

ORGANISING PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Like another voluntary service organization, Rotaract has top priority for Membership Development. Today the Rotaractors are concentrating on Membership drives to enhance the Rotaraction in the Club and District Levels. However the authors believe that Promotion of Rotaract Activities In a proper manner would yield better members than Membership Drives.

Introduction to Public Relations

Simply stated, public relations form the relationship between our club, and the community. While the practice of public relations varies between cultures, every club has an outside audience with whom it must communicate. Rotaract public relations can be directed at your sponsoring club, local youth, the business community, local governmental officials, civic leaders, other organizations, prospective members you wish to pull in, and people directly affected by your service initiatives. In this era of Advertising the role of PR is much bigger than we think, and it has been established that good PR would bring in a lot of glitz and repute to your club, apart from quality members. Many Rotaract Clubs of Today have a PRO or Director of Relations in their portfolio, which is a welcome sign. A PRO is as vital as the President and Secretary for the improvement of the club. And it is high time the PROs started realizing their huge responsibilities, which will surely yield sweet results for their club.

PR With Immediate Affiliates

The PR activities should start with your immediate affiliates like your Parent Rotary Club, Inner wheel Club, Interact Club, Family, and Workplace. Rotaract should work in close association with the Rotary, and it is highly essential that you actively involve with your Rotarians. The PRO should ensure that the Rotarians are informed or invited for Club Projects and Events. "The project/event should be duly reported to the Rotary President, and the PRO should ensure that the project is covered in the Rotary Newsletter. The work should be carried on similar lines, with more care with the Inner wheel and Interact Clubs. If you have done these PR works effectively, you should have gained a reputation for yourself amongst the fellow family members of Rotary, and even some of their children may join your Rotaract Club. It is said time and again that we are not effectively Co-Ordinating with Interactors, and it is imperative that the PRO promotes interactions with the Interactors, which will help them become Rotaractors by themselves. You should also keep in close touch with the family members of your own Rotaract Clubs. It is an ironic thing that we don't associate with the families of our Own Rotaractors. If the PRO is able to make the families aware of the noble works done by a Rotaractors, he should

get more support from the Family, and it is always a possibility that members pour into your club in the form of brothers, distant cousins and family friends. For campus based clubs, if their PR is good inside the college level, there should be an overflow of quality members. It is found that many campus clubs do not properly inform their colleges (from authorities to associates on their endeavours). The PRO should ensure that in a campus based club everyone from the Chairman to Coolie in the college is cognizant on any undertaking.

PR With General Affiliates

From the immediate affiliates, we can move to the general affiliates, whom you don't know and are trying to make him aware of your club. The local media is of particular Importance to your efforts because of its ability to reach large numbers of people and influence public opinion. It is a sad thing that we don't see much of Rotaract Activities in the local newspapers today. It is not that the media has developed an adverse attitude, but we have gone lethargic in this aspect. Today the media rules the world, and it is the media that can serve as an effective Conduit for your messages to the public. In today's world, we are offered with a lot of Media Options ranging from national newspapers, regional Newspapers, local Newspapers, FM Channels, Local TVs Internet Groups, and Online Journals etc. If the PRO is able to make optimum use of the varying media, your club will gain in with a lot of recognition, repute and Rotaractors. So Dear Rotaractors Let's go in with Public Relations this year. PR is not a project in itself, but a prominent part of each project. And if we emphasize high PR for every undertaking, we can do the project in a more fulfilling and convincing manner. And Moreover PR can bring you more qualitative membership to your club than the Membership Drives. Rotaract is only a raw iron piece. PR, as a magnetizer, would magnetize the whole Rotaraction, and automatically attract prospective members, and make it stronger. Let's emphasize PR, and make our Rotaract Club a Magnetic Force.

Interacting with Media?

How to write a press release?

For any publicity campaign, the media - in all its forms - Is your biggest target. It can be your biggest ally but journalists can't make news where no news exists. Nor can you prevent them from covering unwelcome stories or writing negative pieces, although considering Rotaract's public profile we can rarely say that there is such a thing as bad publicity. Before you write press release (or telephone a journalist) asks yourself the following questions:

- Is this news?
- Is this a story?

- Why would a journalist be interested?
- Is this a news story in the sense that it says something new, different or controversial?
- Is it an informational piece and of interest as background? Is it a feature?
- Is there a famous or infamous person or group involved?
- Is it about children, animals or the elderly?
- Is it about a general mainstream Issue or is it about a minority issue which will have popular appeal?

Once you are clear about these questions, you are ready to compose your press release.

Writing a press release

1. When outlining your press release bear the following points in mind:

- Keep to less than two pages
- Use punchy titles which describe what's in the press release.
- Always date the press release.
- Use quotes to give opinions and impressions and always attribute them to a specific person
- Only use adjectives such as 'marvellous', "exciting" and "fantastic" within a quote.
- Do not overuse the word "exclusive" and remember that things are rarely unique

2. A press release should be:

- Typed
- On Rotaract headed paper.
- On a single side (unless absolutely necessary).
- In a "sensible" font such as Arial, Times New Roman or Courier.
- Set with wide margins and large white space between paragraphs.

3. Should you need to use a second page ensure you put:

- More" at the bottom of the first page.
- Ends "at the end of the release.
- Page numbers on each sheet.

4. Press releases should:

- Give details of the 5 W's: Who, What, Where, When, Why.

- Be clearly written using short sentences and paragraphs.
- Use easy language.
- Be concise, specific and factual
- Be checked for grammar and spelling mistakes especially any names.

It is not advisable to use jargon or abbreviations in the press release. Should you have an alternative, ensure that the terms are explained to the reader at their first occurrence.

1. Whilst the main body of the press release will tell the story, the provision of additional information can be very helpful to the receiving journalist. Such additional information could include:
 - Details about each subject (position, age)
 - Background information on each subject (telephone number, Occupation)
 - Outline address (i.e., regional area where events took place).
 - Rotaract club name

Caution:

Check with your subjects to see if they mind their details being divulged especially their telephone number.

Remind your subjects that there may be a possibility for the press to want an Interview.

2. If you are supplying photos in electronic format, check with the newspaper for the requirements e.g., format of files, resolution (usually at least 300dpi). Avoid photos of Cheque presentations; try action shots or shots that show the money being raised rather than simply handed over.
3. If your press release is inviting the media to an event, ensure that the following details are supplied:
 - The date and time of the event.
 - Whether or not photograph or interview opportunities will be available.
 - Contact number (especially a mobile phone number) by which they could confirm details nearer the time.

Hints and Tips

1. It is advisable to research the following points before inundating the local papers with Press releases.
 - The name of the person you need to contact at your local paper (e.g. feature editor, community events editor, etc.).
 - The type of articles (content, length and layout) that would interest the particular newspaper.
 - The deadlines (dates) by which articles must be received to ensure consideration / publication.
2. If possible, make personal contact with the papers by visiting their offices and introducing yourself and your club.
3. Invite the editor or a representative of the paper to speak at your club.
4. Send an events list Dress release regularly to your contact at the papers. On a slow news day, they might call you and ask for more information.
5. Always follow up the press release with a courtesy telephone call to the paper.
6. Take your own photographs of the event - especially if a newspaper photographer doesn't show up.
7. Remember, if an article is sent in, it might get printed but if it is not sent, it definitely won't be.