

Media events – maximizing your attendance & news pick-up

As the news media becomes more and more saturated with information, particularly in News Meccas such as Toronto or Montreal, journalists find it increasingly difficult to attend media events.

Here's why.

Electronic highways into newsrooms have enabled a shrinking newsroom workforce to cover more territory because of the concentration of information into databases and the plethora of internal and external wire services. The wide spread adoption of e-mail increases information flow. Working on very short deadlines, most journalists are reluctant to leave their desks for a story.

According to Ipsos Reid, in a 2005 media poll, found on average that business journalists receive about 150 news releases per week. About 18 per cent are used. They also get an average 19 news conference invitations per month, with about 50 per cent getting a reporter to attend. 60 annual reports per year on average. 16 per cent used quickly. 20 media kits per month. 19 per cent used.

Your task, as a media relations practitioner, is to make your story as easy-to-digest as possible and readily accessible via electronic communications. When your story is highly visual through the presence of celebrity spokespersons or a particular location or geography, then plan your event with the following in mind:

- Find out what is going on before picking the date and time – pay attention to the news and advanced notification of events (i.e. www.newswire.ca);
- Make it downtown, as close to news media outlets as you can;
- Make it late morning or early afternoon, to enable media to get there on their rounds after their morning story meetings and before late afternoon deadlines;

Capitalize on the visuals by hiring your own photographer and/or a videographer

Hiring a photographer/videographer enables you to provide media-ready images to news outlets or post them online for access by journalists who are unable to attend your event. Having your own images also permits you to document the event in your own fashion and provides a permanent archival record for future reference. Hire someone already trusted by the news media, perhaps a freelancer who works for a wire service or news organization. Services provided by well known and trusted companies such as CP Photo Assignment Services, News Reach, and Canada News Wire can either be the ultimate insurance policy in case a few to no media show up, or can expand an event's media coverage.