

## Chapter 4

# PROMOTION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

---

There are a variety of ways you can develop promotion for your program in many areas. Public relations is not advertising that costs money. It is getting the story about your program, an event or some volleyball related news either broadcast or printed at no cost to you - as it is news.

Special events, whether fundraisers or not, should:

- Be newsworthy, thus getting publicity
- Relate your program name and that of any sponsors to the event
- Be promoted long before the actual event
- Anticipate what and when one would want to know about it all
- Enhance your program's image
- Affect any level of fan, from reader to participant

### **Telling the Masses About your Start**

You should distribute good looking notices that answer the *Who, What, When, Where, Why and How* questions as well as give the name and phone number of a contact person. Personal contact with those high school coaches in your program's area is the best start. The YMCA, park and recreation department, sporting goods stores, junior high schools and playground areas are also good places in which to post notices. Make sure to get permission before doing so. In larger cities, posting big signs in vacant lots on main streets a week or so before a meeting may prove helpful. Write about your program to key USAV contacts that any Regional Commissioner can provide. Begin in this way to establish your newsletter mailing list, and keep it up to date. Promotion between programs is best developed through travel and competition both within and outside USA Volleyball region in which you are located. Do your best to maintain the contacts you make. You should have not just a program logo and stationery, but a permanent address and phone. A program brochure, media guide, yearbook and spare athlete photos are also important at some time.

In all cases, make sure you:

1. Enlist a promotions director
2. Do your advance planning and publicity
3. Support and inform the media (print and electronic) regardless of the outcome
4. Review all aspects (report to sponsors, parents and media)
5. Create a program website

Many good JOV program successes are due largely in part to good exposure in local media. Why bother with media coverage of your program?

- Get the new program off the ground.
- Increase program prestige and local support.
- Get best athletes.
- Get better sponsorships.
- Better attendance at local events.
- Keep the masses advised of your progress--promote the sport of volleyball.

### **Key JOV Program Media Possibilities**

The metro area teams will be received differently by the press compared to "small town" programs. You'll have to use different techniques, but the following ideas are all worth considering.

- **Television** - Network affiliates are difficult to utilize, but need to keep trying. Look for community bulletin shows, low-power TV stations, and public access stations.
- **Radio** - This is a very fragmented field, but never turn them down. A small town can have a dozen AM and FM stations. Find the ones the kids and their parents listen to. Telephone interviews are OK, but offer to come to their office.
- **Local publications** - Employee newsletters of large companies often want news about employee's kids. Provide as much help as possible (pictures, background information) High school newspapers may want to cover the success of some of their players and this may help in recruiting the best athletes. Handbills and bulletin board flyers are handy, but keep them updated. Don't become a nuisance. They are excellent for registration information.
- **Newspapers** - Maybe the most prestigious, since long-term memories are created from a newspaper article or photo. A favorite for establishing community support.

### **The dreaded interview about your program**

The inquisition was easy...

- When you know in advance, always have a roster listing player name, uniform number, school, grade and height. Have your team logo and name along with your name, address and phone numbers on the form and give it to the interviewer.
- Be prepared. If the interview is a generalized overview of your program (especially with a new writer), explain that USA Volleyball is an AAU spin-off group and start from there.
- Be quotable. Try to be specific about program goals. Writers love quotes, but do not make things up. If you can't think of the good quotes until afterward, maybe you should make notes in advance. Be truthful.
- Be enthusiastic. Show the excitement you have for the kids and the sport. Maybe the writer will catch the fever. This is a selling job.
- If you know in advance, ask if the interviewer would rather come to practice or meet at his/her office. Regardless, give him/her your undivided attention. Let somebody else coach.

### **Radio/TV Interviews**

- Be prepared; keep player's names handy in case amnesia sets in.

- Show a smile and generate excitement.
- The tape can be edited, so don't worry about slip-ups.
- Advance questions can sometimes be obtained.
- If appropriate, use the name of the station or the interviewer in the interview (i.e., "the support has been unbelievable, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the listeners of WHIC Super Country for their support.") -- careful, not to get mushy. Remember the interview will be reduced in time.

### **In general**

- Try to draw the interviewer into your program. Draw on their expertise (what local coach would you recommend for a motivational speech?).
- Always follow up a major interview with a thank-you note complimenting the article or broadcast.
- Consider an annual awards program, and invite the media.
- Get parents to occasionally commend the news folks. Make sure no criticism is given, coach them in advance.

### **WORKING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA**

Although some of the information in this section is directed to media at the national level, it contains many valuable tips and guidelines for dealing with the media at any level, and for giving exposure to the sport, something all volleyball programs should do.

#### **Whether your program is big or small, follow these tips:**

1. Prepare news releases.
2. Develop an adequate media mailing list.
3. Prepare low-cost publications that explain your sport.
4. Make media phone calls. Return call promptly.
5. Inform media to interesting aspects of your sport and key competitions.
6. Make it easier to cover your national competitions and make it a pleasant experience for the media, which will then wish to return and do even more the next time.
7. Introduce your top athletes to the media and get them some space in the papers or a spot on radio and television.
8. Be known as "good people" to work with, and develop solid friends in the media that you can go to and suggest sound story angles.
9. Accessibility is critical. Many sports will be eying for the same space or air time.

#### **What the news media is**

In spite of the clubhouse stories about the seamy side of sports, the news media of this country is actually made up of pleasant people who are fans and sports lovers at heart. That's how they got into this line of work, and they pride themselves on getting paid for covering the games and the athletes they actually like. Now, what better life is there than that? None that we can think of!

Many members of the sports media are former athletes or coaches who grew up playing sports, being managers, keeping statistics or school cheerleaders. Nothing is very complicated about all that. Now, however, as far as their written and broadcast words are concerned, their power is as awesome as that of financiers, heads of state and Czars.

But even with all their power, sports writers and announcers are just human subject to all the normal human faults and emotions. They have a job to do, one in which they rarely set out to "get" anybody. They want to

do the best job they can, and towards this end they welcome all the help and cooperation they can get from your sport's administration. In fact, your help and cooperation will go a long way in providing the needed coverage and seeing that it reaches more folks.

Contrary to the philosophy of journalism which was in effect from the 1930s to the 1960s, journalists who cover sports are no longer classified as cheerleaders for their assignments. Those 30 years were a time when the professional teams could count on the constant support and friendship of the men (not too many women at that time) who "covered" their beat. For this support, the writers received gifts and other "perks" on road trips. Fortunately, this practice has gone the route of the six percent home loan and 25 cent-a-gallon gasoline. Most of today's sports writers and broadcasters are solid journalists who tell it as it is and refuse to become shells or pitchmen for sports teams or organizations, with or without outside enticement.

Moreover, these professionals are tough to sell any idea that is based on weak angles and questionable facts. Your program must produce newsworthy events and sound results if it is to get the additional media coverage that will lift it above routinely-reported sports efforts. In addition to the games, championships and results, there are many other newsworthy items about your program and your athletes which should be passed on to the aggressive, interested reporter. Your program, in turn, will get the exposure you desire. However, be realistic. You will not have success every time. But, be persistent.

### **Develop the Relationship**

As a public relations person, your first efforts should be directed toward establishing personal relationships and creating an image you can present to the media. You will come in contact with the media at your events, but you should also make an effort to seek out the national and local media that cover your sport. This includes the magazine and sports writers, and in particular the broadcasters who, because of their assignment or personal interest, care about YOUR sport. You can call them, write them, meet them for lunch while traveling, or simply introduce yourself by any means possible within the limits of your budget and time. Get to know them and let them get to know you and your program.

You must become the person they call on to find out the facts, schedule an interview, to supply information they need to complete a story, provide credentials or clues on where to get them, to suggest a hotel or restaurant, or to tell them where they can rent a car. It's YOU they will call when they need help to fulfill or complete an assignment. And, if they remember you as being helpful, cooperative and available your future dealings are made easier.

Of course, the danger always exists that your social relationships will interfere with your professional relationships. Therefore, when you become good friends with a media representative of your sport, tread carefully. In this instance, you must both maintain the friendship and respect the obligations (and limitations) that go with the professional aspect of the relationship; your responsibility to the sport.

Do NOT leak information of a vital nature, or give a "scoop" to friends in the media. They will respect you more for not doing. However, that doesn't mean that you can't help develop an unusual story. You will soon learn which media members are aggressive, interested and receptive to your angles and suggestions for features. As in any other business, some people are always hustling and looking hard for ways to write a better story and out-hustle their competitors.

Never give one writer a break above another. They will respect you for your fair and equal treatment. You MUST NEVER be seen as vindictive or scheming, and MUST ALWAYS be seen as cooperative, available and above all, impartial. Treat the media equally. This means that you must accord the reporter from the smallest paper the same courtesy that you accord a staffer on the *New York Times*. In the end, hard as it is to believe or to carry out, you will be better off for doing so.

## **To Err is Human, To Forgive (Quietly) Essential**

- NEVER criticize, constructively or otherwise, your media contacts. Seldom does a complaint about lack of coverage result in good coverage. Never complain about free publicity unless it appears a grand jury indictment is imminent.
- Refer to rule #1 and don't you forget it.
- Try to understand the role your contact plays in their organization. They cannot possibly understand all facets of every sport, so be prepared to help them understand, but NEVER in a condescending manner. Most sports media types are underpaid, on tight deadlines and can have their ignorance about any sport exposed in public every day ... and are genuinely interested in local youth sports. (Who besides you cares if you are quoted as running a "3-4 offense with a man-down defense"?)
- Most misquotes and errors are only noticeable by you and a few parents and players, and most of them are your fault. Always spell the players' names in a call-in for the newspaper.
- Instruct all of your players and parents to never call the sports department to complain or criticize. Their interference could be permanently damaging. Get them to adopt your personal "any press is better than no press" philosophy.
- Vent your anger privately, and never phone to badger the media because someone did not use a story, follow your angle or cover an event that you really wanted covered. You must make an effort to remain cool with the media at all times, because if you don't, you will make enemies and thus rule out your future effectiveness. The results for your program will be a silent telephone, unreturned phone calls, and sport events that are not recorded in the papers and magazines or presented on the air waves.
- As one-sided and unfair as it sounds, this is the way the media game is played. Still, you must keep on pitching, maintain the same cool exterior and continue to provide the game results, the angles, the tips and the ideas for features, as well as keep on projecting the same anxious-to-help attitude.
- Even when you don't get a "favorable" story or see in the sports section the results you have so faithfully called in, or when a commentator does not include the fact that your team has a big tourney in town, you still shouldn't give up or complain. In this sense, you are a salesperson who doesn't always make the sale.
- If writers or broadcasters make a major error in a story, find a diplomatic way of calling it to their attention. This is especially important if it deals with a FACT, and is not a personal opinion. If they mention that your organization went over its budget by \$23 million, when it was \$23,000, then you should call it to their attention. This could be done by a phone call in which you gently mention the correct figure. You won't have to insist on a retraction or an on-the-air correction, because journalists who are true professionals will voluntarily find a way of making it up to you and your organization.

## **Anticipating coverage needs**

As director of your program, you can take certain steps that will guarantee you good media coverage.

- Get to know deadlines, space limitations, office hours and schedule of the reporters and broadcasters. Newspapers plan weekly staff coverage seven to 14 days in advance. Be early and prepared.
- Anticipate what they might possibly need when they come to cover an event, such as a quiet room for an interview and use of a phone.
- Review their rules about the size and composition of pictures or slides to be used determine such facts as the type of TV slides.

- Query experienced public relations people in other sports about their problems and solutions. Visit them whenever you have a chance to see their operation during a major competition.
- Improve your press releases by comparing them with copies of other national governing bodies (NGBs) press releases.
- Get out and meet the media and ask to see their operations. Once you are familiar with the physical layouts and the methods of operation of a major newspaper, TV or radio station, or wire service office, you will have a feel for what and whom you are trying to serve.
- Ask far enough in advance what they might need in the way of special services, so that you can supply their needs.
- Utilize seminars, which involve your public relations associates and members of the working media. At these functions ideas can be comfortably exchanged and you can be aware of their needs.
- Get to know local PR staffers from other professional areas, and learn about their operations and their methods. The mutual benefits will amaze you.
- Try occasionally to think like a professional journalist. Imagine covering an event or looking for a story yourself and taking good notes. As such, never attempt to hide a major story, even if it is detrimental to your sport. Attempts to hide negative items or "sit" on a story will ruin your relationship with the media. If you have done so, however, acknowledge the fact immediately and take your lumps, because the media will always find out. Your honesty and cooperation will help your organization in the long run and perhaps soften the effects of the story on the public.

### **Keeping your program in the public eye**

- Find out the deadlines for the local papers. Ask the radio/TV folks when they would prefer you calling in game scores and story summaries.
- Unless told otherwise, call the scores in from the game site. Never call collect and always be prepared when you reach your contact.
- Always call your contact after any significant event ... even if you didn't win a match. Sports writers have NO respect for coaches who only want to publish their wins. If you got pre-match publicity, you have an obligation to your contact to give him the results. An occasional humbling remark about the coach may endear you to the writer. ("We felt like we were in the land of the giants") try to offset it with a positive remark ("I think we've made some defensive adjustments that will keep us competitive against the taller teams next week.) Negative comments about players look awfully big in print. Try to avoid emotional remarks.
- When calling in tournament results from across the country, begin the call by telling your contact who you are, where you're calling from, and why ... mostly in the first sentence. Remember, be excited ... even if you lost, and call as early as possible.
- Since only one team wins a tournament, be ready to tell your contact how many teams were entered in your division, where you placed and any successes. Always find a bright spot. Have game scores handy with individual performance highlights and quotes.
- If your source prefers written material, write it as soon as you return and deliver it the following day. For weekly publications, this may get you printed verbatim.
- Understand the college and pro sports schedules and make your stories available on the "off" days. Why compete against the Super Bowl?

- If you're getting no publicity and you've tried everything, give somebody else a try. It may be you.
- Be realistic. The majority of your news will be of interest to your local media outlets. Do not concentrate on national media.

### **Writing the news release**

There is no question that the best relationship and results from contacting the media come from a personal visit or phone call. Even so, the news release is still the major means of reaching the mass media and other parties interested in your sport that you cannot contact personally. Make sure to direct it to the proper contact.

In most cases, the quality of your news releases will dictate its uses. Take time in preparing and delivering them. News releases are not a license to ramble or a chance to practice therapy because you flunked tenth grade composition. They are the vehicle for telling a media contact the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW and WHY about your sport. Make them simple to read, easy to find your major facts and lively enough to keep a reader's interest.

### **Do's**

- Feature present, not past, events as your lead story.
- Use your team logo with return address.
- Be timely. Avoid the last-minute, rush syndrome.
- Keep the language simple.
- Box off and feature your major points (time, place, date, ticket information and phone number).
- Always include a "contact" name and phone numbers for more information.
- Write the news release in a style similar to the target's style. You may get your release published simply because it was easy.
- Be quotable; include quotes for the writer's use. Don't make the writer do all the work; help them find a reason to write about your program. Use quotes in plain layman's language.
- Send the news release to the right person which is not necessarily the editor.
- Type on one side of the paper only.
- Make sure your press contact's name, phone number and address are prominently displayed at the top or bottom of the release.
- Write a short headline at the top of the story telling the reader what's ahead.
- List a release date and time.
- Check your spellings of names of individuals, competitions and cities, and proofread all dates, sites, and times of events.

### **In writing the news release, use the following format:**

- At the top of the first page of your press release, list:

1. A release date and time, if desired.
  2. A notation of "For Use at Will" or "For Immediate Release." If it has already been released earlier to the wires and they are now getting it in the mail, however, no notation is necessary.
  3. A headline or teaser about the news to follow.
- Keep the story simple. Break it up into short, concise paragraphs so that the media can read it easily. Use sub-headlines to break up long passages.
  - Always give credit to the source of any quoted information. Either paraphrase the information or quote it verbatim. Keep it short, simple and understandable. To do this, make sure that you yourself understand what the quotation means.
  - Position the DATE, TIME, PLACE and TICKET INFORMATION for any upcoming event prominently in your release. You need not write that material in the actual paragraphs of the story. You can place it all in a box within the story.
  - When announcing the appointment of a new coach, administrator or other official, indicate where that person can be reached by phone. Many media representatives like to reach such individuals for comment or a feature as the announcement is made. Whenever possible, also let the local broadcast media know the same information when you release the item on a quick-time basis. They might be anxious to talk to those persons, whether or not they have already gone to work in your national office.

NOTE: *Do NOT make up your own quotes for either individuals or organizations mentioned in your releases.* Not only is this unethical, but the quotations are often stilted and pointless. Let members of the media get the quotes by reaching your boss or the new appointee and getting their actual statements.

- CHECK YOUR S-P-E-L-L-I-N-G over, and over again when you proofread your typed release. After all, the best of us occasionally misspells the little words. Sometimes it is possible to have someone other than author to proofread a release, too.
- Use the style you think is the most attractive, whether it is single-space, double space, or space and a half. Few editors edit the release copy itself anymore. If they use it, they have somebody re-write it and make a few changes. Do not use *italic* or any other hard-to-read type.
- Make sure that the envelope enclosing your release clearly states the name of your organization, its address and perhaps the fact that it comes from your Information or Public Relations Office. If you have a big budget, then you can go in for design and color and other printed details. It never hurts, and you might win a PR award, too!
- Have your releases say: "The 1996-2000 budgets for USA Volleyball has been targeted at a record \$45 million, and \$20 million of that figure will be sought from the American public.
- We recommend that you type on only one side of each piece of paper, unless economy is of the utmost importance. Editors and writers constantly neglect to read the other side of a page, and thus lose part of the story. If you wish to use both sides, indicate (i.e. please turn to reverse side).
- Because the release is going to broadcast outlets, whenever you have a name in your story that is difficult to pronounce, spell the name in phonetics and place it in brackets after the name first appears in the story, such as: U.S. Olympic Volleyball coach Terry Liskevych (Leis Kev-ich) names star Matt Wellerczernaski (Wel-er-cher-nah-ski) as the captain.

## **Sending the news release**

We believe that the news release, despite the fact that it often ends up unopened and in the wastebasket of a newspaper's editorial or sports department has a definite value IF PROPERLY PREPARED AND DELIVERED.

Our philosophy on the subject is that the printed news release is designed to reach members of the media, who cannot be reached in any other way. If you are releasing a major item nationally or locally, your first obligation is to use the telephone (or FAX machine) to notify the editor, sports editor, or news director. This personal touch is effective and appreciated, especially if you act in deference to their deadlines. Remember verify fax transmission.

As soon as you decide on the announcement and when you want it to be released, notify the nearest Associated Press and United Press International bureaus. If you want to hit the usually-larger morning papers, contact the wire services early in the afternoon or late morning, because if they are going to use the material at all, it will take them this much time to distribute the material.

Sports directors at TV stations are rarely in the office before 3 p.m. They hate calls that come at 4:45 p.m. when they have a 5 p.m. show. Therefore, call such TV personnel close to 3 p.m. and be concise. Condense your announcement so that they can use it without a lot of editing for air use. Another good time to contact sports directors is 8 p.m. They are usually back by then for their 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. shows. Do not leave the message for the sports director and expect him/her to use it on the air. Talk to them personally, and call them back as many times as necessary to reach them. Also do not ask them to call you back. If they are unreachable and do not take calls from public relations individuals, hand-deliver the announcement to the stations and ask the receptionist to notify the sports directors that the receptionist has material for them.

### **Here are some tips for sending news releases:**

- Where possible, use the actual name of the sports editor or sports director. Because of the turnover, especially in broadcasting, make sure that those names are up-to-date, by contacting the local station. Media people agree that they are more attracted to an envelope that is addressed to them personally, rather than simply to "Sports Editor" or "Sports Director." If you cannot keep checking the names, then simply send your release to the attention of the sports editor or sports director, which is not an insult.
- Check media and other directors for a listing of the various publications that cater to your sport. If you do not already have them, add the names of the various staffers there to your mailing list.
- Send releases or other items for publication to a writer's business address, rather than to their home, unless he or she has specifically asked you to do so.
- Prepare your mailing list on a master set of labels if you do not enjoy the luxury of a computer setup. Simply reproduce the labels in sets to carry you through the year or each time you wish to mail.
- Prepare master sets of envelopes with the labels affixed ahead of time, so that you do not have to sort and apply labels each time you mail. A little time spent preparing master sets of envelopes saves a tremendous hassle later.
- Send a notice once a year to all individuals and organizations on your mailing list, asking them whether they wish to remain on the list for the coming year. If so, have them return it with any address change. Ask them if they have anybody else in mind who should be added, if the releases are being used, and if they are getting the job done. Finally, ask those on your mailing list if they want any other special service. Include a self-addressed return postcard that they can fill out and send to you. Also, request phone and fax numbers. You can develop a great telephone card file on main media, both locally and nationally.

## **The mailing list**

Compiling and keeping a fresh mailing list for your news releases is a job that takes time and planning, plus constant review several times a year. Nothing disturbs a sports editor more than to receive an envelope addressed to his/her predecessor, especially if the predecessor has been dead for two years.

Do not place a multitude of people in the same department at a newspaper or broadcast outlet on your mailing list. The sports editor, lead columnist and the person who covers your sport at the newspaper is sufficient. At the broadcast outlet, the sports director and in some cases, the assignment editor is more than sufficient.

## **FREE PROMOTIONAL IDEAS**

The following ideas can be used by any program primarily as publicity for an event, a fundraiser or tournament. They will also work as well for finding players.

- Sending press releases and radio announcements two weeks in advance to local newspapers and radio stations concerning free or non-profit events.
- Having PA announcements made two weeks in advance at junior and senior high schools.
- Notifying local clubs, churches and organizations that have possible interest in the events.
- Notifying high school and college campus calendars of the events.
- Announcing the events at cafeterias during meal hours.
- Painting pertinent banners on any campus after obtaining approval from campus authorities.
- Setting up a booth on any campus (student union or library), with proper approval.
- Chalking classroom blackboards with the program, time, date and place.
- Taking advantage of any free advertising available on any campus. Check with campus paper.
- Announcing at professional, high school and college sporting events, and at city or campus productions.
- Dressing up in costume (appropriate to the event) and walking around town or on campus, especially during the noon hour as a means of advertising the event.
- Contacting any and all physical education teachers in the area and asking them to spread the word in and out of school. Contacting any sports booster clubs, even though they might not be volleyball-related.
- Telephoning people whose names are in the directory.
- Arranging for public service announcements
- Contacting local businesses and provide signs to them.
- Placing approved signs on vacant lots of main traffic streets.
- Visit service clubs (Lions or Rotary).
- Free instruction clinics.
- Get on local milk cartons, newspaper ad cover pages or door-to-door shopper cover bags.

- Being creative and coming up with further ideas.

### **Advertising Ideas**

- Flyers - Tack them up around town and campus, after first checking the regulations. This is a great way to advertise quickly.
- Buttons - Put your name, event or catch phrase where people will readily see them: coats, belts or hats.
- Posters - Get an artist to come up with an eye-catching way to attract attention to your event. Place posters in heavily-traveled areas to get maximum public awareness.
- T-Shirts - Use your logo or poster design on t-shirts to advertise your event or group. Sell them for \$1 above cost, thus creating moving advertising and a source of funds.
- Bookmarks/pins - Hand out these useful items as reminders of your organizations.
- Mailing lists - Mail to selected sports-minded groups, after first checking on any regulations. Contact all schools and perhaps all coaches and physical education teachers at all levels. These lists are available through various town and campus organizations.
- Free tickets - Have local radio stations raffle or offer free tickets to your event.
- Advertising - Place advertising for your event in student and local newspapers and with radio stations. This can be inexpensive and reach a large number of people.
- Sponsored Advertising - Ask local businesses to publicize or subsidize your program by giving them free advertising in your programs.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs)**

How are these announcements made? By whom? Who selects which announcements or broadcasts? When are they scheduled? By whom? In short, how do PSAs come into being and how do they find their way onto television? Perhaps more to the point, how can the volleyball program in which you are interested make use of this opportunity to get your message across to the public?

These are among the questions which this section attempts to address. Although no one who has ever watched television or listened to the radio in this country has failed to be exposed to hundreds of these announcements, there has been comparatively little written about them. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a great deal of confusion surrounding their production and distribution. Properly used, this section should provide you much of the information needed concerning public service announcements on radio stations, television stations or cable systems in any community.

#### **PSAs defined**

"A Public Service Announcement (PSA) is any announcement (including network) for which no charge is made and which promotes programs, activities, for services of Federal, State, or local governments of the programs, activities, or services of non profit organizations (i.e. UGF, Red Cross Blood or Donations) and other announcements regarded as serving community interests, excluding time signals, routine weather announcements, and promotional announcements." - FCC Form 303 IV, iii.

That is the Federal Communications Commission's official definition of the public service announcement. These public service announcements serve to validate and promote organizations and their projects their concerns. PSAs help raise funds and build constituencies and serve as a major source of information about

the public and voluntary sectors to the American public. And, unlike commercial announcements, they do not cost their sponsors. They represent a contribution by radio and television stations.

## **Community Calendar**

Many stations, although they may not take PSAs for a specific one-time-only event, do have a community bulletin board or a community calendar. Station's specifications for such announcements vary, but in general stations will require:

1. The name of the group
2. A description of the event and its purpose
3. Specific information (date, time and location)
4. How to obtain tickets
5. Where to phone or write for further information

Community Bulletin Board announcements, like PSAs themselves must be submitted in advance. Station deadlines range from two to three days to as much as four to six weeks. Again, contact your local outlets for specific criteria.

## **Handling**

Many organizations prefer to deliver material to stations by hand. This gives them the chance to answer any questions the station may have and to make certain that delivery to the proper individual has been achieved. It is wise to make an appointment in advance. Otherwise, be prepared to drop the material off with the receptionist or a guard. In that event, or in the event that the material has been mailed in, it is appropriate to telephone to determine that it has been received and that the information supplied has been sufficient. Be sure in any case that all materials (copy, slides, tape, discs for film) are labeled with the below listed information.

1. The name of the organization
2. Whether they are generic or pertain to a specific campaign
3. The length of the announcement
4. The number of the slides

If you wish the material to be returned at the conclusion of the campaign this should be specified. Although some stations may be able to forewarn you as to when your announcement will air, most are unable to do so because the material must pass through several hands and schedules are often made up at the last moment. Similarly, although some stations provide a record of the number of times an announcement has been aired; most stations find that such record-keeping diverts personnel from more important duties. Records of broadcasts do exist in the logs which television stations are required to maintain and are available for inspection 45 days after date of broadcast.

## **Making PSAs effective**

Joseph Pulitzer is generally credited with the cliché about the "ABC's" of a good news story: accuracy, brevity and clarity. Effective PSAs require the same journalistic essentials. Whether the PSA consists of a fact sheet to be read by an announcer, copy to be read over slides or a fully produced film spot, it must be completely factual and factually complete. If an event is referred to, for example, be certain that the audience is told all of the important details -- the who, how, what, when, where and why.

Don't try to compress everything you know about the subject into a 30-second announcement. Organize the materials before you start to make sure you are concentrating on the essential information for this announcement. Then make your key points in short sentences. Use simple words and not too many of them. Remember that the spot is designed to reach the audience, not to impress the organization or professionals in your field. *Don't give more than one phone number.*

How can you make the process work? We hope that this section will help. It lists the requirements, policies and practices of representative radio and television stations in large/small markets all over the country. Watch or listen first. You will find that not only a courtesy to the station but a favor to yourself, is understanding how they approach your problem. Public service announcements are generally placed in the hands of skilled professionals who are proud of their ability and their opportunity to serve their communities.

Remember, no station is obligated to run public service announcements.

### **Booth Readers**

These are messages read live by booth announcers. They are read in the morning when a station goes on the air, in the afternoon during community calendars and in the evening just before a station concludes its broadcast day. If you would like a booth reader PSA, it should be typed on one page of paper, double-spaced, no more than 30 seconds in length, have an end date typed in the upper right hand corner along with the publicity chairperson's name, address and telephone number. Be sure to include the important who, what, when, where and how of your event.

It is NOT necessary to submit any visual materials with the booth reader PSA. Booth readers should be at a station two weeks before you would like your announcement read. You should also make a copy of the announcement that you send as it will likely not be returned.

Here is a sample of a PSA written to air as a booth reader:

Im A. Goodcoach  
Whoknows High School  
Anywhere, USA  
(800) 123-4567

:30 Seconds    Air Until: December 10, 1995

The Anywhere Junior Olympic Volleyball Program is looking for interested players and coaches. Boys and girls, ages 12-17 are playing this great game. If you are interested in coaching, or getting a young athlete involved, call us at 123-4567, or drop by our practices at Anywhere HS on Mondays at 7 pm.

### **Produced PSAs**

Announcements that are put onto video tape in order to air on television are called "produced PSAs." Before making a produced PSA, it is necessary to make an audio tape of your PSA. Your audio track may be prepared at a television's audio production facility or any production house. When recording your audio track, explore different possibilities (sound effects, more than one voice or music).

Length is yet another factor on which station policies vary. Television stations may accept 10, 20, 30 or 60 second announcements. Be aware that 60 second announcements will get much less play, and will appear only late at night on many stations. The optimum length is probably 30 seconds which corresponds to most television commercials. Ten second announcements in television are apt to get the most exposure in heavy listening and viewing time periods.

In estimating copy length for live announcements it is essential that they be read aloud or into a tape recorder using a stop watch. Read at a comfortable speed and allow some breathing space. The audio track must be timed exactly to length of the PSA. If you are producing your audio track elsewhere, it must be recorded at 7 1/2 i.p.s. (inches per second). After writing your copy, time

yourself with a stopwatch or second hand on a clock. Estimate the time with the following word guide.

20 words-10 seconds

45 words-20 seconds

70 words-30 seconds

120 words-60 seconds

Television PSAs are produced on film or videotape. Film productions should be on 16mm film with optical sound track. Most stations will accept only two inch high and low band videotape as well as 3/4 inch videotape cassettes. Within the next few years many stations will be equipped to handle one inch videotape cassettes. It is essential, before producing any announcements, to check the acceptability of the storyboard and also the format which the station can accommodate. Many organizations have not needed this advice and have wasted sums they could hardly afford in producing materials which the stations were simply not equipped to broadcast.

Television PSAs are also accepted in copy form, generally with 2"x 2" slides. In submitting slides, it is essential to remember that the television format is horizontal with 3"x 4" aspect ratio. That is to say that every television camera and every television set produces pictures whose proportions are three units on the vertical to four units on the horizontal. These proportions are slightly different from those of 35mm slides. Also, some television sets may be badly adjusted and a portion of the picture is therefore not seen. Keep the important information within the so-called critical area of the slide.

### **SAMPLE**

Anywhere Jr. Olympic Volleyball Audio Copy: 30 seconds

Im A. Goodcoach  
Whoknows High School  
Anywhere, USA  
(800) 123-4567

MUSIC BED: Hard Driving Jazz

VOICE NUMBER ONE: \_\_\_\_\_

The Anywhere U.S. Junior Olympic Volleyball Program is beginning its fifth year of competition. Both boys and girls from ages 12 to 17 may try out for this excellent program.

VOICE NUMBER TWO: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents and players should come to the general orientation meeting June, 13 at the Haunted Gym at 7 p.m.

VOICE NUMBER ONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Come join us for a season of travel and friendship while learning the challenges of this great American game.

When your audio tape is completed the next step is to select the visual items you plan to use for your produced PSA.

## **VISUALS FOR PSAs**

### **35 mm color slides**

35 millimeter slides should be shot so that everything is within the frame horizontally. All slides should be color, and of professional quality. Your slides will highlight and draw visual attention to your audio track. Slides should be in sharp focus, not distracting or busy.

### **Color photographs**

Color photographs should be a minimum of 5"x 7" and a maximum size of 16"x 20". All photos should be clean (no scratches or tears) and of professional quality. Photos 8"x 10" are the easiest to work with.

### **16 mm color Film**

Color film may also be used to assemble your produced PSA. Your film should be photographed and processed by a professional and be clean with no scratches. For a 30-second PSA, approximately three minutes of film footage is needed. Before your production session, you should look at the film and make a brief list of the different scenes. By doing this you will be familiar with the contents of the film and what scenes you would like to use in making your produced PSA.

### **Videotape (3/4-inch, 1-inch, 2-inch)**

If the visual material you have to make your PSA is on video tape, a produced PSA can be made by assembling the best material. The tape must be in good condition and must be on three-quarter, one-inch or two-inch video tape. Half- inch tape cannot be used. Be familiar with the contents of your tape before the session.

### **Personalities in the studio**

If you decide to use a personality in the studio, your spokesperson should be at ease on camera, have a clear, pleasant voice and be familiar with the copy. (use of teleprompter is usually provided upon request). Anyone appearing on camera should follow these guidelines:

**Clothes:** Avoid white or very light colors. Wear soft, medium colors. Don't wear sharply contrasting patterns or colors.

**Make-up:** Make-up should not be excessive; a natural tan pancake makeup usually looks best on men and women.

**Jewelry:** Avoid bright, glittering jewelry, as well as jewelry that "jangles" with every movement.

### **Other key points in PSAs**

- Correlate audio and video. The double sensory impression fixed the sales point more firmly.
- Demonstrate...demonstrate...demonstrate. People are more likely to remember the points when they see them proved by demonstration.
- Keep it simple.

- Use the right personality. When appropriate, the use of an authority "increases impact." Many "authorities" may be too expert or too remote for viewers to identify with. Who will the viewer respond to? The professional who provides the service, for example, or the average person who benefits from it? Remember that the purpose is not to impress the president of the organization by putting him on television but to reach the audience with a helpful message.
- Keep in mind that the audience will judge your message by the same critical standards applied to commercial advertising.

Remember it is your responsibility to provide visual items needed for your production. When you have some copy ideas and are ready for production, call the station's public affairs department and make an appointment for a pre-production meeting. This time will be used to reserve audio and video production time. During this meeting ask any questions you may have about production of your PSA. Your pre-production meeting should take place ONE MONTH BEFORE your audio and video sessions.

If your production is done at one station, others will still be able to air your spot. Call the additional station's public affairs department and tell them at what station the PSA was produced, the title, the length and the end date. They will then send for a "dub" or copy of the tape.

In addition to the many ways you can make a PSA, most stations also tape public affairs programs each week. If you have a topic or a guest that may be of particular interest to one of the public affairs programs, call the producer of that particular program. The producer will tell you if the topic is suitable for the program (taping date or what you will need to prepare). Most public affairs programs are a 30 minutes long. These programs are to provide a public forum for community issues.

### **Photographs for yearbooks and newspapers**

If you have photos to go along with your article, then by all means submit them to the newspapers.

Don't caption your photos to the paper. Editors pride themselves on captioning photos, so try not to steal their thunder.

Here are some tips on what the newspapers like:

- Black and white photos are always preferred, but some will accept color. Telephone the sports editor and ask if color is acceptable.
- Submitted photos should be 3" x 5", 5" x 7" or 8" x 10."
- Photos must be in focus in order to be printed.
- A photo with a light background is always better than one with a dark background because it will reproduce better.
- On the back of every photo submitted, you should tape a piece of paper with the following information on it:
  1. Name of photographer
  2. Name of all people in photo, left to right
  3. Date and place photo was taken
  4. Name of tournament where photo was taken

#### 5. Ages and hometown of people in photo

Sometimes lighting is not good enough to shoot good action shots. Therefore, smiling faces posed with trophies or equipment in hand are quite acceptable. Remember, use a light background so the players will not fade into it.

#### **In closing, "common" courtesies aren't too common**

- Saying "please" and "thank you" are good ingredients.
- Complimenting your writers or television reporters for good stories or editorials in other sports is excellent--if you are sincere. Let them know you are a regular reader or listener.
- Season-end letters of appreciation are essential. Don't overdo it, though. You have to remember, you may be the only coach who even acknowledges the media's importance to your program...and a little goes a long way.

#### **PROMOTION NOTES:**