

Working constructively with a TV news crew



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One of the best ways to demonstrate that Scouting is relevant to today's young people is to bring it into people's homes via their TV screens. For this reason, maximising the opportunities of working with a TV crew becomes an essential part of planning media coverage of an event.

TV coverage is different from other forms of media because viewers can actually see Scouting in action, and enhances our opportunities about demonstrating our key messages, rather than just talking about them.

A TV news crew will often come to you at short notice asking for support so it's important to have a check list to work from to make sure you maximise the opportunity.

Find out what the producer wants to achieve

Even if we make a successful pitch for a story, the producer will have his/her own idea of what they want to achieve. This may be a long way from how we visualise the end result. Often, the producer will have a fixed view on Scouting and perhaps he/she may have been a Scout as a young person. This fixed view could easily be one that reinforces the old stereotypes, so be prepared for a re-creation of boys sitting around a campfire singing "Ging Gang Goolie".

So how do we deal with this scenario? Our role is find out ways of making sure Scouting is seen as a positive and relevant organisation that contributes to local communities as well as the issues that the TV crew is trying to cover. For example there are still a huge number of adults who do not know that Scouting is a mixed organisation, so this often will come as a surprise. It is therefore easy to show the fact that Scouting welcomes young men and young women by making sure that young female Scouts feature in any sequences taking part in modern activities. By thinking about the situation it's possible to meet the TV crew's needs and our own.

Messaging and delivery

Work up your key messages for the piece as soon as possible. Your starting point should be based around fun, challenge and adventure and the benefits adults get from being involved in the Movement. Once you have your basic messages sorted you can add local flavour and angles. Keeping the relevant local people in the loop is also a priority. This is especially important when it comes to selecting the right spokesperson for the piece. This means including an adult working with a young person as a team. You may need to spend time talking with the local leadership team to explain why it is important that the youth voice is heard.

Parental permissions

Ensure that parental permissions to film young people has been finalised before the date of the filming. Most TV and film companies will insist on this and will be keen to either email you their own permission form in advance.

Agree on where the filming will take place

Filming outside is always preferential as that shows Scouting as an outdoor organisation. Try to suggest a Scout Activity Centre as a suitable location as this will showcase our facilities that are unseen by the general public. If there is enough time, suggest a meeting prior to the filming for a "recce". Once the location has been agreed, the exact spot where the filming will take place is important. A position that has good natural light and not affected with the positioning of the sun needs to be considered. Ideally, somewhere with a backdrop of young people taking part in an activity like climbing and abseiling. However, we don't want too much going on in the background that may detract from the piece. Ideally, select an activity that compliments the key messages.

It is not always possible to film outside at certain times of the year when daylight is limited, so the

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preferred option is to bring the camera inside the Scout Group HQ. It is always good to have a pre-agreed sterile area inside the building (e.g. a corner of the hall) for the camera crew to work from and be ready to be in close proximity of the film crew if they need to break out of this area for close up pieces to camera.

If they want to film a typical sectional meeting, have a good working knowledge of the programme for that particular meeting, and try to influence the Leaders to concentrate on the adventure, challenge and fun part of Scouting as opposed to the formal parts of the meeting which involve standing to attention and saluting.

What to wear?

Decide on the most appropriate dress code for the activity with the common denominator being the Scout scarf/necker. Dress informally for adventure - not for formal presentations.

Think regional

TV companies' catchment area of viewers will invariably extend beyond your own County. BBC TV currently has 15 regions whilst ITV has 12. It is therefore important to include other counties in your region, especially when it comes to membership totals, e.g. East Midlands Tonight will have an audience across four Scout Counties (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire) so you can offer data to back up your story that combines information from across the region.

Briefing

Briefing your spokespeople who will be involved in the filming is essential to the success of the piece. It is always good to give your spokesperson a practice. Even if it's a 2 minute run through. This will not only have a positive effect on their confidence; it also gives them a chance to rehearse what they are going to say and when to weave in the key messages. Remember that the last thing a young person hears before an interview is often the first thing they say when the cameras start to role. If you get a chance, emailing the producer some basic Scout information helps.

Planning for one and two camera shoots

Part of your planning will include ascertaining the size of the film crew. There is no set size and the crew could easily range from just one person who

shoots, interviews and then goes away to edit the piece through to a crew of 8 or 10. Usually a TV news crew will consist of 2-3 people: a camera operator and a presenter and possibly a sound operator and or producer. Your aim is to form a positive working relationship with the crew and definitely include the camera operator in your efforts. Sometimes, a second camera is required. If that is the case, a second person is required to support the extra crew. This second person needs to work closely with you. You should make sure you are with the crew from the time they arrive on the site until the time they depart. Quite simply, if you are around you can support and influence what happens.

Say "Thank You"

Some people who work in media don't remember to say "Thank You". If you do, you will be remembered, so take time to say thanks to the film crew. This act of courtesy may persuade them to return on another occasion and make them think positively about the Scout Movement.

Your check list for a successful shoot:

- Find out what the producer/Director/Presenter wants to achieve and agree where you will be working and what will be shot
- Work with them to make sure any work meets Scouting's objectives as well as theirs.
- Research opportunities available for the film crew. If you offer attractive filming options they are usually under time pressure and will go with your suggestions
- Offer to email the producer some generic info about Scouting.
- Agree with producer the most appropriate Scout Group and Section for their needs.
- Keep relevant local people in the loop.
- Ensure that parental permissions to young people to do filming have been arranged.
- Agree on dress code.
- Brief spokespeople (young people and adults).
- Agree on the area where the film crew will be filming.