly worth the effort. If what you have to say is in the public interest and reflects the concerns of your area, the media will most likely be interested, since real news is always worth covering.

Your first responsibility is to acquire the tools to help you communicate effectively through the media. By using this practical guide, you will soon find out that effective media relations are not all that complicated. Prepare yourself and good luck.

The Media

Print and Broadcast Media

Media fall into two main categories: print and broadcast.

The print media consist of newspapers and magazines. These publications can be dailies or weeklies, and sometimes bi-monthlies, monthlies, or even quarterlies. Dailies and weeklies are considered the best communicators of immediate information.

The broadcast media include radio and television stations.

Local and Regional Media

Local media, whether print or electronic, cover a district, including one or more municipalities; the regional media cover an entire region.

The factors distinguishing the regional media from the national media are based on their individual objectives, their method of operation and the clientele they each serve.

Riding communication directors generally use the local and regional media but may, at one time or another, use the national media. Therefore, it is important to know the characteristics of all these organizations. We will return later to the national media. Let us start with the media closest to you.

Most of your communications will be conducted with local radio and television stations and local newspapers. Therefore, it is important that you be familiar with all these media and their journalists. They are your means for direct communication with the public.

Community Media and Cable

Community media and cable are constantly expanding, becoming progressively more interesting as communication tools.

Community media operate differently from public- or privately owned media outlets. They are generally group-owned enterprises, which are managed by boards of directors drawn from members of the community and various regional interest groups.

Community radio, television and newspaper are generally open to covering all local events. They rarely have editorial offices or newsrooms, and rely mostly on volunteers who wish to participate in their activities. It is an excellent form of training, especially for those who wish to become acquainted with information techniques.

Cable companies also broadcast local programming based on local activities and community life. In many cases, they have excellent equipment allowed them to produce good quality television. It would be useful for riding association communication directors to consider regular participation in a community network broadcast.

Few Specialists

The big regional dailies are able to employ many journalists who are familiar with the areas of your concern. This is rarely the case with weeklies, since personnel are often limited to a single reporter and photographer to cover all events. That is why weeklies are such a valuable resource. They don't have the money to go out and investigate every story, so they are more than ready to accept your news releases and photos (photos should be in black and white, on glossy paper, at least 5x7, and accompanied with a caption).

Deadlines vary from newspaper to newspaper, but they are inflexible. It is important to take them into account when you are setting the date and the time for a news conference, or issuing your news release. You need to know what they are because if you miss them, you've missed your news opportunity!

Regional Broadcast Media

Radio and television stations cover the news and current affairs in your region, broadcasting the information many times a day.

If the subject matter of your news event extends beyond the borders of your region, the item could also be broadcast by other regional station, or even at the national level. When a station is not affiliated with any national network (such as the CBC), it often subscribes to a national news agency (e.g. Canadian Press).

Within the region, very few reporters are assigned to cover specific news areas and freelancers are often employed to cover individual events. It's important to take this into account and to call a radio or television outlet well in advance of your event.

National Media

The national media gives national and international news coverage their top priority. The importance assigned to regional news will vary from outlet to outlet. Some newspapers have local or regional news sections, and radio or television newscasts often include a regional news roundup.

In large cities the national media will assign reporters to cover specific topics. Editorial offices and news rooms in these cities are much larger than regional media offices. They also employ regional correspondents who report on a variety of topics.

Large media organizations are usually on the job 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Depending on the newspaper, radio or television station, specialized journalists are generally more available during weekdays. Evening crews and weekend crews are generally smaller in size than the crews operating during normal office hours. More and more, journalists are working flexible hours, sometimes from home, and often for one or more media at once.

Wire Services

Wire services collect news from a wide variety of sources and distribute it to other media outlets. The Canadian Press (CP) is the best known press agency in Canada.

The headquarters for CP is in Toronto, but the agency has 15 offices across Canada and a large number of correspondents.

Subscribers of CP and NTR receive news items from each of these wire services across a computer network. These services distribute international, national and regional news. They in turn are fed by other international wire services. They have correspondents in the House of Commons in Ottawa and most provincial legislative assemblies to cover parliamentary debates. The media who subscribe to the Canadian Press generally covers regional events.

You can identify news items from the Canadian Press by the letters (CO) or (PC) at the beginning of their articles.

Even if you do not wish to inform other cities in the country about your activities, Canadian Press can be useful in your province to transmit your information nationally and regionally.

If your news item is of regional or national interest, the Canadian Press is one distributor you should not forget about. However, their news editor is the person who will make the judgement call on whether your story is newsworthy.

The Canadian Press also offers a photo broadcasting service to its subscribers.

- Photos must fulfil certain technical criteria:
- Be black and white with good contrast;
- Be at least 5x7 inches; and
- Accompanied with a caption.

Editorial Offices – Newsrooms

Print and broadcast journalists work in a “newsroom,” under a “news editor” or “news director.” The editor decides which news events will be covered.

Journalists with specialities are generally assigned to cover events that fall within their beat.

In the larger media outlets, the section heads meet early every day with the news editor to determine priorities.

News releases, news from the wire services and news stories from their journalists are sent to the news editor (or to the section heads in larger media organizations). A decision is then made on which item is newsworthy based on the current priorities. For example, during an election campaign, your news release might not receive the attention you want because it is such a hectic news period.

News editors generally exist only in larger media outlets where there are a number of specialized journalists. The newsroom situation is very different for the regional weeklies, or in local radio and television newsrooms, where a lone journalist often makes all the decisions.

Tools

Your Communications Director

At the beginning, it is important to designate one person in your association to be responsible for media relations. Generally, that person should operate as the spokesperson. Your Communications Director should issue all media releases and is the only one authorized to answer questions from journalists. This person is responsible for your association’s public images and should not be replaced from one event to another. Choose your spokesperson according to his/her aptitude for this type of work, although it is often the president of your association who takes on this responsibility. (This could prove inconvenient, since the president might not always have the time to deal effectively with the media.)

List of Reporters

As your association's activities require regular contact with the media, it is important to establish a list of journalists and media outlets. It is the one tool you cannot do without, since you will be using this list to distribute your news releases, to call journalists to a news conference, to follow-up on those who missed it, or even to call specific journalist directly. The list should include the names, addresses, telephone numbers, facsimile numbers and e-mail addresses of the journalists and media outlets covering your beat and operating in your region. You should contact specific journalists and get to know them.

Don't forget to include the names and addresses of editorialists, weekly columnists and researchers for radio and television public affairs shows.

Also add the people in charge of the community agendas, to take advantage of any free publicity opportunities that might be available in most newspapers as well as the various radio and television programs focusing on community services and regional activities.

News Releases

A news release should be short, clearly written, double-spaced and then distributed to all the print and broadcast media in your region.

A news release is the basic tool of media relations. It may take various forms or serve several objectives, but it should always be short, simple and clear.

The purpose of news release:

- To provide your point of view on an issue or situation, announce an event, or publicize a nomination meeting. Ideally, it should fit on a single page and include no more than three paragraphs.
- To invite journalists to a news conference. This will be a short announcement of only a few sentences.
- To provide detailed information for attendees your news conference. This type of news release can be a little longer than the previous two.

How to Write A News Release

On an 8 1/2x11 sheet:

- Indicate clearly the name of your organization and the words " News Release, " the latter in large, bold type.
- Choose a brief, catchy headline. Remember, the whole point of the news release is to gain attention.
- The first paragraph starts with the name of the town or city where the news release is issued, followed by the date of issue. All the essential elements of your news release must appear in this first paragraph.
- The other paragraphs provide the details.
- Place the number – 30 – at the end of the text. This international convention means that the information is complete and ready for distribution.

- Place the name of the person responsible for media relations at the bottom of the page, including a telephone number where they may be reached at all times.

How to Distribute your News Release

Your list of media outlets and journalists should be used to distribute your news release. It is also advisable to conduct telephone follow-ups to ensure that the information was received, especially if it was an invitation to a news conference.

The News Conference

Why?

You have important information, requiring further explanation that cannot be disseminated in a simple press release. You are convinced that at least three or four journalists will attend your press conference to ask questions.

However, if you are far from a local newspaper with only one journalist, it is unlikely that person will attend. In that case, it is better to issue an informative press release and follow up with a telephone call providing all the necessary information. You could also choose to send a more complete press kit and meet for a personal interview.

There are many kinds of press conferences. When you wish to comment on breaking news, you have only a few hours to organize, and it would be better if this not your first experience! On the other hand if you are announcing a meeting

for a fundraising campaign and have only volunteers to help, you can plan for several weeks to organize your event.

For Whom?

For Journalists, don't confuse a news conference with gathering of local celebrities for a fund-raiser or an inaugural ceremony. If a news conference is held concurrently with such an event, make sure that you clearly establish the spokespeople.

If you think certain individuals should be present at your news conference, invite them as observers. However, the rules must be clear: they must intervene as little as possible during the question period reserved for reporters.

When?

News coverage is unlikely to be good if another activity, such as an election or a social or cultural event, is held simultaneously and consumes all the attention of the public and press.

Therefore, it is important to analyze the situation and choose your time wisely.

Research the deadlines of your local and regional media and plan your news conference at a time when you will receive maximum coverage.

Daily papers usually prepare their weekend editions on Thursdays, so try to hold your news conference on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

Remember that newsroom staff is smaller on Saturdays and Sundays. There are more appropriate times to hold a news conference than 9 a.m. or 7 p.m.

Journalists must have sufficient time to write articles or to meet news deadlines, especially for the 6 p.m. news. Therefore, 10 a.m. or 2 p.m. are good times.

How?

Distribute a media advisory, a short news release informing journalists of the topic, date, time and location of your news conference. Be sure the media receives your advisory a few days before the event.

Who Does What?

A news conference entails a lot of work. Maximize success by delegating tasks.

- complete the technical organization and other planning;
- go through your list of journalists to see who should be invited;
- write and distribute the media advisory;
- prepare a news release which will serve as a working document for the journalists; and,
- if necessary, prepare a media kit.

Don't put too much effort into preparing a buffet or bar: there is no guarantee of a successful news conference.

If your timing is right and the subject is timely, then journalists will attend. A buffet or bar will not attract them. It is better to offer coffee and refreshments only, unless the news conference takes place during mealtimes.

Planning Your Media Operation: Who Does What?

The necessary players are:

- A speaker;
- A person responsible for media relations and a resource person with in-depth knowledge of the subject matters to answer specific questions;
- A facilitator;
- A person responsible for media registration; and
- A person in charge of technical organization.

Note that a single person can hold several of these positions.

Physical Layout of the Site

You will need:

- An easily accessible site for your news conference. Prepare simple signs indicating the place where the event is to take place. Choose a central location with parking. It would be unfortunate if journalists missed your news conference because they couldn't find a place to park, or even locate the site.

- An appropriate size room, preferably quiet, in order to allow broadcast journalists to conduct their interviews under the best possible conditions. (Note: television and radio interviews can also be done after print journalists have left.)
- Two tables, one for the speaker, the other at the entrance for media registration. Documentation for journalists should be on the second table, and should include a registration sheet.
- Chairs and a microphone, suitable for the size of the room and the number of people expected.

Media Relations

You will need:

- Selected reporters from your list.
- A media advisory distributed a few days the news conference.
- A telephone follow-up on the eve of the news conference, to confirm the advisory was received and that a representative will be present.
- A new release. As suggested previously, it should be clearly written and double spaced, with three paragraphs and appropriate subheadings. The news release should communicate your message clearly and assist journalists covering the story.
- A media kit. This is not always necessary, unless you wish to add photos, flyers, reference, documents or statistics (reporters love the latter) to your news release. Be wary of huge documents, they often wind up in the trash.
- Notes for the speaker. The notes should clarify the information contained in the news release. Present the main points clearly and succinctly, one or two sentences to a paragraph, so that the speaker can find his or her place in the notes at a glance.

The News Conference in Action

Someone should be stationed at the entrance of the news conference to register journalists and to distribute news releases or press kits.

It is not unusual to begin a news conference fifteen minutes after the proposed time, in order to give late arrivals a chance to get settled. However, try not to wait any longer than that. During this period people from your organization could chat with waiting journalists.

Time to begin: the facilitator welcomes those present and briefly restates the object of the news conference. The speaker and the other participants, who are sitting at the same table, are then introduced.

The speaker should present the topic in a clear, lively and confident manner, without being tied to a text. Speaking notes should only be used as reminders. Make the presentation short and to the point. Remember that reporters are anxious to ask questions!

The facilitator invites reporters to ask questions, allowing each of them to speak in turn. When there are no more questions, the speaker is free to conduct individual interviews with representatives from the broadcast media.

When the news conference is over, find out which invited journalists did not attend and immediately send them a news release or media kit. The next day, it will be too late for newspapers, and maybe for weeklies, if their deadline has passed. Remember that all media are interested in reporting original news items – not ones already used by a competitor.

Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that no reporters show up at all. Maybe the topic was not of any interest. Perhaps the date and time was inconvenient. Maybe a last minute events monopolized reporters' attention elsewhere? In these cases, you can send your news release to all the media by fax.

After the news conference, you should put together a media review. This is compiled from all the newspaper articles and media reports which resulted from the conference. It's essential to help you evaluate the success of your operation.

The Interview

Many media activities are centred on interviews. Indeed, every time you speak to a journalist, consider it an interview since everything you mention will be used as research for a possible story.

BEWARE OF CONFIDENCES! They can cause irreparable damage to yourself, your colleagues, the riding association, the party, the Government or all of the above.

Some journalists will tell you that you can speak openly “off the record” – that nothing you say will be published or that you will not be identified.

Experience – and human nature – prove otherwise: OFF THE RECORD DOES NOT EXIST

Everything you say to a journalist, even a friend, remains etched in his or her memory and might reappear one day, one way or another.

Therefore, you must be open, co-operative, but careful with the media.

Prepare Yourself Well

Interviews, all interviews, need preparation. Prevention is always better. Once your interview is printed or aired, it is too late to correct yourself.

In any case, you must first identify your message and be able to deliver it simply and clearly, in only a few sentences. If your message is difficult to explain, your ideas are probably not clear enough, and it is better to take a little more time to think about your subject.

You must know your subject well and you can check with the LPC Communications staff to see if official documents are available. Maybe a motion was passed at the last convention or maybe a government official has already made a statement on the issue.

If the journalist asks you a question and you don't know the answer, admit it openly, without being embarrassed. It is better to take note, check with the appropriate authorities and call the journalist back than to give an incorrect or incomplete answer.

Know the Format Well

Some interviews are better structured than others, notably radio and television. They can take various formats and be broadcast live or be pre-taped. There may be a facilitator or a panel composed of several people dealing with the same issue.

It is extremely important to know the interview format, in order to prepare.

If the interview is live, you must know how long it will be in order to organize your thoughts and to deliver your main message before it reaches an end.

If it is pre-taped, it will likely be inserted into a wider story and edited before it is broadcast. Here again, it is important to express your ideas clearly, since only a few seconds are kept after editing.

It is always advisable to take a few minutes to write down your basic message, in order to avoid mishaps due to nervousness or limited time.

In many cases, radio interviews are done by telephone, whether live or pre-taped. We recommend that you isolate yourself in a quiet room and that you shut the door. One can easily be distracted and lose the flow of thoughts or arguments.

Interactive Programs

Here's a communication tool that is popular, efficient and accessible to all: those numerous programs which allow for the direct participation of the public, without a journalist acting as intermediary.

These consist primarily of phone-in shows, which first appeared on the radio many years ago, and now have become common fixtures on television. There are also an ever increasing number of television programs which allow guests, participants and spectators to participate fully.

Phone-in shows are excellent vehicles for presenting information and receiving public feedback. Therefore, it is important to participate. You must not be shy; your opinion is valid. The more clearly you express yourself, the more likely you are to convince people. If, on top of that, you are witty, polite and have a good sense of humour, you will enjoy even greater success.

Obviously, you must prepare yourself before participating in a phone-in show. It is wise to practice your argumentation with knowledgeable people before the show, as well as with people who know nothing about the subject.

In some cases, when the issue is important or complex, it may be appropriate to have several people with the same opinion participate in the same program. They can defend the same premise using different words or examples, or develop complementary arguments.

Parliamentary Visits

There are many valid reasons for inviting local or regional media. These include: an association event; a policy forum or symposium; a statement on a particular issue; or a fundraising activity.

We have already seen how to organize a media operation for statement on a particular issue or a fundraising activity.

Often an MP, a Minister, or even the Prime Minister, will visit the riding. The national media often follow these government officials and their visits are well covered by regional media.

The MP's or the Minister's staff will usually co-ordinate these visits. In any case, the party and the government rely on the party faithful, especially riding communication directors, in order to help plan the visit appropriately.

This is where your particular knowledge of local and regional media can be very useful. You know exactly which publication and which radio and television programs are the most popular. You must communicate this information to the MP's or the Minister's staff. Also, if a local journalist asks you for an interview with a minister, you must transmit the request to your Communication Director, who will in turn transmit it to the Minister's media secretary. Provide as many details as possible, i.e. date, place, length, format of the interview, etc.

It is also very important to list the issues that the local and regional media may bring to the attention of the visitor. You will often be asked to draw up a summary of an issue, to identify the interested parties, and to report on existing media coverage of the issue.

The information you give must be precise, short and accurately reflect the situation. Often local companies will be asked to provide the technical equipment needed for a successful event. You must therefore know who these suppliers are and ensure they are competent and available.

Finally, travelling MP's will often take advantage of their visit to meet with the members of your riding association. Here again, invitations must be issued quickly, and followed up by a phone call, so that as many people as possible will

attend. Depending on the type of meeting, local media may also be interested in attending.

The Prime Minister

A visit by the Prime Minister will generate a lot of media coverage. Members of the National Press Gallery usually accompany the Prime Minister on all his trips.

These trips are planned, co-ordinated and organized by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), according to a well-defined procedure.

As is the case for all other ministers, interview requests must be transmitted, with all the details, to the staff member from the PMO who is co-ordinating the visit.

The riding Communication Officer's role is to act as a link with the local and regional media, informing them of the PM's visit, and inviting them to cover the event.

Vocabulary

Here are some technical terms used throughout this guide and in the media world. You are likely to hear them when dealing with journalists.

Assignment: A job given to a journalist by a news editor.

Caption: A text that appears under a photograph (Photo caption is often used).

Ratings: Private radio and television stations make much of their profits from the sale of on-air advertising. The cost for that air time is related to audience numbers, which are determined by surveys. One of the most well known survey organizations in Canada is the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM).

Embargo: The date and time before which the media cannot broadcast a media release.

Wire: A network joining the central headquarters of a news agency to its subscribers.

Deadline: The final time at which all news items must be submitted.

Headline: The title in bold letters at the top of a news item in the written media; or, a short news clip in the broadcast media.

Article: A news item or story.

Paid by the line: How freelance journalists are remunerated.

Freelancer: An independent journalist not affiliated with any news organization, who is paid for individual contributions or for a limited time period.

Canadian Press: Better known as CP, The Canadian Press is a co-operative association of Canadian daily newspapers, collecting and distributing news items. The CP is a non-profit organization, owned collectively by various newspapers.

Scoop: A journalist's exclusive information.

Target Audience: The audience targeted by certain market. It is determined by statistics from market research and opinion polls.

Circulation: The number of copies of a publication that are sold.

Topo: A colloquial term for an electronic journalist's notes.

Practical Tips

- Be honest when you distribute media releases, especially if they're of an urgent nature. Nothing bothers reporters more than a news bulletin the next day, based on a media release that was issued the day before.
- The media prefer that media releases be issued only once.
- If a media release is subject to an embargo (the notes for a speech, for example), the media will generally respect the deadline, at least as long as the other media respect it.

- Don't issue a complicated media release late in the day and then be unavailable to the media. Unless your media release is exhaustive in its detail, journalists will certainly be calling you for clarification.
- Remember that radio, television and the print media have a variety of deadlines throughout the day and throughout the week
- Never say "no comment" to journalists because you are unable to answer their question. Find someone in your entourage who can answer, or verify the information and get back to him or her later.
- It is much simpler to know in advance who your specialists are and to prepare them to answer calls from journalists. Tell all your resource people to be ready for tough questions from reporters.
- Do not waste the media's time by sending out useless information, or holding unnecessary news conferences.
- Do not call reporters to attend an "important event" without indicating the subject matter to be discussed. "Important events" are all too often insignificant and a waste of journalists' time.
- Unless you want to make enemies, do not play favourites by granting so-called "exclusives" to a select group of journalists. However, always be ready to respond favourably to any individual journalist who asks for information.
- Use clear, concise and direct language when writing. That's what the media want. If you must use technical jargon, clarify it. Unless your organization is well known, give some details.
- Always try to answer the six questions reporters want to know: Who? What? Where? When? Why? And How? However, don't try to answer all these questions in the first sentence or paragraph of your news release.
- Try to include the most important information in the first sentence or paragraph of your news release. Try to summarize the most important elements of your news in the first paragraph. Add the details in the following paragraphs.

- Indicate who your sources are. This person must hold an important position. Do not forget to add one, or even two, phone numbers where you can be reached at all times after sending out a news release.
- One or two quotes from your “expert” source often add weight and life to your text or presentation. If you call a news conference to publicize a tour, make sure you have all the details for the media.
- Remember to add the age and place of birth of the people in your biography kit. Reporters attach a great deal of importance to these seemingly insignificant facts, and will spend a lot of time trying to dig them up.
- Use an 8 1/2 X 11 page and double space your press releases, keeping your margins wide. Avoid hyphenation, widows and orphans (i.e., do not break up paragraphs on two pages). Number your pages and staple them together.
- If you want your news release to be distributed immediately, write “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” on the top of the page. Always add the distribution date on your news release.
- Photos are welcome if they are unpublished or relevant to the news item. They must be clearly contrasted and at least in 5 X 7 format.
- Never address a news release to a particular reporter unless you are certain it will reach that person directly.
- Keep your list of journalists up-to-date.
- Do not send a duplicate of the news release. This duplicates the work of the media and wastes their time.

Appendix I

Creating an Effective Association Newsletter

Why Publish a Riding Association News letter?

The reasons for publishing a newsletter are many. A newsletter can help you:

- establish a regular and direct link between the association, your members and MP
- build a positive, dynamic image for the association
- educate members, volunteers, supporters and others about the Liberal Party and its policies
- promote events, and recruit and recognize volunteers
- ensure that your executive and association operate in an open fashion
- offer members a tangible benefit for joining the association
- record local liberal history as it happens
- feel a sense of pride and accomplishment

Before you Begin

As enthusiastic as some people may be to see an association newsletter in the mail, there are a number of preliminary items to consider.

- Make sure the newsletter is a priority with your executive. It will require an on-going commitment of time, talent and resources.
- Set your objective and put them in writing. Identify both your primary and secondary audience. Determine how often you plan to publish. Determine the tone and the image you wish the newsletter to project. Will it be:
 - contemporary
 - simplistic
 - classic
 - reserved
 - dynamic
 - outspoken
- Recruit a newsletter editor. Ideally this person should have a seat at the executive table and be a good organizer. The editor's job is to ensure that the newsletter gets done. In consultation with others, he/she should determine the time line and organize work assignments. The editor should create a production team. If possible it should include people from the association with skills in writing, photography, word processing, layout and design.

- Select a name for your publication. Design a suitable nameplate (banner) for the front page. A masthead may also be designed for placing on the front, inside front or back page.

Writing Tips

- Determine who is best to write each article. Make each writer aware of the objective and tone of the newsletter. Also be sure to inform them of the approximate length and focus of the articles.
- Make sure the articles are clear and concise. Most people will not read the newsletter from start to finish unless you make it easy for them to do.
- Choose catchy titles or headlines.
- Remember that not all readers are familiar with the Party structure, policy and the people involved. Avoid anachronisms, jargon and inside jokes.
- Keep an idea file: Possible stories, authors, photos, clipart, filler, quotes, statistics, etc.

Useful outside resources for articles include:

- the Leader for a very special occasion; request a photo;
- other Liberal newsletters;
- President's correspondence & minutes of executive meetings;
- events/activities in neighbouring ridings

Content ideas for a Liberal newsletter:

- MP's report
- editorials
- committee reports
- calendar of events
- riding history
- executive list
- pre-authorized chequing program
- quiz/trivia
- other
- President's report
- policy statements
- committee meetings
- coverage of recent events
- profile of outstanding members
- membership process & status
- Liberals in action
- special promotions

Design and Layout Tips

The Page

- Select a page size, number of pages and possible paper type to match your budget. An 11" x 17" sheet, folded once will create a 4-page, staple-free newsletter.
- Use columns; 2 or 3 look best. Words should be without hyphens; left-justified. Seven words per line in each column is easiest for people to read.
- Make "white space" look planned. Ensure there is some on each page. Avoid overcrowding.

The Type

- Select a font and size that best represents your image/tone and is still easy to read. (Courier Prestige Roman Script Sans Serif)
- Sans serif typefaces are best for headings, subheads and extra emphasis.
- Bold, shadowed, italic and outlined fonts are interesting ways to add character to your articles. Except for larger titles, 2 different styles is adequate on any page. Bold is better than italic for creating emphasis.
- Don't mix two sans serif typefaces in a single article.
- Overly large letters (two or three) at the beginning of a story add extra emphasis.
- Never set type in all capitals.
- Use an " endmarker" to tell a reader that the article is over.

Illustrations

- Photos and clipart must be current, meaningful and well placed.
- Charts and graphs must be simple, clear and concise.
- Photos should be cropped to aid effectiveness.
- Avoid large and small photos close together.
- People's faces should appear about the size of a dime.
- Use brief, clear captions to relate photos to stories. Verify the names, and their spelling, of each person in a photo.

Rules

This is the term used to name any straight horizontal or vertical line. Such lines can be used for a wide variety of purposes:

- separate items on a page
- combine elements on a page
- emphasize a small group of specific facts or ideas
- create boxes for sidebar stories (thereby enticing the reader to read on!)
- decoration

Nameplate

The nameplate appears at the top of the newsletter. It contains the name and subtitle of the newsletter as well as the date of publication. It might also contain a photo, a logo, the issue and volume number, and the name of the publisher and/or editor.

Masthead

The masthead contains the business information about the association. This would include the full name and address of the association (i.e. the President) as well as the name, address and phone number of the editor. The masthead might also include the names of frequent contributors and the frequency of publication.

Charts and Graphs

Graphic presentation of information is an effective tool if the appropriate format is used. The following table presents a useful summary.

Information to Present	Best Approach
A group of related items with no specific order in mind	A bulleted list using an icon (☞ ✓●) as bullets
Steps involved in a process or relationship between information	A flow chart of the process
A group of related items with a specific order	A numbered list is fine
Items evaluated against several criteria	A rating table
A comparison of many things in relation to one thing	Bar chart
Analysis of 2-4 items over a period of time	Line graph
Concepts	Illustrations and /or text
Abstract concepts	Written text

Miscellaneous Items

- Colour: red is good; attracts eye, brightens page, avoids boredom; is Liberal!
- Regular features: stylize them; aids in recognition and helps to provide continuity.

Mail-out Tips

- Computerize your mailing list; produce your own mailing labels.
- Purchase a rubber stamp with the editor's return address. Take note of returned mail; update list and be sure to notify the membership secretary.
- Make arrangements to use a postage meter instead of stamps.
- Set up a committee to do the mail-out. Plan a party at someone's home or do it after a regular Executive meeting.
- Reduce your mailing costs by including notices, flyers or membership forms with your newsletter mail-out.
- When appropriate send a copy to local media. You may also want to send copies to your PTA and the LPC.

Putting It All Together

Two important planning tools are needed in order to put it all together: a "Target Date" and the "Critical Path".

The target date is the last possible effective date for mailing the newsletter. Depending on the specific purpose of the newsletter, this date can vary from two to four weeks prior to some significant event (AGM, major fundraiser, year-end appeal for donations, etc.)

Rushing to get the newsletter published on time usually results in a poor, ineffective product. Allow yourself eight to ten weeks from initial approval by the Riding Executive until the actual mailing. Using a critical path, a step-by-step plan of who does what by when, can get you there with as few headaches as possible. A suggested week-by-week plan is outlined below.

Weeks Until Target Day	Suggested Activity
8-10	Financing approved; concept/theme approved; layout designed; space per article allocated; outside contributors contacted; critical path plan completed
7	Writing articles; gathering photos; designing clipart
6	Follow-up to outside contributors (if needed); matching photos to articles; writing captions
4-5	Submit all articles, photos, captions, artwork etc. to printer; discuss your layout plans with printer; confirm date to receive proofs.

Weeks Until Target Day	Suggested Activity
2-3	Proof-reading of final prints and re-submission to printer; double checking of all names and facts; arrange for mailing labels; get cash from Treasurer for other supplies
1-2	Arrange "mail-out party; purchase envelopes; arrange for postage meter or stamps; 7 days to target date is the last acceptable date to receive newsletters from printer without financial compensation; gather any other material that is being included in the envelope
0	Purchase party refreshments (budget for these); gather all materials at the site; Prepare mail-out

If you are using a home computer with a scanner, appropriate publishing software and a photocopier, it is possible to reduce this schedule from the ten-week maximum to about seven weeks. If you will be making your own proofs and having a printer produce the final copies, the time required is eight to nine weeks.