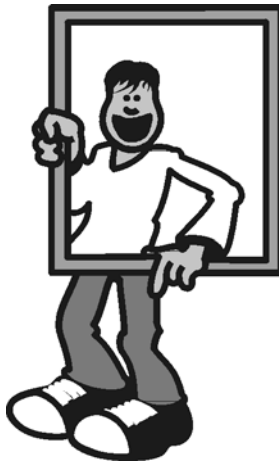


\$2.00

# Expose Yourself!



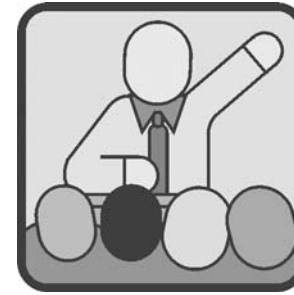
*Articles from*  
***The Sources HotLink***  
*– A newsletter about publicity and  
media relations –*



## Sources

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December 2005



## Effective Media Relations

You may be a speaker, a consultant, the owner of a small business, a staff or board member of a non-profit association, or involved in communications in a corporate or government setting. You know that promotion and publicity are crucial to success, and you know that getting media attention is one of the very best ways of getting publicity.

Media coverage is arguably the most valuable kind of publicity there is — it is based on the *news value* of what you do or say, and is therefore more inherently credible than advertising, which is paid for. Plus the potential reach of the media coverage you can earn far exceeds the reach of any advertising you can possibly afford.

The problem is: how do you get the media to pay attention to you? For many people, that is a problem they feel uncomfortable tackling.

This booklet, consisting of articles reprinted from *The Sources HotLink*, a newsletter about getting media coverage, is intended to provide some practical advice about doing media relations. *The Sources HotLink* is published by *Sources*, the directory for the news media which connects journalists looking for interesting and authoritative news sources with individuals, organizations, and companies willing and able to be available to the media.

If there is one key message that runs through the articles in this booklet, it is that media relations is human relations. Journalism — broadcast, print, or online — is about telling stories, and compelling stories are about people and their lives. If they are going to give their viewers or readers interesting stories, journalists need people to talk to, human contacts, people who can provide quotes and background, people who can make the story interesting.

There are certainly techniques and strategies for dealing with the media. But it's important not to get carried away by them. The key thing is to be authentic, to be yourself, not to sound rehearsed or phony.

If you get a call from the media, they are in all likelihood going to be calling you to ask you about a topic that you know about and that you feel passionate about. In fact, the likelihood is that you know a lot about the topic in question *because* you're passionate about it. This is important: Figure out what moves you and what you know about, and you'll be a long way along when it comes to developing your media "strategy".

Your relationships with journalists can be important to your success. All too often, however, we only think of these relationships as something to call upon when we need them. However, like any living thing, our relationships with journalists need to be maintained over time in order to be fruitful.

Journalists turn to you for information if they know they can rely on you for credible, accurate information, not self-serving advertorial. By forwarding interesting news about research, developments and ongoing trends in your field — not necessarily directly about yourself or your organization — that you pick up at conferences, events or from colleagues, you can nurture a mutually beneficial relationship with journalists that will reward you hundred-fold.

Take the time to get to know the reporters you want to reach. Do a search through their publications archives, often available on the Internet. Read articles they have written that relate to your issues. Each reporter has a different interests and priorities. By tailoring your approach to a reporter, you can greatly increase your chances of getting coverage.

The basics always apply. All the relationship nurturing in the world won't benefit you if you fail to return journalists' calls within the day, don't provide clear, concise, relevant story information, and don't have additional graphic, video and print materials.

With proper care, the relationships you and your organization develop with journalists can last a lifetime — and benefit everyone.

Finally, a word about *Sources*, the publisher of *The Sources HotLink*. *Sources* is designed to get journalists to call you. Reporters and broadcasters need knowledgeable sources to interview and quote when they write stories or line up guests. The *Sources* directory is the first place most journalists turn to when they need to find experts and spokespersons. *Sources*

gives them what they most need in their day-to-day work: a wealth of human contacts — **people like you** — offering a wide range of views and expertise, ready and willing to speak to the media. A *Sources* listing complements and magnifies your other efforts to publicize yourself. We'd love to be able to include you in *Sources*. Call us at 416-964-7799 for a free information package or to discuss your needs, or visit the *Sources* Web site [www.sources.com](http://www.sources.com) for details about how to include yourself in *Sources*.



## Watching The News

Want to get to know how a reporter thinks? Try analyzing your friendly local newscast.

On a recent trip to Los Angeles to conduct media training for a client, I scrutinized the local news. With all the bells and whistles used and the content of the stories, the newscasts could have passed for a local version of "Entertainment Tonight". The first three stories were about celebrities and their personal lives, not offering much valuable information to the viewer.

The producer of the newscast would argue that these are the types of stories "people are talking about" in LA. Whether you agree with that philosophy or not, news stories are based on what a news organization believes reflects the public's interest.

How does that affect you when you work with the media? Whether you are pitching a story or being interviewed, you must convince the reporter that the public is interested in what you have to offer.

### Personalizing the Story

Observing how stories are written by news anchors and reporters will help you determine how to deliver your message when you are being interviewed. Notice how stories are "personalized". Words like "you" and "your money" are staples of the nightly news. These are words we should all use during interviews. It helps bring the message home to viewers.

Take a look at how reporter “packages” are edited. If a story is well-done, you should be able to understand it by turning down the volume and just watching the video. This means that if you can offer reporters good video to go along with your story idea, you will be creating a win-win situation.

### 20-20 Rule

Many reporters have what is known as the 20-20 Rule, meaning that there will be no more than 20 seconds of narration alternating with no more than 20 seconds of a sound bite. This keeps the story well-paced. In my reporter days, I used a 15-15 rule. This means that you should keep your interview responses to no more than 15 seconds. This way you are increasing the chances that your message will not be edited.

### “Exclusive”

Count the number of times you have heard a newscaster, “As we told you exclusively at six...” Reporters like to be the first. This means that if a reporter has worked hard to develop his/her own story, we should honor that. Of course, the exception is when the “enterprise” story is a negative one. In that case, a strategic media campaign may be necessary.

When you become familiar with how a newscast is developed, you will get a better feel for how to become successful when working with reporters. It is an important first step in getting consistently good media coverage.

Remember, whether you are pitching a story or being interviewed:

- 1 Watch the local news to learn the types of stories that are covered.
- 2 Personalize your story
- 3 Offer good video opportunities.
- 4 Keep your responses brief.
- 5 Honour a reporter who has “enterprised” his/her own story.

*Courtesy of Al Rothstein Media Services, Inc., specialists in spokesperson training and media relations seminars. Phone: 1-800-453-6352*

*E-mail: [mediabrain@rothsteinmedia.com](mailto:mediabrain@rothsteinmedia.com)*

*WWW: <http://www.rothsteinmedia.com>*

*This article appeared in Sources HotLink 17 (Autumn 2000).*



## Flying High: 5 Sure Ways to Get Your Business Soaring

BY CATHLEEN FILLMORE

**1** Joining appropriate associations and organizations not only adds to your credibility but also provides you with important contacts. Since there may be many worthy organizations you could join, you need to develop a criteria to help you find those that would be mutually beneficial. Before making a decision, consider whether:

- a. members are encouraged to participate
- b. the information at meetings meets your needs
- c. training is available
- d. networking opportunities with prospective clients are encouraged
- e. the benefits outweigh the cost of both time and money.

Helen Walter, Sr. Designer with Capstone Communications Group claims that she isn't a joiner by nature. “But I've found such a high quality and level of enthusiasm and morale at the Association of Independent Consultants that I signed up. It's a very professional organization and no matter how tired I might be before a meeting, I always leave with an upbeat feeling. While finding clients hasn't been my primary motivation, I have led Meet the Pro sessions and gained clients from my participation at meetings.” Of all the benefits one can get from a good professional organization, inspiration and morale boosting are among the most important.

**2** Write articles or a book for publication. It can't be said often enough that being an author adds instant credibility. Write for periodicals that your prospective clients read - this is part of what Helen Walter calls

knowing the client better than you know yourself. “Know what their motivations are and what turns them on. Get beneath the surface and really listen to what they’re saying.” Also find out what they’re reading and offer to write a relevant article for that publication, making sure you leave your contact information and a brief bio if possible.

**3** Raise your profile by speaking to groups and associations where members of the audience fit your prospect profile. Develop a speech that ties in with the article(s) you’ve written and offer to deliver it at an annual conference or a regular monthly meeting. Give a handout to each audience member that sums up the points you made and that has all your contact information. If you need training, try either Toastmasters International or the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers.

**4** Form strategic alliances. One of the most cost effective way to advertise your business is to get someone else to do it for you. Cross-promotion is the wave of the future and if you don’t learn to surf it, you’ll get dunked! Find businesses that complement yours and look for ways you could work together, either by sharing a booth at a trade show, combining a mail-out, or offering the other business’s customers a substantial discount. This makes your marketing budget stretch much farther.

**5** Get a listing in *Sources*. As a journalist, I have depended for many years on *Sources* to provide a comprehensive list of experts and contact information. As an expert myself, I have had enormous payoffs from my listing, including an article that featured me in *Canadian Living*, a phone interview from *Canada AM*, and an Ottawa radio station interview, not to mention clients who found my information in *Sources*. Other experts I have spoken to have had the same experience. And Susan Stern, writer and speaker, notes that her relationship with *Sources* has become a partnership. She says “The people at *Sources* are exceptional - they’re a joy to deal with. They’re the kind of people who return phone calls and who follow up; in short, they want me to be successful.”

To make best use of your advertising budget, the goals for any advertising should be to create credibility, to raise your public profile and to gain clients. When a resource does all three, you know you have a winner.

Lise-Ann Jackson, Media Relations Manager with Andersen Consulting sums up the elements in a good public relations strategy: “Know your audience, know your message, be clear and consistent in that message, then develop a strategy and execute it, making sure your objectives are well defined and the measurements of your success upfront.”

Time for take-off!

*Cathleen Fillmore is co-author of Going for Gold! A Complete Marketing Strategy for Speakers and author of more than 80 published articles. She leads marketing seminars for businesses, entrepreneurs, professional practitioners and speakers and also does private coaching. Visit her on the Internet at [www.speakersgold.com](http://www.speakersgold.com) and check out her listing in Sources. This article appeared in Sources HotLink 18 (Winter 2001).*



## There’s no such thing as a slow news day

BY LYNN FENSKE

When the war in Iraq and the SARS outbreak dominated the headlines for weeks, it reminded us of how impacting news reporting is on our daily lives. After a while news stories (and casual conversations) gradually return to regular topics of discussion like politics and the weather, and the panic seems to be over — at least until the next time.

Let me assure you, though, that while crises may come and go, the news is never slow. It just oscillates between the everyday and the life-threatening.

Regardless of their specialty, journalists are always on the frontlines of communicating what’s happening - 24/7. They can’t always predict where any story will take them or whom they’ll need to talk to in order to get the necessary facts and comments. One thing is for certain; they will always need quick access to people in the know.

So you may be sitting there thinking “the media never calls to speak with me”. Or you have already made the assumption that if they haven’t called by now, they never will. Well, consider this — is your expertise relevant to today’s news story? Do you have any way of knowing for sure when you will be of interest to a roving reporter? Or better yet, have you done all you can do to make yourself known as a contact/expert in your given field of endeavour?

Listing in *Sources* is a major step in the right direction. Next to the telephone book, the *Sources* directory is the most used resource a Canadian journalist has for finding spokespeople relevant to any particular story. The heart of your listing is the descriptive paragraph. Some organizations print their mission statement while others address journalists directly. Whatever format you choose, make sure you provide a brief, compelling introduction to your organization so *Sources* users clearly understand who you are and what you do.

The next thing you can do is keep reading your *Sources HotLink* newsletter and visit the HotLink Web site ([www.hotlink.ca](http://www.hotlink.ca)) regularly. We’ve crafted *The Sources HotLink* to be your perpetual guide to getting positive news coverage. With each new issue we offer the best advice available from industry insiders. Like the media, we appreciate your comments. If you’re feeling “out of the loop” let us know what we can do to help you improve your media relations. After all, it’s only a matter of time before a reporter will call ...

*Lynn Fenske is a freelance copywriter with extensive experience working both sides of the media fence as journalist and publicist. She can be reached at [info@whatiwrite.com](mailto:info@whatiwrite.com). Lynn was editor of The Sources HotLink from 2001 to 2004. This article appeared in Sources HotLink 26 (Spring 2003).*



## News releases that work (and those that don't!)

Do make sure it is newsworthy. Nothing will shoot your credibility more quickly than sending out frequent news releases on unimportant topics.

Do focus your approach. Target individual section editors of papers, industry and niche publications. Don’t forget the powerful reach of community papers, especially when your subject matter is local.

Do put yourself in the reporter’s shoes. Consider the needs of the journalist as far as content, timing, style and length. In other words, Don’t send a busy financial reporter a five page sales pitch on your new line of accounting calculators two days before the next “Moneysense” supplement to her paper comes out and expect any coverage!

Do consider the advantages of regular mail. Although the fax machine has become an increasingly popular way to send news releases, many journalists report that they feel overwhelmed by the constant stream of faxes their offices receive. Using the mail also enables you to provide reproduction quality photographs directly with your release, a time-saver that could result in an article on your issue.

Do include effective contact information. Clear, recognizable phone, E-mail and after-hours information for the appropriate person is vital to the success of a press release. Be sure to include reference to your *Sources* listing (“See our listing in *Sources*”). Journalists can turn to your listing and have a capsule description of your organization, reproducible logo, additional contact persons, branch offices and so on.

Don’t assume that writing a news release is straightforward! The style should be tailored to the subject matter of your release and the outlets you are targeting. Industries, media formats and even specific publications have their own style. Consider hiring a professional to help you navigate, especially if you are new to the world of media relations!

*This article appeared in Sources HotLink 32 (November 2004).*





## Media Relations - Behaviours Unbecoming

BY BARBARA FLORIO GRAHAM

Communications consultant Barbara Florio Graham provided *The Sources HotLink* with an excerpt from her book, “Five Fast Steps to Low-Cost Publicity” (available from the author at her web site [www.simonteakettle.com](http://www.simonteakettle.com)) that highlights what not to do when dealing with the media. Collected over the years at Canada’s National Press Club in Ottawa, here’s Barbara’s compilation of media relations behaviours to be avoided:

- the news release on an important issue which arrives just before deadline
- any print information without the complete name, title (if appropriate) and telephone number of a contact person
- the contact person who is unavailable when telephoned
- telephone calls which are not returned promptly
- contacts who telephone at inappropriate times, and don’t bother to ask if it’s a good time to call
- telephone callers who don’t get immediately to the point
- contacts who think they can dictate (or even suggest) which reporter should cover the story, how it should be treated, the length, placement, etc.
- information which doesn’t check out
- gaps in background information, which are not immediately apparent because too much extraneous information was provided, or because it is not organized efficiently

- the subject of an interview who asks to see the story before it goes to print
- the interview subject who insists upon changing the wording of a quote when you call to check
- the interview subject who decides, after the interview, that most of the discussion is off the record
- telephone calls complaining about story placement, angle, etc.
- complaints concerning errors of fact, made to superiors instead of to the reporter, or complaints to the reporter about tiny, insignificant “errors”
- compliments to everyone except the reporter involved (the best compliment is a Letter to the Editor, with a copy to the reporter)
- the nervous interview subject who waves back and forth in front of the microphone (whether on radio or TV), or who touches the microphone and/or cord
- the apparently glib interview subject who suddenly freezes in front of the microphone
- someone who smokes, coughs, or giggles on air
- the person who tries to influence the reporter by bragging about his or her contacts in the community, on the paper, or elsewhere
- the academic, artist, or executive who treats reporters as unfortunate, working class, under-educated slobs
- the individual who asks for tear sheets, copies of audio or video tapes
- the person who attempts to buy favors with lunch, booze, etc.
- the interview subject who decides that, on the basis of a couple of meetings, the reporter is now a personal friend, who can be introduced to others on a first-name basis
- the individual who gives someone else a reporter’s home telephone number without first asking for permission

*This article appeared in Sources HotLink 28 (November 2003).*





## Is Your Web Site Media Friendly?

BY LYNN FENSKE

You've spent thousands of dollars to launch your Web site. It's a major component of your current communications strategy. But does it help or hinder one of your most important audiences — the media?

Unless you are a media relations specialist, it's easy to overlook what reporters, editors, researchers and broadcast producers require to gather news and information. Deadlines are brutal but the needs are pretty basic. Since they must work efficiently and expediently and mostly by telephone, what media people need first and foremost is a contact name and telephone number.

When tackling a new story, journalists will start with its principal players and who they already know relevant to the story. Masters at networking they have learned that people lead you to other people who can help tell the story. When additional research is required or facts need checking, then staff writers can turn to research assistants or librarians to assist in the search. Freelancers are left to do their own research. In each case the search begins in the same way. The Internet is second choice only to telephone directories and Sources print directory.

Who in your organization is designated and trained to handle media inquiries and where can they be reached? While the Internet can be a very expensive medium for providing such information, if it is not readily available from your Web site chances are you'll risk missing the call. When the media is seeking your comment or opinion relative to their story

and they can't reach you when they need to, they will call someone else equally equipped to comment, likely your competitor.

To create a media friendly Web site, here's what you need to consider:

1. I'll restate the obvious. Include the names and telephone numbers of key personnel, particularly those assigned to handle media inquiries. And don't be sending anyone into voice-mail hell. If you depend upon voice mail to manage incoming calls, be sure to check messages regularly and return calls promptly, particularly those from the media. A journalist on deadline always needs to speak to humans, so be available.
2. Publish E-mail addresses but only if you are willing to check messages regularly and reply expediently. Remember, media people need you urgently. They telephone first, resort to E-mail or the Internet second.
3. If you provide a press room or media centre on your Web site, be certain the information is timely and up-to-date. While archival information about your organization can be helpful in some cases, it has limited value to a news story. A journalist's job is to find out what's happening today, not yesterday.
4. If you have information on your Web site accessible only by accredited journalists then here's a really valuable piece of advice. Let journalists choose their own password. Or if you must assign them a password, then provide them the opportunity to change it to something convenient for them. This way, you are making it easier for journalists to use the same password(s) for access to different databases rather than have to work with and remember several different passwords, each of which works only with one particular database.

Media relations must be an integral part of any effective communications strategy. Don't try to hide from the media. More and more newsrooms are giving their reporters state-of-the-art computers that permit individual Internet access. As a result, more reporters are doing more of their own research as their story is being written. Be available. Be helpful. Return their calls. Don't rely on your Web site to try and hide an inability or unwillingness to handle media inquiries.

You really do want the media to call you and consider your personnel



important contacts and resource people, particularly in times of crisis. With proper training and experience, your personnel can work with the media to provide clear images of what your organization is all about - in good times and in bad. As Michael Levine so aptly points out in the first paragraph of his book *Guerilla P.R.*, “our civilization is utterly dominated by the force of media. After our own families, no influence holds greater sway in shaping the text of our being than do the media that cloak us like an electronic membrane”. So stay media friendly, particularly on the Internet where more and more influence is taking place.

*Lynn Fenske is a freelance copywriter with extensive experience working both sides of the media fence as journalist and publicist. She can be reached at info@whatiwrite.com. Lynn was editor of The Sources HotLink from 2001 to 2004. This article appeared in Sources HotLink 33 (May 2005).*



## Blowing Your Own Horn!

BY CATHLEEN FILLMORE

The best possible way to promote your business is to launch your own public relations campaign. And that's not as difficult as it may seem.

An excellent way to get your name out there is to write for publication and to speak to a variety of carefully targeted groups.

This not only increases your name recognition, it gives you added credibility and multiplies your networking connections.

Decide which publications you want to target and start from the top by studying a sample copy of the periodical you'd most like to write for. Determine how long the articles are, what the general slant is, who advertises in the magazine, and what the reader profile is. If you phone the editorial office, you can often get an editorial schedule for the coming year and that will help you fit your proposed article into the magazine's line-up.

Once you have a good solid proposal, send a query to the editor.

Articles are not simply self promotion, they have to provide a solid benefit for the reader. You can, however, often get a small photo of yourself scanned in at the beginning or end of the article and contact information

at the end or at least an E-mail address.

If your business depends on local traffic, offer to write a weekly or monthly column for the local newspaper. It doesn't have to be about your business as long as it's relevant to your target market and has your contact information at the end.

Publishing and distributing your own newsletter is an excellent way to reach potential clients and/or customers and keep your name in front of them.

Keep all your published articles and slowly build up a portfolio to be included in your promotional package.

Articles are not simply self promotion, they have to provide a solid benefit for the reader.

As for speaking, a good place to start if you're inexperienced, is a service club such as Rotary. Let everyone know that you're available for speaking engagements. Offer to speak at your organization's regular meeting or next convention. Check the business section of the newspaper for upcoming events and meetings where your expertise would be welcomed. Trade magazines often have a section at the back where upcoming events are announced with contact information. Call and offer your services as a speaker. These events need lots of lead time so if you're too late for this year, inquire about the next year's event.

*Cathleen Fillmore is publisher of Speakers Gold marketing newsletter and has published over 70 articles. If you'd like an in-depth version of this report, call 416-466-6540 or E-mail cfillmore@idirect.com. This article appeared in Sources HotLink 15 (Spring 2000).*



# The Follow-Up Telephone Call

BY MARK LAVIGNE, APR

When I was a journalist, the inundation of information was mind-boggling. There was a constant incoming mountain of information. News releases arriving by fax, media kits arriving by courier, news wire stories provided by Broadcast News and their commercial counterparts, all followed by hundreds of phone calls made by well intentioned people wanting to know if I had received their information and was interested in their story. Sometimes these calls worked when their news was put into a tight sound bite. Sometimes I would scramble and dig into the blue box looking for a kit that seemed interesting after the “verbal sell.” But not usually.

And now that E-mail has significantly increased the flow of information into newsrooms and freelancers’ home offices, how can one follow-up telephone call cut through all the “noise”? What follows are some suggestions from two journalists in the field.

Marc Saltzman, who is one of North America’s most successful freelance technology journalists in both print and broadcast, receives between 150 and 200 E-mails per day, plus about 10 telephone calls per day. He hates the phone. “The phone ruins my writing flow, E-mail is much more conducive,” he says.

Which leads to follow-up call tip #1. Find out the journalist’s preference in communication. Is it E-mail, telephone or fax?

Saltzman also stresses that practitioners should “choose their battles” for follow-up calls. “Isolate the important stories.” He also notes that PR should do their homework. Don’t follow-up on an inapplicable lifestyle story to a tech product journalist for example.

John Valorzi is the Business Editor at *Canadian Press*, which is the nerve system for the Canadian news business and one of a handful of newsgathering co-operative organizations that feed the world’s news outlets. He receives about 200 E-mails a day and gets between 75 and 100 telephone calls per day. He likes phone calls by the way, as long as they are worthwhile and provide context. “I don’t mind receiving (follow-up) calls, but more than half are from juniors who simply ask if I got the release, not from seniors who can debate things or tell me the context.”

Valorzi points out that two or three times a week he gets follow-up calls from practitioners wondering if a release is of interest when it’s actually been on the *Canadian Press* wire for three or four hours. He begs that we media monitor before we call.

He also begs for data that makes a story newsworthy. For example, if a product is being launched, how many jobs will it create, how much money will be spent on building the new plant. He notes that is worthwhile follow-up contact information that will interest him.

And he reminds us to do post-mortems on stories that bomb out. “Did it have hard edge, quantifiable information that lifted the release beyond just a product release? Before being called 100 times, the PR person has to understand that content is king.”

*Mark LaVigne, APR, is Past President of the Canadian Public Relations Society (Toronto). He runs a media relations and media coaching firm based in Aurora, Ontario where he can be reached at (905) 841-2017 or mark.lavigne@sympatico.ca. This article appeared in Sources HotLink 32 (November 2004).*



## Tips for Making the Call

BY MARK LAVIGNE

- Find out the journalist’s preferred medium: phone, E-mail, fax
- Always ask if they’re on deadline
- Pay close attention to your E-mail’s subject line
- Don’t tease to enable a follow-up call as an excuse
- Don’t wait to the last minute to follow-up (a week before an event is perfect)
- Make sure the beat matches the content before you follow-up
- Provide a customized story angle or context in follow-up communications



- Pick your battles, don't follow-up on everything
- Media monitor before following-up, you may have already made the news wire or Web site

*This article appeared in Sources HotLink 32 (November 2004) .*

## Top Ten List of Media Relations

BY LYNN FENSKE

David Letterman has his top ten lists, and now so does *The Sources Hotlink*. We begin by offering our top ten recommendations for becoming (and remaining) media friendly:

1. Treat media representatives equally.  
Don't play favourites.
2. Treat media deadlines as your own.
3. Address a person, not a title.
4. Know the media's requirements.
5. Be accurate.
6. Be accessible.
7. Be consistent.
8. Be helpful and polite.
9. Don't speculate or "pretend" to know the answer.
10. Be professional.

*Lynn Fenske is a freelance copywriter with extensive experience working both sides of the media fence as journalist and publicist. She can be reached at [info@whatiwrite.com](mailto:info@whatiwrite.com). Lynn was editor of *The Sources HotLink* from 2001 to 2004. This article appeared in *Sources HotLink* 23 (Summer 2002).*



## Don't Forget to Write

BY ULLI DIEMER

Writing letters to the editor is an effective and inexpensive way of getting publicity for your point of view and your organization.

Letters to the editor are published by almost all publications, from newspapers and magazines with a national circulation such as the *Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's*, to community newspapers, special-interest magazines, trade publications and newsletters.

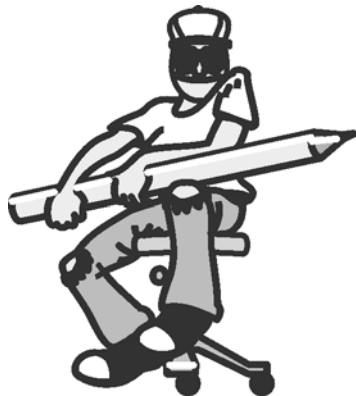
A letter to the editor may not have the glamour of splashier forms of media exposure, but the letters pages are among the most widely read sections of almost all periodicals.

Guidelines for writing a letter to the editor:

- Make it brief. 100 to 150 words should be the maximum, fewer if possible.
- Confine yourself to one subject. Make one point and make it clearly. You or your organization undoubtedly have views about many issues, but in a letter to the editor, you can make only one point effectively.
- To help you focus, begin by summarizing the point you want to make in a single phrase or sentence. Use this to guide you in writing the letter.
- You can and should bring in supporting evidence and arguments, but they should all be in support of your main point. Don't digress.

- Your main point can be specific or broad e.g. “The proposed land fill site will pollute Otter Creek” or “Because we’re overfishing, the world’s oceans are becoming deserts.”
- Have someone else read or edit your letter before sending it. It’s hard to judge one’s own writing objectively.
- If you’re writing on behalf of an organization, make that clear. Be aware however, that newspapers tend to favour letters from individuals over letters from organizations.
- Avoid persona attacks or disparaging the motives of someone with whom you disagree. Stick to the issue and the facts.
- Send your letter quickly, while the issue is fresh, preferably within 24 hours. Chances of your letter being printed diminish with each passing day.
- If possible, fax your letter, send it by E-mail or deliver it by hand. Sending it by mail may delay its arrival by two or three crucial days.
- Remember to include your name, address, and phone number. Many publications have a policy of contacting the letter writer to confirm that s/he is truly the author.

*Ulli Diemer is Publisher of Sources. This article appeared in Sources HotLink 4 (Summer 1997) .*



## Maximizing Coverage in Community Newspapers

BY LYNN FENSKE



As a publicist, I’ve established a pretty good track record for getting local events featured in community newspapers. People often ask me, how do you do it? To answer that question, here (once again) is my best advice:

When it comes to getting news coverage in community newspapers, presentation is paramount. The newspaper’s editor(s) need all the help they can get since staff members are always pushed to the limit. Even when student interns are available to help out, there is never enough manpower or time to follow up on every story lead or to attend every special event. So to maximize your profile and get your story or event covered, submit what the editors want, when they want it.

### Here’s how:

- Be accurate in content and delivery. Submit your information to the appropriate person listed on the newspaper’s masthead or in an up-to-date media directory like *Media Names & Numbers*.
- Always submit information in the proper format of a news release or advisory. To do so, consult an appropriate “How-to” book, view press releases online ([www.sources.com](http://www.sources.com), [www.newswire.ca](http://www.newswire.ca) or [www.cp.org](http://www.cp.org)) or hire a professional PR writer. (The results garnered by a professionally written press release are well worth the expense.)
- Answer all the key questions of who, what, when, where, why and how - briefly.
- Submit your press release or advisory via both E-mail and fax. Follow up by telephone if you can. Never mail press releases, you can easily miss deadlines this way.
- Every community newspaper publishes instructions on where to submit information. Follow them, particularly when it comes to calendar listings for an upcoming event. Event listings are usually

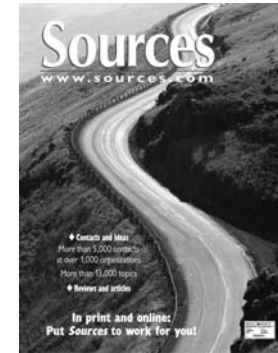
directed to an editor working independent of the newsroom.

However, provide enough details, written in news release style, and your calendar listing may, at the discretion of the editor, become a nice “filler” article.

- Honour the geographical boundaries of the newspaper. Remember, they are serving a specific community. Anything taking place beyond their “territory” will not receive coverage.
- Be aware of schedules and deadlines. Some community newspapers are published two or three times a week, others monthly. For calendar listings, get the information in as early as possible - up to four weeks in advance of your event. Calendar space is limited and often assigned on a first come, first served basis.
- Always convey any opportunities that exist for taking photographs and be specific about the time and location. Photographers are usually assigned to cover several events in one day. If you do not specify the scheduled time for a presentation, ribbon cutting ceremony or the presence of a local celebrity, etc. then the photographer may inadvertently arrive too late.
- Maintain a positive attitude and be trustworthy, accurate and timely in your delivery of information. In other words, be someone the editors can look forward to working with and can depend on.
- Be sensitive to the pressures and deadlines of newspaper publishing. Don't make demands on the editors. They have enough pressure to deal with, often being responsible for several editions per week.
- Establish a good working relationship with editors. They rely on people like you to help them stay informed of all that is happening in the community.

Now go get those headlines.

*Lynn Fenske is a freelance copywriter with extensive experience working both sides of the media fence as journalist and publicist. She can be reached at info@whatiwrite.com. Lynn was editor of The Sources HotLink from 2001 to 2004. This article appeared in Sources HotLink 31 (September 2004).*



## Why I Am Listed in Sources

BY ANN DOUGLAS



Over the years, I have turned to *Sources* time and time again to track down experts to interview for whatever newspaper or magazine article I happened to be researching at the time. So when the time came for me to position myself as an expert—to let the media know about my bestselling pregnancy and parenting books—it was immediately obvious to me what I had to do: take out a listing in *Sources*.

Like many journalists, I turn to *Sources* on a regular basis. It's a great way to find experts quickly without a lot of hassle. I can't tell you how many times I've gone to the trouble of tracking down an amazing expert via the Internet or through word of mouth, only to find that they are unwilling to speak to the media. *Sources* saves me time by providing me with leads on experts who are not only willing to be interviewed: in most cases, they're downright eager!

When I was trying to decide whether or not I should invest my hard-earned money in a listing in *Sources*, I pulled out some of my old *Sources* directories. I discovered that the majority of high-profile experts that I had interviewed in the past are listed in the directory year in and year out—a clear indication that they feel that they're getting a lot of bang for their buck.

Something else that factored into my decision to advertise in *Sources* was the fact that Sources publishes both print and online editions of its directory. I've hung around enough newsrooms to know that some journalists

like thumbing through paper directories, while others prefer typing a few keywords into an online search engine. The only way to hit both groups of journalists is to offer the information in both print and online formats, as *Sources* does.

I also appreciate the fact that *Sources* is distributed to freelance writers as well as writers who are employed full-time by newspapers and magazines. The majority of magazine articles published in this country are written by freelancers rather than staffers, so it's important that freelancers have access to *Sources*, too.

I'm glad I decided to take the plunge and purchase a listing in the *Sources* directory. Within a few weeks of taking out my initial listing, I had been called by one of the producers of *Canada AM* and booked on the show to talk about my book *Trying Again: A Guide to Pregnancy After Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Loss*. That interview was followed by a steady stream of requests from radio and newspaper reporters who were interested in doing interviews with me, too. Having a listing in *Sources* has certainly paid off for me: with any luck it will for you, too.

*Ann Douglas is the author of 18 books, including The Mother of All Pregnancy Books, and former President of the Periodical Writers Association of Canada—Canada's national association for freelance magazine and newspaper writers. She can be contacted via her Web site at [www.having-a-baby.com](http://www.having-a-baby.com). This article appeared in Sources HotLink 20 (Autumn 2001).*



## Use the media to raise your profile

Being quoted in the media as an authority or expert in your field, or being booked as a guest on a talk show, can do wonders for raising your profile and helping you to line up speaking engagements. *Sources* is designed to help you do exactly that by putting your profile and your contact information on the desks of journalists coast to coast and beyond.

A *Sources* listing complements and magnifies your other efforts to publicize yourself. Reporters and broadcasters need knowledgeable sources to interview and quote when they write stories or line up guests. The *Sources* directory is the first place most journalists turn to when they need to find experts and spokespersons. *Sources* gives them what they most need in their day-to-day work: a wealth of human contacts — **people like you** —

offering a wide range of views and expertise, ready and willing to speak to the media.

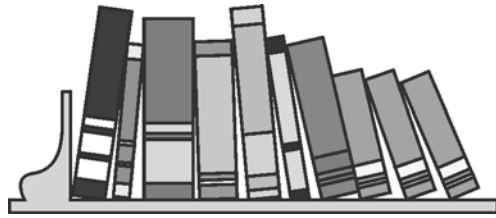
When you are in *Sources*, your media profile, including your expertise and your contact information, is there working for you whenever journalists turn to *Sources*, as they do thousands of times every week. One thousand reporters a day use the *Sources* Web site [www.sources.com](http://www.sources.com) to find the spokespeople they need. Every time they do, each of them looks at an average of five or six listings to find the most appropriate contacts to call. In addition, more than 10,000 copies of the print edition of *Sources* are in use on journalists' desks at this very moment. Each time they use *Sources*, in print or online, your media profile is right there, telling them about you.

Journalists give us very positive feedback about *Sources*. They like the fact that *Sources* is targeted to their needs, the fact that everyone listed in *Sources* is by definition willing to take calls from the news media, with their phone numbers and other contact information right there.

By contrast, we've heard, doing a search on Google or another search engine is "like trying to take a drink from a fire hose". A search on almost any topic returns millions of hits, but rarely the contact information a reporter needs. Journalists, whether they are working in broadcast or in print, need **someone to talk to**. They need someone to interview, someone who can provide quotes or sound bites. A Web site cannot provide that: only a human being can. And that is why *Sources*, the directory of human contacts, is an irreplaceable tool for journalists.

We'd love to be able to include you in *Sources*. Call us at 416-964-7799 for a free information package or to discuss your needs, or visit the *Sources* Web site [www.sources.com](http://www.sources.com) for details about how to include yourself in *Sources*.





## Top picks from *Sources HotLink* Resource Shelf

### Media Relations

The Bonner Communications Series  
Allan Bonner  
Briston House, 2003, 176 pp.,  
\$24.95 Cdn., ISBN 1-894921-00-3

### REVIEWED BY LYNN FENSKE

Eight seconds.

It's the average length of time devoted to a spokesperson's remarks during a television news item. Are you prepared to make the best of it? Do you know where to begin?

Start by accepting the fact that the media moves faster than you do, so be prepared. Always.

This is the message of Allan Bonner's brilliant new book, *Media Relations*. In it he coaches the reader on attaining utmost media preparedness or, as he describes it, having SOCKOs.

SOCKO is an acronym for Strategic Overriding Communications and Knowledge Objective. It's a Bonner invention and fundamental to the media training he offers in this book, in his numerous published articles and at his Centre for Risk and Crisis Management in Toronto. SOCKO starts with strategic thinking and through "simplicity, brevity, clarity and repetition," can lead anyone to becoming media savvy.

By Bonner's definition, a SOCKO is "a short, positive, sharp, memorable, honed, polished, true, unassailable statement." According to Bonner it is

always "20 seconds or less, quotable, full of impact and often showing caring, knowledge and/or action." Think of Pierre Elliot Trudeau's infamous "Just watch me," and you've got the idea.

In *Media Relations*, Bonner uses his SOCKO mentality to conquer the challenges of dealing effectively with the media. His writing is clean and concise. His lessons are no-nonsense and to the point. His key advice — "make your message powerful and clear and get it out early and often and you will always be ahead of your adversaries."

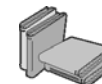
Every component of SOCKO is clearly articulated and its power demonstrated. Bonner reminds us that while reporters and editors are forced to make choices, we, as PR practitioners, can affect those choices. Central to Bonner's training model is the reality that "your message and demeanour can influence whether you are depicted as peripheral or central to the (news) story."

Once the SOCKO framework is introduced and explained, Bonner proceeds to describe (in greater and more relevant detail than I have previously encountered) the mechanics of media relations — how to organize and manage a media conference, how to structure and write a media release, the contents of a professional media kit, how to test your story idea for newsworthiness, and, most importantly, how to handle reporters face-to-face.

In under 200 pages (complete with illustrative photographs, a glossary, real-life examples and generous appendices of charts, worksheets and checklists) Allan Bonner packs an impressive one-two punch in media relations training — not just how, but why. There's method and motive to his message.

My recommendation is for you to buy this book and swiftly absorb the contents. Be confident that with Allan Bonner's expert instruction you can become more proficient and less intimidated when facing a media inquiry. His knowledge is your power. And power is having SOCKOs. Get ready. Aim. Fire.

Allan Bonner is currently working on four more books in The Bonner Communications Series. *Speaking and Presentation Skills in the Digital Age* and *Risk and Crisis Management* are scheduled for an autumn 2004 release. Watch for *Writing: An Oral Approach* and *The Wounded Leader* in spring of 2005.



## Going for Gold! A Complete Marketing Strategy for Speakers

Cathleen Fillmore & Susan Sweeney C.A.

REVIEWED BY SOURCES HOTLINK STAFF

Cathleen Fillmore and Susan Sweeney, two prolific Canadian speaker/authors, have teamed up to create a friendly, warm hearted guide to establishing yourself in the increasingly crowded field of professional speaking. With topics ranging from finding your niche, cultivating your network, and making the most out of new technologies and the now de rigeur Web Site, Sweeney and Fillmore have compiled a readable and approachable resource that should find a comfortable home on the desks of aspiring speakers as well as anyone with an interest in marketing their uniqueness.

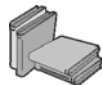
*Going for Gold!* is really two books in one. Part one, authored by Cathleen Fillmore, editor of *Speakers' Gold* newsletter, delves deeply into the nitty gritty details of beginning and maintaining a career as a professional speaker. From developing a media kit, through cultivating relationships with journalists, how to record a promotional audio or video tape, and etiquette with speakers' bureaus, Fillmore gives a thorough and readable treatment to her subject. It holds a tight focus on the subject of professional speaking, although much of the marketing material does have "crossover" appeal.

Susan Sweeney, author of *101 Ways to Promote Your Web Site*, takes the reins for part two of *Going for Gold!* Sweeney's treatment of Internet marketing how-tos definitely has appeal beyond the realm of the would-be professional speaker. From maximizing the use of E-mail, through the dark netherworlds of Meta-tags and keywords, Sweeney does an admirable job of translating the buzz words of Internet marketing into real strategies.

All in all, *Going for Gold!* provides a solid introduction to the world of professional speaking, and reaches beyond it to provide an excellent marketing guide for anyone looking to promote a unique person or cause.

Visit Cathleen Fillmore on the Internet at [www.speakersgold.com](http://www.speakersgold.com)

Visit Susan Sweeney C.A. on the Internet at [www.connexnetworks.com](http://www.connexnetworks.com)



## From Starting to Marketing... Your Own Consulting Business

Reg Pirie

Ink Ink Publishing, 1997, \$16.95, ISBN 0-9698196-1-7

Anyone interested in increasing public awareness of their company will benefit from the ideas and strategies in *From Starting to Marketing*. Although this book is a practical guide on how to become a successful consultant, readers in many types of business ventures will be able to learn from author Reg Pirie's insights.

Pirie writes about one of the biggest business challenges readers will face: "to maintain and sustain a marketing presence while at the same time completing the work he or she is being paid to do." Pirie has created a step-by-step book for people interested in a long term, entrepreneurial career and those venturing into the world of self-employment.

*From Starting to Marketing* is divided into four theme areas: Focus, organization, research and activity. In the Focus section of the book, you can create goals, plan strategies and concentrate on qualities that set you apart from others. By organizing, you learn to avoid mistakes, set a pace and access goals. Research is the stage when you examine details, information, image and challenges. Activity is when you learn to follow their own guidelines and begin to network.

Through a two-fold plan, Pirie helps readers realize that success is achievable. Marketing and networking play an equal role in accomplishing goals. It takes a balancing act to incorporate both into a business plan, but thinking in terms of long term planning and maintaining momentum will help entrepreneurs develop strategies and stay in control.

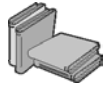
*From Starting to Marketing* shows that networking is a people relationship. Image is the key to successful networking. Image encompasses such facets as telephone manners, letter writing, presentation and promotion. An example of the types of information in *From Starting to Marketing* is Pirie's suggestion to subscribe to leading periodicals in their field. "Everyone enjoys dealing with a well informed person," he writes.

Marketing yourself involves creativity. It can include anything from becoming involved in service clubs, associations and charitable organizations, or writing articles, guest speaking and attending conventions and trade shows.



Everyone is an expert in a certain area and should take every opportunity to get his or her message across to various groups. Pirie suggests illustrating “your knowledge about topics relating to your business. Getting your name in print is a good way to build awareness about your company.”

*From Starting to Marketing* is a great book for independent consultants. It is also a good source of information and means to measure the quality of consultants you may wish to hire. No matter what your needs, Pirie lays down a plan of action that will help you to increase your profile, raise awareness about who you are and improve your public image.



### **The Art of the Handwritten Note A Guide to Reclaiming Civilized Communication**

**By Margaret Shepherd**

Broadway Books, 2002, 153 pp.,  
\$24.00 Cdn., ISBN 0-7679-0745-0

**REVIEWED BY LYNN FENSKE**

How do you say “thank you” to a friend, a colleague, or a client? Ever considered thanking a journalist who has written about you in a favourable fashion?

Leading sales coach Tom Stoyan ([www.CanadasSalesCoach.com](http://www.CanadasSalesCoach.com)) recommends “looking for opportunities to send thank yous”, preferably in a hand written letter.

For those of us married to a computer keyboard and out of practice with pen and paper, Margaret Shepherd comes to our rescue with a comprehensive guide to hand writing that special note of appreciation, sympathy and acknowledgement.

As an acclaimed calligrapher, Shepherd has more than a passing interest in a resurgence of hand written communications. *The Art of the Handwritten Note* is her contribution to an art form that “brings out the best in both the person who creates it and the person who looks at it”. She has put together a beautifully appointed, well written book that with prose, poetry, quotes and illustrations, provides everything necessary to inspire and motivate even the “most stymied letter writer”.

Her message is simple, “you can still use the telephone or the Web for the daily chores of staying in touch, but for the words that matter, it’s courte-

ous, classy, caring and civilized to pick up a pen”. As Shepherd so perceptively proclaims, “Ink on paper is still the classiest way to express the thoughts that really matter, on the occasions that really count”.

Consequently, she provides valuable advice on making the best choices. From thanking a colleague for a job well done to heartfelt sympathy for a grieving friend or relative, Shepherd recommends the best format, language, materials and penmanship for communicating your message.

This book is a must for anyone interested in mastering the art of interpersonal communications. Read it and use it to seize all those opportunities that exist to say thank you.



### **Other top books for Publicity Seekers**

For those of you pursuing and perfecting the fine art of getting publicity, here’s a list of books you can’t live without:

#### **Guerrilla P.R. How You Can Wage an Effective Publicity Campaign...Without Going Broke**

**Michael Levine**

HarperBusiness, 1993, ISBN 0-88730-664-0

This book is an action-packed, how-to and why-to manual that empowers anyone dealing with the media. Through his conversational style and hundreds of real-life stories, Levine actually instructs the reader on how to think like a publicist.

#### **In the News The Practice of Media Relations in Canada**

**William Wray Carney**

University of Alberta Press, 2002, 225 pp., ISBN 0-88864-382-9

Excerpts from this book have been featured in recent editions of *The Sources HotLink* for good reason. It’s an all-Canadian, comprehensive text that is research based and provides both a practical and philosophical guide to dealing with the media.

## Public Relations Kit for Dummies

Eric Yaverbaum & Bob Bly

Hungry Minds Inc., 2001, 346 pp. (including CD-ROM), ISBN 0-7645-5277-5

Bold descriptive headings, concise copy, and pertinent graphics that highlight “tips”, what to “remember” and the occasional “zinger” all add to this book’s readability and value as a reference for both beginners and experienced pros. Don’t pass this one by just because you’ve been in the business a while - it’s a fun read and a powerful reminder of how great campaigns get implemented and evaluated.

## The Canadian Guide to Managing the Media, Revised Edition

Ed Shiller

Prentice-Hall Canada, 1994, 189 pp., ISBN 0-13-324724-4

Media consultant and *Sources HotLink* contributor, Ed Shiller, wrote and revised this book some time ago and contrary to what your local book retailer may say, it’s still in print and available from the author. Every aspect of media relations is covered including crisis management, handling an interview, planting a story and mastering the tools of the trade (media kits, releases, videos, conferences).

## Guerrilla PR Wired:

### Waging a Successful Publicity Campaign Online, Offline and Everywhere In Between

Michael Levine

McGraw-Hill, 2002, 281 pp., ISBN 0-07-138231-3

Hollywood PR guru Michael Levine applies his Guerrilla PR strategies to the Internet with stunning results. Don’t build a Web site or online campaign without reading this book. And pay attention, there may be a test on this material! (there really is a test — at the end of the book!)

## The Public Relations Writer’s Handbook

Merry Aronson & Don Spetner

Lexington Books, 1993, 210 pp., ISBN 0-02-901052-7

Anyone writing material for media consumption should have a copy of this book. Buy it. Read it. Use it. It’s as indispensable as a dictionary or thesaurus.

## Publicity & Media Relations Checklists

David R. Yale

NTC Business Books, 1995, 190 pp., ISBN 0-8442-3218-1

For task-oriented, list making publicists (count me in!), here is the ultimate collection of checklists. Absolutely every PR activity is covered, from the initial approval process right through to hiring a clipping service to track your campaign.

## Media Names & Numbers

Published by Sources

\$109.95 per year (includes 396-page print directory plus online access)

489 College Street, Suite 305, Toronto M6G 1A6

Phone: 416-964-7799. Fax: 416-964-8763.

E-mail: sources@sources.ca www.sources.com

Determine who to contact and where to find them, quickly, with this comprehensive directory of media outlets that includes radio, television, daily newspapers, campus media, Web sites, consumer magazines community and ethnic papers, trade magazines, scholarly journals and associations. It also includes geographical, language, owner and subject indexes. Print and online versions; also available as a database.



*The articles in this booklet appeared in*

*The Sources HotLink, a quarterly newsletter on media relations published by Sources.*

*The Sources HotLink is a free benefit of listing in the Sources directory for the news media, and is also available online at **www.hotlink.ca**.*





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