

Public Relations Principles

IFUW has many products and services currently on offer, in addition to the projects that are being conducted by NFAs throughout the world. These initiatives and services need to be marketed both as a means of developing resources and in order to increase the membership base. This requires reaching out to the various publics who have the potential to help IFUW advance its Mission.

Where to start?

Regardless of cultural differences from one country to another, associations around the globe have audiences with which they should or must communicate. Developing a message and finding the appropriate way to deliver it is public relations in action.

It is important to direct your messages to:

- the media
- local government officials
- the business community
- civic leaders and organizations
- people directly affected by IFUW service projects

Effective public relations campaigns require time, effort, research and planning. It is incumbent upon the IFUW MPRF members to develop a strategy at the beginning of her term that is focused on media relations

I. Mainstream Media

The media is important for nonprofit organizations like IFUW because they offer a gold mine of free publicity. The objective is to learn how to work effectively with representatives of the media. Media relations is an art, not a science. Those who obtain outstanding coverage for their organizations, know how to build rapport with the media.

Our mission must be focused, and the targeted audiences need to be clearly identified. The target group of our mission is women and girls, but the targets for implementing strategies that will allow us to achieve the mission are varied. In addition, there can be a negative result if care is not taken with words, image and audiences we are reaching if they are not in alignment with what we are trying to achieve.

"Knowing the market means knowing the media. The reach of the media varies from country to country, the style and expectations vary, the accessibility varies."

These might include:

- your regional or suburban newspaper(s)
- the local radio station(s)
- specialized media that cover one specific topic, such as education or health
- metropolitan radio/TV stations
- local TV station(s)
- internet sites and links

After targeting the media, it is the time to put together a contact list for each story that includes the names of journalists, editors, or news directors who might take a special interest. Larger newspapers or broadcast stations may have departments or reporters specializing in certain topics such as features, medical news, calendars of events or education. Before sending stories to a journalist, it is important to know who their audience is by reading the publication and watching TV programs to learn if that audience is likely to have an interest in IFUW activities.

Just as manufacturers market their products, IFUW must “sell” stories about our activities to the media.

There are several ways to take the story to the media. Whatever approach is chosen, be persuasive, persistent and friendly- but not aggressive – although this can vary depending upon the journalist’s preferences.

- By phone: Reporters can tell you whether they are interested or if they need additional materials.
- By fax: Faxes are inexpensive and fast but can be ignored easily because of the masses.
- By mail or by e-mail combining with telephone.

The objective is to get an interview with the reporter so only highlight the story line when making the first contact. The journalist is actually a “gatekeeper” of the public, so convincing them in the first contact that you have a news worthy story to tell is critical. The meeting with a journalist needs to be prepared well.

Some simple recommendations:

- Keep up-to-date media lists. Personalize the materials as much as possible.
- Contact the media only with newsworthy story ideas.
- Contact them in advance of events.
- Call reporters during times other than deadline time – mornings are usually best.
- When speaking to reporters be brief and stick to the point.
- Know your story and anticipate questions.
- Avoid asking reporters if they received your release or if they intend to use it.
- Send background materials immediately following contact.
- Be available if more information is needed or to check a fact for accuracy.
- Always work within a reporters deadlines.
- Make sure your association members are informed when information is sent out to the press.

News Releases - WWWWW+H

News releases are a basic media outreach tool. A release should provoke interest, be connected to something concrete and include a local angle. Begin with a short, attention-grabbing headline. Just as important is a well thought-out “news hook”- a compelling reason for the media to pursue a story. The news hook, best included in the first paragraph (or “lead”) provides direction to the rest of the release. The remaining paragraphs should answer the following basic questions:

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?

Releases should be limited to one page. If it is sending a release to a television station, a visual needs to be included.

Sometimes there is more information than can fit in a one-page news release. When that happens, it is provided a media kit that includes the release, fact sheets, and other background materials, such as brochures, bios, flyers, and photographs or CDs.

II. Nontraditional Media

As competition for media time and space increases, IFUW should investigate alternatives to traditional media including:

- Online publications, electronic bulletin boards, Web advertisements
- Local access cable stations
- Corporate newsletters and other community organizations' newsletters
- Student newspapers and university alumni publications
- Highway billboards/bench, bus, and airport advertising
- Local radio programs
- Community bulletin boards
- Entertainment guides and magazines
- Tourist information/tourist brochures, and etc...

III. Volunteers and Public Relations

Volunteers are the most powerful PR tools because when they truly feel a part of the cause and the mission, they will deliver the messages of IFUW in their community with compassion and in a variety of groups. This is the best kind of endorsement for the mission could get.

To tap into this resource, it's useful to provide PR training to the volunteers. The volunteers must understand what the main message is, what it isn't, and how it can be misunderstood. They must be prepared to answer critics. Two-way communication is very important as feedback will help to understand what image and message is being projected.

Volunteers are also the key resources in networking. The best public relations an organization can do is recognize the accomplishments of the volunteers. Award ceremonies, press releases, newsletter articles are all ways to assure that the volunteers know they've made a difference. The volunteers – both members and non members – can become our most credible goodwill ambassadors.

IV. Building Relationships

Involving organizations and community groups increases the reach and impact of a public information campaign. The relationship is mutually beneficial as other community leaders learn about IFUW and IFUW volunteers meet with potential members.

A joint community project can increase the pool of membership candidates, expand community service opportunities, and increase financial or volunteer project support while gaining greater public recognition.

There are many sectors of the community that associations can partner with, including:

- Local or regional offices of key international organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNEP, FAO... and the World Bank
- Parent and student organizations
- Educational institutions
- Healthcare providers
- Local and national businesses and business organizations
- Environmental organizations
- Legal and social services
- Neighborhood groups
- Humanitarian groups such as Soroptimists, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Jaycees, etc..
- Other women and girl organizations such as Girlscouts, The Council of Women, Mothers' Associations and other local volunteer based organizations.

V. Promoting Events

Promoting special events of your Association helps to raise awareness of IFUW in your community and beyond, in turn helping to find sponsors and to better serve members and others. Fundraising events in particular are an important part of every volunteer based association.

When we plan these kind of events, we should always remember to include the five "W's" in our promotional materials-Who, What, Where, When, and Why and one "H" How is very vital. Then, these are the steps:

- Approach the media with information about the fundraising event (as explained in "media relations")
- Create IFUW PR materials to create publicity materials such as postcards, t-shirts, posters, banners, fliers and other materials with our emblem and logo that maintain a consistent IFUW image.
- Use IFUW pamphlets to educate the public about our mission and our activities remembering that people are most receptive to organizations that can demonstrate specific positive activities.
- Enlist a local celebrity who believes in the Mission. They can draw a wider audience, and possibly attract more media to the event.
- Add the event to local calendar listing in newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and on local television. This must be done well in advance of the event.

Conclusion

- PR needs research, planning, implementation and evaluation.
- PR needs to be based upon a strategy, including the budget.
- PR is a very vital tool for management, but the top leaders and policy-makers must also be involved in the strategy.
- We must be knowledgeable and be up-to-date on what key audiences or "publics" know (or think they know) about our organization, if we expect to communicate effectively with them.

This draft is prepared using some sources as:
DARTNELL's Public Relations Handbook
Rotary International Web site
Birten's own files and knowledge (since 1971)