

GENERATING PUBLICITY FOR YOUR EVENT

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What is publicity and why do you need it?

So you've figured out your next event and have started organising it. Now what? It's time to promote and generate as much publicity as you can!

Publicity is about getting free media coverage for your upcoming event, and should complement any other promotional activities you'll be carrying out. You've put in a lot of effort to organise your event, so you want as many people as possible to know about it and attend. Publicity is one of the most cost-effective ways you can get this message across to your target audience.

Creating a promotional plan that maximises publicity

The more time you have for promotion after deciding on an event, the more opportunities you'll have to get your messages out. The key to running a successful promotional campaign is to prepare what you'll do in advance. This is especially important when trying to generate publicity through the media as they have deadlines they work to.

- Once you know what event you'll be running, have a think about who your audience will be. Who are they? What media do they use? How do they get their local news? What will appeal to them?
- If you're organising an event through your local council, chances are you'll have to get approval from their PR department before you can send out anything with their logo. Know what your council expects from promotional materials and media releases, and how long the approval process takes.
- Make a note of how much time you have to promote and what tools you have to do it. Tools may include writing a media release, using social media, distributing posters, running a mail out, handing out flyers directly, etc. Consider where these will fit in the time leading up to your event, and schedule them into your promotional plan.
- When it comes to maximising media coverage and making announcements, use the same strategy large festivals use: break down your key messages and release them each week. For example, over a period of weeks you may begin by announcing you have a show coming up, the next week announce the bands, then announce the headliners, then any special offers you may have for the audience.
- Select the media outlets you will target. Decide this by knowing what media your target audience consume. Do they read the local paper (or perhaps their parents read it)? Are they online? What websites or social media do they use? Do they read music magazines?
- When selecting media, make a note of their deadlines, when they go to print or publish news, and what kind of content they look for. You will need to take all of this into account when writing your media release and sending it to them.
- The ideal amount of time to leave for promotion and publicity is 4 to 6 weeks from the event. This gives you the chance to recontact the media if they haven't run your release, more time to change your pitch if needed, and more time to arrange additional coverage such as interviews.
- People will Google your event if they're interested, so create an online presence.

How to write successful media releases

There are a few general ideas when it comes to writing a media release.

- Keep the media release well formatted and one page in length, or 2 pages at the most.
- The media release needs to be attention-grabbing, but don't get lost in trying to make it sound overly amazing. Keep it relatively simple and cover the facts.
- The first three lines should contain all the important information you're trying to convey, while the rest of the page is mainly filler. Assume that people are time poor and won't have time to read your entire release – make it easy and quick for them to get the important details.

- Double check you've included the contact details of where to get more information, the website, the venue address, how and where to buy tickets, and if there's some benefit to buying presale tickets (such as cheaper entry).
- Attach a good, clear band photo in a low resolution so you're not clogging up an editor's emails.
- Include a website link for further details, where that photo can be downloaded in high resolution, with a copy of the media release if needed.
- Keep emails small in size, embed the press release and include it in a word document (not a PDF file) so it can be easily copy and pasted.
- Ask lots of questions from the bands
- You may need to write more than one media release, depending on who you're sending it to. Council may need a corporate-style release, young people will need one that appeals to them, and your local paper may need something inbetween.
- Know if the media you're sending it to will copy and paste your content – if they probably will, make it an appropriate length for what they normally use and try to tailor it for their specific style.
- Make it easy for the media to get what they need, including all the necessary information, photos, extra information, and contact details.

Sending your release to the media

Once you have written your media release, send it out. Find out when the best time to contact the media is and their deadlines. The day they distribute news will be the day they start working on their next edition.

- You can pitch your media release according to the media and what they need. You may also pitch interviews or pictorials to maximise your exposure.
- The more time you leave for promoting, the more time you have to change your pitch if it is rejected or not run by the media you contacted. It also means more time to contact other media.
- Don't bombard the media with the same message, keep it new and fresh.
- Once you've sent out your media release, send a follow-up email closer to the date to remind them of the upcoming event, especially in the week or two before. But keep in mind their publishing dates – there's no point in sending a media release a few days before the event if the media finalise their content for printing the week before.
- Follow up emails should be re-angled to fit the publication, include a bit more information, and any news or announcements you've made.

The importance of having good photos

- Make sure you have a good, clear picture of the band or event you're trying to promote. Having bad pictures can limit the amount of press you get or people's perception of your band.
- Better pictures will take priority in the media, so try to think creatively and even ask the photographer to make some suggestions.
- You can pitch your photo ideas to the paper or magazine to tailor it to what they want and get the best exposure (such as the front cover).
- Getting a big story in the media can be harder than getting a pictorial. Start by pitching a pictorial to them and see what you can get from there.

Other ways to promote and gain publicity

- Think about how your publicity will complement your overall promotional plan. The key is to be consistent with your key messages and across all media.
- Get well-designed posters or flyers and distribute them where they will best reach your audience
- Use Facebook to build your audience, post events and updates. Keep messages streamlined and don't over post.
- Each band on the line-up should also be promoting the event on their social networks.
- Coverage shouldn't stop once your event has passed. Encourage live reviews of your event, invite the media to come along and cover it, and take lots of pictures that you can post on your Facebook or send out to media in future releases.
- Word of mouth is the most effective way to promote, so get people talking about it!