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Media and Public Relations: Best Practices for Race Directors

Tips for working with media to maximize positive coverage of your event, enhance your brand and tell your story the way you want it to be told

BEFORE RACE DAY

Getting the word out:

- Start promoting your race to media early, using milestones such as registration opening day, 100 days out, one month out, etc. Send regular press releases as the event approaches, staying on the radar of local media while sharing new details as available.
- Don't rely on a press release to earn media. The press release is a good place to start, but you'll need to follow up with individual reporters by phone and/or personal email. Have some interesting storylines in your back pocket, tailored to each specific reporter. For example, a business/economics reporter will want to focus on the economic impact the event is bringing to the host city, while a sports reporter will focus more on the competition/winners. A features reporter may be interested in featuring one athlete who has an inspiring story.

Press Release Examples:

- When a new host city is selected or a new race is announced (focus on venue, relationship with host city and local partners — what value does this new race bring to the community?): <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Triathlon/News/Articles-and-Releases/2018/May/22/USA-Triathlon-Unveils-Legacy-Triathlon-To-Be-Held-Annually-in-Long-Beach>
- When registration opens (add details such as course maps, schedule, etc.): <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Triathlon/News/Articles-and-Releases/2018/July/30/Registration-Now-Open-for-2019-Duathlon-National-Championships>
- 1 Month Out (include the nuts-and-bolts information most relevant to media, such as location, schedule, number of competitors and overview of race formats/distances): <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Triathlon/News/Articles-and-Releases/2018/March/29/USA-Triathlon-Collegiate-Club-and-High-School-National-Championships-Return-to-Tuscaloosa>
- 1 Week Out (feature top returners, interesting stats/storylines): <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Triathlon/News/Articles-and-Releases/2018/August/01/West-Chester-to-Welcome-Approximately-1000-Youth-Junior-Triathletes-for-National-Championships>

Building relationships with media:



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- Paid tools such as Meltwater, Cision or Critical Mention give you easy access to reporter contact information by topic, media outlet and influence. They also enable you to track media pickup as a result of your PR efforts. However, they can be pricey and may only be worth the cost for race directors who host large events throughout the year.
- You can find reporter contact information online for most local news outlets. Search for the “newsroom staff” page (target editors and reporters, not anchors or publishers).
- If you have a relationship with the host city, ask if they’re willing to share their local media lists and/or forward your release to their contacts.
- Distributing road closure information is important to ensure things go smoothly on race day — but it’s also a way to almost guarantee coverage of your race. It may start as a news item focused only on the road closures, but it will make media aware of your event and spark further interest in what’s going on. This may justify a standalone news alert based on the extent/impact of the closures.
- Follow up! Reporters are busy, and often it takes multiple phone calls and emails to make a connection. Be persistent — and be prepared with key information and interview availability should a reporter express interest. Have impactful numbers on hand (how many athletes are expected, how many staff/volunteers does it take to put on this race, how many local partners, etc.)
- Maintain relationships from year to year. Add to your media list anytime a new reporter reaches out about your event, and make sure they’re receiving every piece of race-related media info thereafter. Follow up with them the following year and ask if they’re interested in coming out again.

Finding great storylines:

- Include a question in your registration flow that asks, “What challenges have you overcome to train/compete in this race?” Scour the responses and look for good storylines that may be interesting to media (especially local athletes). Be sure to ask the athlete if you can share their story before doing so.
- Examples of strong storylines that aren’t about the top athletes: Weight loss story, cancer survivor, recovery from an injury, overcoming a fear of the swim or bike, racing for a cause or in honor of a loved one, racing with a family member, racing as a paratriathlete, youngest or



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oldest athlete in the field, military connections, key figure in the local community

- Reach out to the local triathlon club(s) and ask who's racing. See if the club president can give you some interesting storylines or connect you with a few athletes who'd be open to media opportunities. It's a good idea to have a few "friendlies" who you can count on for short-notice interviews.
- Get to know the athletes at your event by introducing yourself during packet pick-up, capturing finish-line interviews, etc. Make notes of your favorite athlete stories, and pay attention to who returns year after year.

RACE DAY

- **Media information:** Have a collection of resources available for media on race day. This can be in the form of print materials in folders that you hand out onsite, or digital resources housed in a Dropbox link (or both).

Consider including the following items in your media kit:

- Your contact information
 - Media parking information
 - Pre-race preview and other relevant press releases sent in the lead-up to race day
 - Course maps
 - Event schedule
 - By-the-numbers information
 - Top returners/athletes to watch
 - Photos and/or video (make sure you have permission from the photographer/copyright owner to share these)
 - Links to the event website and where to find results once available
 - Social media handles and relevant hashtags
- **Interviews:** Be prepared to be interviewed on camera on race day (or nominate a spokesperson from your staff). Morning news reporters will have specific needs very early on race day (before 5 a.m.), and often at 20- to 30-minute intervals thereafter, so it's important to dedicate someone to accompany and support. You'll want to have at least one athlete on hand to offer up for interviews, too.
 - **Practice your response to: "So tell us what's going on here today?" Other common questions include:**



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- How many athletes are competing?
 - Where are they coming from? (know how many states are represented)
 - What are the ages of the athletes?
 - What is a triathlon and what distances are they doing?
 - Tell us about what it takes to train for an event like this?
 - What do these athletes “get” if they perform well (e.g., prizes, qualification for another race, rankings, bragging rights, etc.)

 - An interview is your chance to tell the story you want to tell! Reiterate your key messaging points. Guide the conversation in the direction you want it to go. Think about what you’d want to be quoted saying in a news article, and stick to that message.
- **Results and photos**
 - **Results:** After all the work you’ve done to interest media in your event, the last thing you want is lose the coverage opportunity. Post-race is critical, as you need to provide reporters with the information they need in a timely manner (they’re on a deadline). Make final, accurate results readily available on your website as soon as possible (and email the link directly to reporters you’re already in contact with). If anything is complicating the results (penalties, protests, etc.), explain that to your reporters so their recaps are accurate.
 - **Photos:** Giving media access to race photos is another way to help secure coverage. This must be arranged with your photographer in advance (ask specifically if you have permission to share photos with media after the race — work this into the contract — and make sure media know who to credit for the photos). Set clear expectations with your photographer so that they know how many photos you need in what timeframe (e.g., 3-5 selects within an hour of race finish, with the full collection to come later).

POST-RACE

- Follow up with reporters who covered your event. Thank them for coming out, tell them you appreciate the coverage, ask if there’s anything else you can do for them, and tell them you hope to see them next year. If the piece turned out well, share it on your social channels and tag the media outlet.
- Publish a race recap and photo gallery on your event website, then share on social media.



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- If something memorable happened at the event, pitch that story to media right away. Notable performances, acts of good sportsmanship, finish-line proposals, etc., all make great post-race stories!
- Compile all the coverage you received, and save links and print copies. This will allow you to track improvement year-over-year and remind yourself which media outlets covered which topics.

Additional Resources: Media & PR

- *Press coverage for events: PR essentials to make your race a success (ACTIVE.com)*
<https://www.endurancesportswire.com/press-coverage-for-events-pr-essentials-to-make-your-race-a-success/>