

Maximising summer media opportunities



Item Code FS103951 June 2010 Edition no 1

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The summer holiday season is a key time of year to pitch “on brand” Scouting stories to local media outlets. Not only is there a huge number of exciting story lines to select from (camps, expeditions, day trips etc.), it is also the time of year when there is a general shortage of media content elsewhere. The chances of obtaining good media coverage for your story is therefore significantly enhanced. In fact, it is even worth considering holding some non time dependant stories back to coincide with the summer period.

This information in this factsheet is designed to build upon the factsheet FS295427 “Generating media coverage from an international event”, available from the Scout Information Centre. You can use similar strategies for any camp as long as there is something of interest to hook the attention of the journalist. The Scout Brand is based around “Everyday Adventure” www.scouts.org.uk/adventure

Planning

The larger the event, the bigger the team you will need to plan, pitch and deliver the story. The above-mentioned factsheet deals with assembling a team of people with various skills, planning, the various story lines, adopting an integrated approach to media work and expectations. This approach has been successfully used with small and large scale County camps and events, even if it involves just one of the five Scouting sections.

Key messages

This element is vitally important but is regularly overlooked. It not only helps with coherent and consistent communications when it comes to external media, it also helps with selling the event to Leaders and participants and gives a good framework for accurate content for the event weblink, newsletters etc. Having clear and definite messages will help move your PR work from simply raising Scouting’s profile local into helping deliver the messages that you want the public to hear.

Here are some example key messages for a County camp which can be adapted and used as a template for your event:

- The *(title of the event)* will be the largest ever Scout camping event *(in the region)* and will provide the opportunity for all *(your County)* Scouts to take part in their own locally organised Jamboree.*
- Half of the *(maximum number)* participants will be from the host county. The other half will come from across the UK and over *(???)* countries around the world.
- Participants will camp for *(???)* nights and will have the opportunity to take part in over *(???)* different adventurous activities over the course of *(???)* days.**
- The young people will gain awareness about protecting their environment through community projects such as doing conservation work, undertaking recycling and understanding major ethical issues in order to make the world a better place.***
- The event will be supported by over *(???)* adult Scout volunteers.

* Look for “killer facts”, the first, the largest, the longest, the biggest size, the furthest etc.

** When counting up the number of activities, make sure that you include tent pitching, camping, preparing meals, cooking and all the other Scouting skills that may be relevant.

*** If your event has a theme, make sure that you consider building this into the key messages.

Matching stories to outlets

A one day event lends itself to inviting journalists, a radio truck or a TV crew to the event.

Alternatively, select the most “on brand”, high quality image taken during the event and let that become the focus of your media work with local outlets.

However, covering a camp or event lasting a few days or more will give you far greater opportunities. A key part of your planning will be looking at how to get the most from each event, so think about pitching for a “before” story, a “during” story and finally an “afterwards” story.

Some tricks of the trade

“Before” – A “before” story can feature expectations from the participants. This best lends itself to a local newspaper or local radio piece. One trick is to get the a Young Spokesperson participant(s) being interviewed in a local radio studio to invite the presenter along to the event or work out a plan for the interviewee to be invited back. This has worked many times in the past, one such example was just before EuroJam. The presenter was particularly struck with the word “EuroJam” and he ended up inviting the guests back after the event if they have successfully made a pot of “Euro Jam”.

“During” – A “during” story is all about inviting the journalist, radio presenter or TV crew to experience the event in full swing and to savour the atmosphere. This requires some good planning techniques. Firstly, have a look at the programme for the day so that you can invite the media along at the right time to suit your event. If you want them to see for themselves the large number of activities on offer, it is no use them coming along during the lunch break. It is well worth letting the activity instructors know that you will be accompanying somebody from the media so they are aware and feel involved in the experience. Plan a route that you intent to follow which includes all the activities that you want to showcase. Consider not showing the media the rifle shooting or archery. Although these are typical and popular Scout activities, they can be sensitive areas. Remember that you are in control. You don’t have to show the media everything that is happening. Think about which activities will help best convey your key messages.

A good way to involve a local TV station is to be creative and invite the “weather girl” along to present the weather forecast live from the event. If they are not able to attend, offer them some suitable images that feature the weather conditions.

Two inventive ways of having regular mentions on your local radio station is to inform the travel news presenter when the participants are arriving and leaving. They particularly like to have an anecdote to run alongside the traffic report, and you can justifiably tell them that the reason why there are delays in the area is that there are a huge number of Scouts on way to have the adventure of their lives at this location. Give them

relevant key messages, and this gives you a free advert for Scouting every half an hour.

Another winning idea is to work with the radio station and get them to invite parents of the participants attending the event to text or email the stations with messages of good luck to their sons and daughters.

“Afterwards” – Finally, an “afterwards” story works well across all media outlets.

A local newspaper story works well because you will be in possession of the full media package: the story, the right images, the quotes that compliment the story and image, and even a case study to expand the piece.

Local radio is perfect for your Young Spokespeople to talk about their own personal adventure, challenge and fun, the friendships made and if you are lucky, their life changing experiences.

Finally, an interview in the TV studio can be significantly enhanced with video footage to play alongside which brings the interview to life. If there is no video of the event, then offer the right images.

Timing

The best case scenario would be to give your story to the media well in advance if you are pitching for a “before” or “during” story. If you are pitching for an “afterwards” story, it is crucial that who are working with TV and radio no more than 24 hours after the event. Ideally, this should be the case with local newspapers. However, there have been instances of local newspapers running the story a few weeks after the event. Sometimes they have not got any space left for your story during the following week, so they will hold it back to the next issue. It is worth considering using language like “Scouts have recently returned from....” rather than giving exact dates.

Remember that there is nothing wrong in writing up the story prior to the event taking place. You already know the story along with your key messages (don’t forget to change them into the past tense), so it is just a matter of weaving in your quotes and choosing the right images.

If you would like any more support or guidance please contact The Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818 or info.centre@scouts.org.uk