

How to win friends and influence people

Apologies to Dale Carnegie for stealing the title of his famous book but isn't this what marketing is all about? Some of the most influential friends you can have are in the media, so here's my list of top tips for successful media mateship to get you started.

1. Remember it's your job, not theirs

A 'Good Thing' isn't automatically a good story. The job of the media is to communicate what's happening in the community it serves so think like they do – what's in your news for their audience? Why will they care? That's your angle to 'sell' your story.

2. Go through proper channels

Most libraries are part of bigger organizations, which means there are probably policies in place about who can speak to the media and how media liaison is managed. Make sure they know what's going on and use their resources for help with media liaison and developing your media materials. Use your opportunities to make friends in-house – public libraries could ask their mayor to open an event, for example. His media profile will help get your story out because your local journalists will already know who he/she is.

3. Start close to home

Never underestimate the locals. The community angle is a great place to start with your story, and improves your chances of someone coming to visit the library instead of simply cannibalising your media release. Positive contributions to the quality of life in the community are more important to local media – and isn't that what libraries are all about?

4. Do the work for them

No matter whether in the broadcast or print media, a journalist has only one focus: getting enough of a story to use. Help bridge the knowledge gap – and increase the chance of your story running – by providing extra information, facts, and figures in a backgrounder sheet with your media release. For example, the media release may announce your program for Library and Information Week, and the fact sheet will explain how many members you have, how many people come to these events each year, and what happens. These facts tell a journalist that the library is significant in the community they are writing for and helps convince them to run the story.

5. Pictures tell a thousand words

A photo with your story is a proven way to add significant value to the exposure you gain through a story in the media. Is your story a visual one? It won't attract a photographer if it's not. That's why National Simultaneous Storytime gets double the newspaper coverage of Library and Information

Week – there's something to photograph or film for the news outlet. But be aware you will need to have your legal ducks in a row on this – there may be rules in your organisation's media policy about photography, as there are in schools for example, and if you are taking the photos yourself, it's best to get written permission from anyone in them for their use in publications or on the internet. For tips on good photo taking, go here <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/liw/2008/photos.media.pdf>.

6. Follow it up

Don't just send your release and sit back to wait for stampede of Pulitzer Prizewinners to arrive. Give it a day or two and then ring your top priority targets to ask if they've received it. This gives you a chance to make personal contact and 'sell your story in' to the media outlet. There's a lot of competition out there and, on average, up to a third of initial emails and faxes don't hit the desk they're intended for on the first try. You can also use this call to offer spokespersons for interview, to try to set up a photo opportunity and to help raise the library's profile generally with your local journalists.

7. Be there when the phone rings

Your media release must contain all-hours access for journalists because they don't work 9–5. Your spokesperson's mobile number is a must, but whoever the spokesperson is, she/he has to answer the phone. Ringing back later could kill your story because the journo often won't have time to try again later; they'll just pick up the next media release and move on. And, of course, your spokesperson needs to be fully briefed and able to expand on the story you want told.

If you are just starting out with working with the media, you'll find lots of resources online on the ALIA website: <http://www.alia.org.au/>

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Marketing your library: getting back to basics

It's 2009 and we're in the midst of a global economic downturn. Unemployment rates are increasing, workers are delaying retirement, and people are tightening their purse strings.

So what does this mean for our libraries?

The current climate not only presents us with an opportunity to raise awareness of library services – our libraries have a responsibility to ensure people know what's on offer. From the unemployed searching online for job vacancies to parents borrowing books and DVDs for the kids, libraries are even more important when times are tough.