

# The Sources *Hot*Link

Tips and Practical Ideas to Get Positive News Coverage

Number Thirty-three

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## Smooth Talking! Explore the Paid Speaking Market

BY CATHLEEN FILLMORE

You've got a good solid business, expertise and experience. It's time to get paid (well!) for sharing that wisdom with an audience.

Money is not the only reward. There's something about the immediacy of being on the platform that has great spin-off benefits.

So whether you do it for the fees or for the contacts or both, you can't lose.

The first step is to get training. Start with Toastmaster's. Then offer your services as a speaker to non-profit or community groups.

Maybe you're a good story teller and a natural on the platform. Not so fast! Are you also good at structuring your speech and sticking to the time frame? It's deadly to go overtime or ramble. Don't fall in love with the sound of your own voice.

Maybe you've been well trained and have your own staged choreography: arms open here, two strides forward there. Stop! You need to unlearn all this.

Perhaps you have a string of degrees and have done tones of research. You know your stuff, you're earnest about it and eager to share. Stop! You have to unlearn all this too. You need to rephrase academic material into conversational language.

You can do almost anything on the platform as long as you're real. Please don't be staged, fake or stuffy.

Be authentic. Be conversational without being patronizing.

Involve your audience. Forget about yourself and focus on what value you're bringing to your audience.

Find a title for your speech. You know that buying decisions are based on chemistry, not intellect, so create an attractive title. Your subtitle should clarify.

A personal story will help audience members identify with you.

Throw in a couple of other stories and make your six or seven points. End with something inspirational – so that people are reminded why they should care about what you've said.

You can offer to 'waive your normal fee' when giving speeches to groups in your own community. Once you have a number of speeches under your belt, you'll be ready to charge.

Now that you have some expertise, use the contacts you've gained at your no-fee speeches to get testimonials as well as find a paying audience.

Ask the meeting organizer to put his or her testimonial in writing on letterhead and add this to your press kit. Also ask if they know of any other organization that would benefit from hearing you speak. You can get a list of Associations from Micromedia (416-362-5211) and corporations from either the library or Board of Trade.

When calling an Association, ask to speak to the conference organizer. Then ask what the theme is and whether they've got their speakers lined up. Large conferences usually plan a year or more in advance.

Let them know what you speak about and offer to send them your material.

Once hired, customize your speeches by talking to the organization leaders as well as employees and addressing their concerns.

To be taken seriously as a professional speaker, you'll need a single sheet that will contain your bio, your photo, three of your speeches with a blurb about each, client list and testimonials. That can be a very powerful marketing tool.

The focus should be on how your prospective client will benefit from hir-

ing you.

Go for it! Share your wisdom with others – become a 'smooth talker' in the very best sense of the phrase. .



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*Chamber of Commerce Canada. To contact her, visit [www.speakersgold.com](http://www.speakersgold.com) or call 416-532-9886. Inquire about her e-course, *Speaking for Money*.*

### News from Sources

Spring has officially arrived and the **Sources** office — like yours, no doubt! — is buzzing with activity.

You will find a brochure for ExpoWorld Canada enclosed with this issue of The Sources HotLink. ExpoWorld Canada is an amazing directory of Tradeshows and Exhibitions — an essential resource for any company or organization involved in this important industry. We are very pleased to announce that we have negotiated an arrangement with the publishers of ExpoWorld Canada by which **Sources** listees can subscribe for a 50% discount. That's 50% for just quoting your **Sources** Customer ID number when you order.

# 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.

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# Don't be a "Time Bandit"

BY MARK LAVIGNE, APR

Scott White, a 26-year veteran of the Canadian Press (CP) advises the public relations community to not be a "time bandit" when it comes to interfacing with his extremely busy journalists.

White, Editor-in-Chief of Canada's "wholesale" news agency that is co-operatively owned by the country's 100 or so daily newspapers, notes "the primary job for CP is to cover the day's spot news developments, preparing material for a national audience. So what might be appealing to the morning jocks of an FM radio station probably won't be of much interest to CP."

Following up new product stories, and pitching to multiple editors within CP not only aggravates these journalists unnecessarily, but actually steals valuable time from this news operation that runs on minute-to-minute deadlines 24/7. Hence, White's term "time bandit." "We receive literally hundreds of communications from PR professionals each day. Some of our editors, especially those in Business and Health-Lifestyles, can barely keep up with the flood of information. What is most maddening from an editor's perspective is a call about something that our organization would have absolutely no interest in covering, such as new product news."

Many of us in the media relations trenches know that getting one of our client's stories into the Canadian Press is often the 'holy grail' of our 'beat.' Pick-up by the Canadian Press and the 600 news media that subscribe to CP and its broadcast wing Broadcast News (BN) literally means at least 10-million impressions when all is said and done!

White's best advice to the 65-plus PR gathered at a CPRS Toronto/Canadian Press panel at the Albany Club in Toronto in late March is to anticipate, anticipate, anticipate. "We need to deal with PR people who not only react quickly when we need quick reaction, but actually anticipate that we'll need reaction before the event happens. This works when PR professionals know the day's scheduled news events and can offer up comment or information as quickly as possible."

Monitoring the Canadian Press through the daily newspapers and directly real-time via its media monitoring service Command News will certainly help PR understand what CP is interested in and to know when



our clients can add to the steady flow of news from CP's Toronto headquarters and seven bureaus. CP's Director of Business Development, Dwayne Desaulniers, told the audience that CP is now even available on PDA's such as Blackberry through the major service providers. For busy PR, receiving a CP news feed wirelessly is a very good way to stay on top of what interests CP and what news it carries and enables practitioners to react quickly to news developments.

Knowing when to call and pitch is also very important. General News Director Mike Omelus, a 21 year veteran at BN, will take calls from PR he knows brings "newsworthy information" to the table the one or two times a year that they reach out to him. "PR is essential in helping the news media get the job done. It's an important relationship. But knowing our needs, and those of other news organizations will help you as PR understand what we and other outlets will consider newsworthy."

The Canadian Press is affiliated with the largest news agency in the world, the Associated Press (AP). CP delivers real-time text, audio, photos, graphics and online services to newspapers, broadcasters, publishers, Web sites, wireless carriers, cable companies, and even elevator and subway information kiosks.

CP also offers PR several invaluable tools, such as the Canadian Press Stylebook, Broadcast News NewsTalk, and Caps and Spelling – all crucial in helping PR write acceptable copy for news media consumption.

Commercial services that help fund the non-profit news side of CP include its paid wire service PR Direct, media monitoring service Command News, and paid photography service CPimages.

For more CP newsroom tips, please see the sidebar. For more information, go to [www.cp.org](http://www.cp.org).

*Mark LaVigne, APR, is immediate Past President of the Canadian Public Relations Society (Toronto) and sits on the national CPRS board. 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](mailto:mark.lavigne@sympatico.ca).*



## Newsroom tips from The Canadian Press

- Provide news they can use – timely, national, trendy, hard news, monitor CP news, calendars and advisories to match your story to what they are covering.
- Monitor the news – offer your spokesperson as an expert on news of the day – prepare rapid response logistics and protocols.
- Use common sense – find the relevant CP staffer to pitch to. Send your release to the appropriate reporter or editor – if turned down, don't shop around within CP. Don't be a "time bandit."
- Be prepared – why should CP care? Be prepared to answer "who benefits from this news?"
- Be ready – explain context – how your news impacts other organizations – share prices, number of employees, market.
- Have facts nearby: number of employees, annual revenue, head office location, number of retail outlets etc.
- Avoid calling in the late afternoon between 4 and 6 p.m. and back off when it's a hectic news day, what CP calls a "Red Ball."
- Be a CP news junkie – use Command News.
- Review the CP Style Guide and Caps and Spelling. And if you have a question on style, call or E-mail the editors. They do get back to you very quickly.

*(Source for tips: The Canadian Press, 2005)*

# The Princess and the Press: How to write a news release that will make you the belle of the ball

BY KIRSTEN COWAN

Everyone who has struggled to get media attention for their organization can find themselves lost in a romantic day-dream. A dashing prince (or princess) with a press card wedged in their crown, swoops down on your organization and catapults it into the national spotlight following a fabulous TV appearance, feature article or guest spot. Your vital cause, your innovative products, are on everyone's lips, and you live happily ever after, a sparkling media darling.

In reality of course, the road to media attention has more to do with a skillful pen than a magic wand. How can you zero in on what is newsworthy about your organization and communicate that to those who have the nation's ears (and eyes)? A news release is a key tool, and writing an effective one is easier than you think.

The most important part of writing a news release is the same thing that matters in any kind of writing — write for your audience, not yourself. Of course this is even more key when you are trying to precipitate action on the part of your reader. Even though this seems like common sense, it's amazing how often press releases sound exactly like advertisements. The press are neither your customers nor your Board of Directors — they don't care about the features of your product or the amount of hard work you've done to make the world a better place — they want a story.

The first line and paragraph of your news release need to say it all. Pack the key attention-getting information into the headline and first paragraph. There's a good chance the rest won't even get read. When you do go into detail, make sure it answers the journalist's or editor's needs. Where's the story? Why do their readers want to know?

Here's a compelling story, spun in two different ways.

*For Immediate Release:*

## Impact resistant polymer compound available for townhomes

A new innovation in housing materials made its debut yesterday. After extensive testing, 3PIGS Inc. is proud to announce that BRICKS™, its space age construction material, is now available. Developed through advances in bonding polymerase technology, BRICKS™ are an affordable, weather resistant alternative to traditional straw and wood materials.



Tuesday May 24, 2005,  
9:00 am

## "I can't believe I'm here today!" exclaims survivor of wolf attack

3PIGS Inc. scientific developer A. Little Pig was in the midst of testing the company's new building material, BRICKS™, this April, 2001, when the test suddenly became much more serious — he was attacked by a wolf. Amazingly, not only did Pig survive, but the test house was undamaged. "Traditionally houses have crumbled under the impact of wolf attacks" says Pig. "the development of BRICKS™ means we can achieve a level of wolf-proofing that would have been impossible ten years ago"

There are a few other basics to keep in mind that will ensure you have a coach and not a pumpkin on your hands. Include complete, accurate contact information, with an individual's name. Make sure the person listed is articulate and available. If you mention a Web site in your release, make sure it has full details about your product or event before you send the release — not after.

The Internet is filled with accessible information on putting together news releases with that extra touch of fairy dust. Check out [www.infoscavenger.com/prtips.htm](http://www.infoscavenger.com/prtips.htm), or the five part workshop, including an interactive template, at [www.canadaone.com/promote/pressrelease.html](http://www.canadaone.com/promote/pressrelease.html).

Your relationship with the press might not be a fairy tale, but it definitely doesn't have to be horror story.

## Tell us your story

We would love to feature your story of media relations success in a future issue of *The Sources HotLink*. It can be a testimonial about listing in *Sources* or how a specific marketing communications strategy worked for you.

Contact us with the details and we will follow up with a news story of our own.

Send us a quick E-mail to [hotlink@hotlink.ca](mailto:hotlink@hotlink.ca) or call Ulli Diemer at 416-964-7799.

Just another way that *Sources* can help you get your story out.

The *Sources HotLink* – May 2005 Phone: (416) 964-7799