



# Engaging the Media: Promoting your work to the media

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Attracting the attention of media organisations can be challenging. As can deciding how best to ‘pitch’ your work and through which medium. This fact sheet will arm you with tips and tools to improve your chances of securing media coverage. Be confident and direct about your research – making it clear to the journalist how it can be of benefit to the newspaper/TV/radio/online audience. This will improve the media’s perception of you.

## Know your media

Establishing a rapport with local journalists will improve the chances of your work being reported on and will help sustain ongoing media relations.

- Review the quality and style of stories covered by health correspondents and target your communications to these journalists.
- Think about how your work translates through different mediums:
  - TV is likely to be interested if there is some visual element to your work
  - If key messages are best conveyed through discussion, target radio and offer yourself for interview
  - If your work contains facts and figures the print media are likely to publish a story
  - A time sensitive announcement or discovery can be shared to a worldwide audience quickly through online or social media.

## Enticing the media

If your research is to be published or made available on a set date you can use the opportunity to ‘sell’ or promote the forthcoming release of your work to your preferred journalists. This tactic is referred to as ‘trailing’ your story. Other ways to trail include:

- sending copies of your research paper identifying key results, to selected journalists
- emailing a media release to selected journalists that highlights key messages about your work. See our fact sheet on *Writing a succinct media release*.
- developing an online following through using social media – Twitter, Facebook, blogs, LinkedIn or even YouTube – to generate awareness of and interest in your work<sup>1</sup>.
- holding a press conference, but make sure you offer a compelling reason for them to attend. Remember, this is only to trail/advertise that your work is forthcoming so you

need to be justified that this is more efficient than issuing a media release. An embargoed announcement would be one example for holding a press conference.

**‘87% of the general public get most of their information about science from the media’<sup>2</sup>**

## Tactics

Obtaining media interest in your work can be challenging, especially if it is a topic the public may know little about. Using local resources and identifying messages or personalities that people can identify with can help to generate awareness of the subject matter and motivate interest in it.

- Get people talking – generate discussions about your research by promoting it on intranets and general noticeboards in universities, hospitals and primary health care sites.
- Get your research ‘trending’ – use social media to create your own online media presence to connect with peers and the public. Use this exposure as a gateway to achieving mainstream media coverage<sup>3</sup>.
- Use the resources of communication and marketing departments at affiliated universities to promote your work. This is a useful way to raise awareness to new stakeholder and media groups.
- Identify ‘champions’ (i.e. high profile people) who can endorse your work by speaking about it at stakeholder or media events, or who have incorporated elements of your findings into their lifestyle.
- Once your work has been published/released it may be appropriate to hold that press conference – but remember to offer something or someone of significant interest to the public, and make this explicit in the media invitation. Include reference to any photo or film opportunities.
- Ensuring researchers have had formal media training<sup>4</sup> will increase the number of spokespeople available for interviews and conveys to the media that researchers value media engagement.

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## Using social media

Social media (Twitter, Facebook, blogs etc) can be used in promoting your professional work and research to the mainstream media (print, online, TV, radio). To get started with social media:

- If you are publishing a new paper or presenting a conference paper—tweet about it. If you are attending a conference relevant to your field/area of research then post a Facebook update or tweet to make a connection between your work, to the work already in the spot light.
- Try your hand at blogging. If you are attending a conference, or conducting research then a blog could be an innovative way to document the work you are doing.
- Don't forget to comment. Keep your social media profile active by 'commenting' on other relevant researcher's work, updates and online media coverage through different social media avenues.

Remember, when using social media you are representing your organisation, your field and your work. Therefore, it is important to use social media to develop a positive professional relationship with peers, journalists and the public. Your organisation may have 'social media guidelines' available with points specific to that organisation or field.

Following some general 'common sense' guidelines will ensure both you and your work are portrayed well through your use of social media<sup>5</sup>:

- Keep your personal views separate
- Remember that anything you post is in the public domain
- Check your facts and be accurate
- Post regularly and monitor responses.

## Promotional timing

It is worth conducting some environmental scanning of your stakeholder groups and preferred media to ascertain whether research activity is being modestly or prolifically profiled at the time of your proposed promotion. Getting the timing right will help to obtain maximum positive exposure of your work.

- In planning the best time to release news of your work, account for known forthcoming announcements or launches that could conflict with or undermine the work you want to promote.
- Monitor the media for news stories that you could highlight as relevant to your research, using such opportunities to promote and comment on your own work (known as 'piggy-backing').
- Learn who are your local reporters in your specialty area and establish a professional relationship (keep notice of seminars, social functions, invitations to briefings as potential contact points) and keep up-to-date with their work through social media. Good relationships with reporters can bring more and better coverage than the widespread scattering of hopeful media releases.

- It is useful to use social media or a media monitoring device, such as Google Alerts, to keep up-to-date with news in your field.

### Twitter Tip

Interact with other experts and organisations in your field, as well as prominent journalists and publications. Retweets, @mentions or #hashtags are great tools to use<sup>6</sup>.

## Resources

Australian Science Media Centre. (2013). Tips for Scientists using social media. Retrieved January 2014 from <http://sciencemediasavvy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/6-SMS-Tips-for-scientists-using-social-media.pdf>

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Newsmaker. (n.d.). Successful Media Campaigns. Retrieved January 2014 from <http://www.newsmaker.com.au/pages/2/pr-advice>

PHCRIS Getting Started Guides: How to... Promote your research to the media – [http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/media\\_promote.php](http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/media_promote.php)

PHCRIS Getting Started Guides: How to... Write a succinct media release – [http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/media\\_release.php](http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/media_release.php)

PHCRIS Getting Started Guides: Be interviewed by the media – [http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/media\\_interview.php](http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/media_interview.php)

Science media savvy. (n.d.). Using social media. Retrieved January 2014 from <http://sciencemediasavvy.org/using-social-media/>

UK Science Media Centre. <http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/>

## References

- 1 Flinders University. (2013). Online promotions. Retrieved January 2014 from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/marketing-communications/marketing-and-promotions/online-promotions.cfm>
- 2 Science Media Centre. (n.d.). Why engage with the news media?. Quote cited as 'Ipsos MORI Public Attitudes to Science 2011'. <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/resource/11701.33400.file.eng.pdf>
- 3 Flinders University. (2013). Social media. Retrieved January 2014 from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/marketing-communications/engaging-community/online-communities/social-media.cfm>
- 4 For details of media training, science events and courses visit: Australian Science Communicators <http://www.asc.asn.au> or contact your organisation's media department.
- 5 Flinders University. (2013). Social media guidelines. Retrieved January 2014 from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/marketing-communications/training-and-support/online-communications-support/social-media-guidelines.cfm>
- 6 Twitter help center Retrieved January 2014 from <https://support.twitter.com/>



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