Let's Get in the News! Traditional Media Tips and Tricks

Developing your story/message

- *Keep it timely*: connect it to other local stories and issues.
- *Keep it local*: Why divestment is important for your community/country/region?
- *Make it personal*: it’s easy to refer to numbers/facts/figures of climate, but what’s unique for your local/national newspaper is how it’s impacting local people.

Developing a Media List

For maximum coverage, reach out to different media outlets: including print, radio, and TV. Contacting local outlets is particularly useful in establishing relationships to maintain in the long term. *Pay attention to the different stories that reporters cover, and pitch stories to reporters that are likely to cover your activities/issue.* To get their contact info, visit their websites! Check to see if their email addresses are online, get in touch with the media desk and/or search for them on twitter.

Make a list of these reporters or news outlets, and include their contact information, phone numbers, and emails. But don’t worry; this list doesn’t need to be long. Less is more! *We recommend finding a few key folks and focus on getting in touch with them. Your list doesn’t need to include every reporter in your city. We do, however,*
recommend you check out various types of media outlets such as radio, television, print media and online media outlets. Often times its worth identifying your prefered media channels and connecting with them in advance to share unique updates/information.

**Prepare your team for media opportunities**

The media may try to speak with anyone so you may as well talk about the main message you want to get across with everyone involved! Get your team to practice in advance. Practice answering the questions “What are you doing?” and “Why?” While everyone may know the answers, it is good to practice keeping the responses short and sweet. It is also OK to respond to media saying “I don’t have the information you are looking for and can connect you to someone who can provide you with the information” or “Please allow me to look into this and contact you later.”

**Press Releases + Media Advisories + Interviews**

**I. Press Release**

Write a press release as if you are writing a newspaper article. Avoid overly academic language and acronyms, keep paragraphs short, and put the most interesting and important information at the beginning whenever possible. Sometimes, media will print it word for word.

A press release is like a brief news story. It's direct and to the point and is peppered with quotes and supporting facts.

*Remember news deadlines! If timely, send it early in the day (around 6:30am-8:00am), when reporters/editors are determining their stories for the day. Ideal to follow up with a pitch call soon after! Also, best to avoid Fridays afternoon since it is the end of the week and journalist are less likely to take on a new story at that point.*

**How to write one:**

- Pick a nice, catchy title or headline. You want a title that is snappy and explicit. Try to include who did what and why...
- In the 1st paragraph, include the: who, what, where, when, why, and how
In the 1st or 2nd paragraph put in a quote using your talking points and key messages. This helps make the release more personal and allows the story to include people from our communities!

If you can, include a photo. Otherwise, indicate that press can acquire good images if they cover your story (when possible).

Try to include numbers or statistics - the media love quantitative info

Finish your press release with # # #

IMPORTANT: Make sure that you, or whoever indicated in the press release, is fully available to answer media calls

**Structure of Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 13, 2015

CONTACT: (contact details of person(s) responding to media inquiries)

“Global Divestment Day” Challenges Fossil Fuel Industry on February 13-14

*Today, across the world, thousands of people are gathering to call on universities, cities, states, and religious institutions to divest from fossil fuels*

*Reminder on purpose of press release: should be written as you want it to appear in a news story giving all important information since journalists skim through and need to be able to easily extract the essence of the release easily*

CITY, Country -- First sentence, should grab the reader and say concisely what is happening


The first paragraph (two to three sentences) should sum up the press release, and the additional content must elaborate it. Start needs to generate enough interest to pick up story.
The rest of the release should come in a logical order with the most important information high up in the release followed by the supporting information making sure the following clarifications are covered: the who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Don’t forget quotes.

Concluding paragraphs: Here you can provide additional context and background information.

*Important note:* Try to keep the press release to one page when possible, the longer the release the less likely it will be read.

Provide some extra information links that support your press release as footnotes when and if useful.

### (to signal the end of the press release)

**HOW TO GET IT OUT THERE:**

Email it to your media list. The timing of when you send it will depend. Copy the press release into the body of the email, BCC reporters, and hit send.

**II. MEDIA ADVISORY…**

A media advisory is like a list of points that answer: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and WHY.

An advisory is often sent out in advance of whatever you want to get covered in the media, as it is advising reporters of what will happen. This gives them enough time to get it on their radar. Regardless, you’ll still want to follow up with key reporters.

*Send it out in advance of when you want your story to be covered and, again, be sure to follow up with reporters.*
Structure of Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA ADVISORY: [concise, informative title, written in the style of a news headline]

CITY, country, [date of release]-[2-3 sentence summary of the WHO, WHEN and WHAT of the event, with slight elaboration on the WHAT--make sure to contextualize the event with background information, and make it clear why the event is significant and newsworthy, but do not provide so much information that it becomes unnecessary to attend the event itself; on a similar note, do not include quotes]

WHAT: Short one-phrase description of the event
WHEN: Date and time of the event, in the following format: Day of the Week, Month, Day, Time (specify time zone)
WHERE: Venue of the event
WHO: Names and titles (if applicable) of those carrying out the event followed by an explanation/description of those involved.
WHY: A couple of sentences explaining why this event is important and what is the overall context in which it is taking place highlighting local/regional issues of relevance currently at play.

###

Following-up after sending a press release/advisory and pitch calls ...

Call key media contacts and follow up with them. Ask if they received the release/advisory and offer to re-send it to them so that it is at the top of their inbox. Offer them interviews, and answer any questions.

You can also always ask if there is another reporter who may be more appropriate to talk to, and if there are photos for an event, let them know!

III. Interviews...

Sometimes media will just call and ask you for an interview on the spot, while other times they may give you some more notice.
Important to be prepared in advance!!

**HOW TO PREPARE:**

- Develop “talking points” -- a list of the main messages you want to convey and that you don’t want them to miss.
- Make a list of likely questions the journalist will ask and prepare answers
- Recruit a friend and pretend they are interviewing you. This is not only great practice, but you can also get feedback. Pay attention to your quirks -- do you move your head a lot? Do you gesture a lot? Do you touch your hair or cover your mouth when you get nervous? Try and avoid these things
- When answering the questions, pay attention to whether or not you are conveying your key messages! And don’t feel bad about repeating your message.
- Speak in sound bites. Make sure you can say your key point in under 30 secs.
- Make sure you know the key background information. Bring some notes if you need.
- Speak slowly and clearly, with conviction and confidence!
- Use full sentences and avoid acronyms.
- Stay Calm! While practicing is definitely a good thing, remember… it’s just the media!
- Be mindful and respectful towards your audience

*Take a deep breath. If you mess up your statement, or start to stumble, take a deep breath, pause and start again.* Some phrases that we use to help get us back on message are:

- Well, I think the real issue is that…
- What is actually important is…

Remember, you are there to share the message, the issue, and talk about what matters!

**TAKING GOOD PHOTOS/VIDEOS THE DAY OF THE EVENT**

**I. PHOTOS:**

*Documenting your event with a powerful photo is a crucial part of your local action.*

Here are seven guidelines to help you get a great action photo:

1- *Check the camera.* Make sure that it works, someone knows how to use it, and that its batteries are fully charged. Use the best digital camera you can find with the best
person behind it and set it to the best-quality setting. If possible, organise a backup camera. If you can’t get a fancy camera, don’t worry – use a cellphone camera.

2- Gather your people. It’s crucial that you gather everyone together at your action for your photo – this is how we can show world leaders just how big this movement is.

3- Show your message. Whether it’s with signs or a banner, your action photo will be strengthened if it’s clear what your message or demand is.

4- Show the world where you are. If possible, include local landmarks or typical surroundings of your area in your picture. If you live in a city, have some buildings in the shot, or if you live by the sea, let’s see some water.

5- Take more than one picture! It’s easy to take a few shots of groups, also from different angles or closer and further away. This will allow you a choice from which you can select your best images. Be creative with some of your shots!

6- Check the picture. Most digital cameras allow you to instantly review your pictures. Make sure your pictures look OK before everyone goes home.

7- Send us your best images. You can submit your best photos to the 350 Flickr account by sending us an email to photos@350.org following these instructions:

- Add your photos as attachments, making sure not to exceed individual photo size of 5MB.
- Submit only one photo per email.
- The subject line of your email will be the title of your photo.
- The body of your email will be the caption for your photos. Include a compelling one-sentence description of your event and what is happening in the photo.
- Include any photographer credits in the email body/caption.
- Send your email to photos@350.org

II. VIDEOS:

Digital storytelling is now more accessible than ever, with the advent of YouTube, Vimeo and cheap video cameras. Consider taking video as a compelling way to get the word out, document your action and amplify your impact. It’s also particularly important if you are planning an activity which involves Civil Disobedience. Here are just a few tips to keep in mind to make your video stand out:
1- **Check your camera the day before you shoot!** Make sure your batteries are fully charged, and that you have three times as much memory as you think you’ll need. You never know what might happen the day of the event!

2- **KISS – Keep it short and simple:** A video to document your action should not be more than 5 minutes long. A minute-long mini-movie can have a lot of impact. Concentrate on what’s exciting and important — you don’t have to jam every last thing that happened on your action into the movie.

3- **Hold your camera steady:** Avoid the wobble-cam look — it makes viewers ill and steady shots are easier to edit. A good rule is to hold each shot steady for at least ten seconds when shooting (you can always cut them shorter when editing later). Use a tripod, or if you don’t have one brace the elbow of your camera-holding arm on your chest, breathe in and count slowly “steady one, steady two, steady three…” . It will seem like a long time when you’re shooting, but you’ll be very happy you have your ten seconds per shot when you start editing! If you want to move the camera across a scene (pan) do it slowly.

4- **Shoot wide, and close-in:** Vary your shots. Shoot some wide shots to show the general scene, and then others close-in on interesting details or characterful people. Emphasise what’s special about your locale — movies showing character of place and character of people are more interesting.

5- **Pay careful attention to sound.** If you’re doing an interview, make sure there’s nothing noisy going on behind the person being interviewed, or it will drown out their voice. Don’t move your hands around on the camera while you’re shooting — this can cause weird clunking or squeaking noises on the camera body that will be picked up by the microphone. Monitor the sound while you’re shooting with a pair of headphones.

6- **Avoid long shots of a talking head:** Edit out the boring stuff that people say, only use the sentences that count.

7- **Upload the video.** Once you’ve done that, you can edit your footage and upload it to a video sharing site.