



How To Talk To The Media

What You Should Know About Contacting the Media

So your organization has decided that media coverage of your charitable bingo activities might increase attendance—where do you start?

First, you must determine what you want to say about your organization and the charitable bingo activities before you pitch your story to media outlets. Remember, the information you provide must be newsworthy. Since your organization is charitable and you are promoting the organization's charitable bingo activities consider including the following:

- Who benefits from your organization's charitable bingo activities and in what ways do they benefit
- Information about where your organization conducts charitable bingo such as street address, telephone number of playing location, and website address
- The days and times your organization conducts charitable bingo

The information you provide to media outlets should be focused and include—who, what, when, where and why the media should be interested in your story. Additionally, the information you provide should be short, honest, and not fancy or written with a lot of flourish. Avoid superlatives or arrogance, jargon, suspicious quotes, unattributed facts, and excessive detail or technical data. It is your job to convince the media your story is newsworthy.

Once you have established media contacts you should always provide them with media advisories and press releases relative to each event you want them to cover. When you first establish contact with a reporter you should provide them with a brief historical background of your organization in writing so they will have a complete understanding of your organization. Refer to the enclosed "Charitable Bingo Fast Facts" as an example of historical information that could be provided to the media.

Getting the Attention of the Media

You must make contact with the media to get them to consider running your story. If you or someone in your organization are lucky you may already know someone that works for a media outlet such as a newspaper, television or radio station and that person may be willing to help you.

Your first step in getting your story in the media is to make contact with a media representative. Call the news room of any media outlet and ask for the assignments editor and pitch your story. Be organized when you pitch your story and be prepared to give the assignments editor the who, what, where, when, and why of your story. Be prepared to tell them what makes your story newsworthy not just the bare facts—you have to get *their* attention. Telephone calls are the most effective way to communicate with reporters and are an essential to an effective media strategy. Reporters are constantly in paper overload, chances are they never see your faxed release or advisory. If you are unable to talk to the assignments editor leave a detailed message. If they don't return your call—call them back. It is acceptable to make three call backs for one event.

Once you identify the assignments editor, find out what her/his mailing address, e-mail address, direct phone number and fax number are. Don't wait to talk to them before sending them a copy of your media advisory and press release.

If the media runs your story be sure to send a thank you note to the reporter—it just might help get publicity for your next event.

Media Advisory and Press Release

Two important components of your media strategy and relationship with the media are the media advisory and press release. There are established procedures for writing media advisory and press releases and you should adhere to those procedures if you want to garner the attention of the media. The following provides an overview of media advisories and press releases and general guidelines for writing them.

Media Advisory

The media advisory is used to notify the media regarding an event. It provides basic information to generate media interest—who, what, when, where and how, the name and telephone number of the contact person, as well as directions to the event site. The media advisory should be distributed at least a week before the event.

Producing a media advisory (see enclosed example):

- Print on your organization’s letterhead
- In the upper right corner print a bold title, see example, “NEWS from—insert your organization’s name”
- Below the title print:
 - “**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**” and underneath print the date the media advisory was released, below this statement print;
 - “**CONTACT;**” and the name and telephone number(s) of the spokesperson for your organization. The contact person should be someone who is knowledgeable about the information in the advisory and can be easily reached by phone and include the contact person’s home phone number, if appropriate.
- In the center of the page in large bold letters print “Media Advisory.”
- Below media advisory write, in parenthesis, the name of the city or location where the event will be held followed a short description of the event.
- Then provide the Who, What, When, and Where of the event.
- If the advisory continues to a second page, type “More” at the end of the first page “Continued” centered at the top of subsequent pages.
- At the end of the advisory type “-30-“ centered on the bottom of the last page.

Press Release

A press release provides information about your event and is intended to get the attention of the media contact. A press release should read like a news story, you should cover the, who, what, when, where, why and how. A press release is more detailed than a media advisory and should provide the media with all the information a reporter would need to write the story. A well written press release should be clear, professional, factual, and contain no spelling or grammatical errors. Do not attempt to interject humor or puns into your press release. If you incorporate quotes keep them brief. Provide the media with the story as you want to see it written.

A press release should be distributed to the media the day before or the morning of your event.

Producing a press release (see enclosed example):

- Print the press release on your organization's letterhead.
- In the upper right corner print a bold title, see example, "NEWS from—insert your organizations name."
- Below the title print:
 - "**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**" and underneath print the date the press release was released, below this statement print;
 - "**CONTACT;**" and the name and telephone number(s) of the spokesperson for your organization. The contact person named should be someone who is knowledgeable about the information in the press release and can be easily reached by phone and include the contact person's home phone number, if appropriate.
- Release statement - indicates when the information in the press release should be made public. It should appear in the upper left-hand margin beneath the letterhead logo. The release statement can read "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE," with the current date underneath, or you can indicate a specific date and time. You can also include the time you want under the date.
- Headline – is placed two lines after the contact information, in the center of the page in large boldface type. A headline can make or break a news release. The headline should include the most important information in the press release and should be written in a manner that grabs the attention of the reader.
- Lead paragraph – the first paragraph of the press release should grab the reader's attention. Important information should jump off the page—most reports will only spend 30 seconds looking at a press release, so make the most of the lead paragraph. The lead paragraph should be limited to three sentences and include:
 - Key message
 - Purpose of the release
 - Clearly state with the story is about and why the story is important
 - Introduce the local angle of the story

Note: you should plan on spending 75% of the time you devote to writing the press release to the headline and lead paragraph – they are that important!

- Body copy - or primary message of the press release following the lead paragraph should be fully developed and include a colorful quote from an organization official to provide credibility to the story. The body copy should be built around the lead paragraph, providing additional details and explanation.
- Final paragraph – should include a description of the organization and should not exceed three sentences.
- If the press release continues to a second page, type "More" at the end of the first page "Continued" centered at the top of subsequent pages.
- At the end of the press release type "-30-" centered on the bottom of the last page.
- Photo Opportunity – you should mention a photo opportunity if there is one and be sure to send a copy of the release to the photo desk.

Note: The guidelines for the placement of elements on the media advisory and press release will be influenced by the style of your organizations letterhead. Try to adhere as closely as possible to the above guidelines given the limitation of your letterhead.

Timelines For Media Advisory and Press Release

1. **First** – write your **media advisory**. The media advisory should be faxed or e-mailed to your media contact a week prior to your event. The media advisory can be sent directly to the reporter(s) you want to cover your event, but they must be sent to assignment editors. If your organization is in a community with an Associated Press or Reuters bureau, send your advisory to the “daybook editor.” The daybook editor puts together a weekly schedule of news events that go to all subscribers of that wire service. Mainstream news media use the daybook schedule to make assignments to reports. Make follow-up calls to assignment desks after you have sent the advisory to make sure they received it and if the opportunity presents itself pitch your story to the reporter but be brief in pitching your story.
2. **Second** – write your **press release** and fax or e-mail it the morning of or the day before your event. In most instances you should send a press release to only one reporter per media outlet. Always make follow up calls after you send the press release.

Examples and Templates of Media Advisory and Press Release

For your reference and convenience we have enclosed examples of completed media advisories and press releases and templates of each one, for your organization to use in developing your media advisories and press releases.

Speaking With the Media

Dealing with the media is not limited to telephone calls, media advisories and press releases—they may want to talk to you. If the media requests an interview don’t panic, be prepared. If you know how to speak to the media it will enhance the chances of them running your story. Enclosed is a document titled “Making the Most of Your Media Interview” by Jim Cameron, President, Cameron Communications, Inc. It provides valuable information on how you should prepare to speak to the media. We suggest you read the article and practice. Do mock interviews until you are comfortable with being interviewed. Also, be sure you are familiar with all aspects of your organization and that your information is accurate.

Example of a Media Advisory

Insert Your Organization's Letterhead Here

NEWS

From (Insert Your Organization's Name Here)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

(Enter Release Date Here)

Contact:

(Enter Contact Name)

(Enter Contact's Phone Numbers Here)

MEDIA ADVISORY

SAMPLE

(Enter Name of Your City) – Write a short description of the event in this section.

WHO: Enter your organization's name as it appears on the bingo license

WHAT: Enter the name and/or description of your event here, i.e., *Name of your organization* as it appears on the bingo license kicks off its charitable bingo activities.

WHEN: Enter the day, month, date and year of the event here, i.e., Friday, July 8, 2005

WHERE: Enter the physical location of the event here, i.e. Civic Center, 2700 Convent Avenue, San Antonio, Texas

One Page Media Advisory - Enter "•••" centered at the bottom of the first page if there is only one page.

Multiple Page Media Advisory - Enter "**More**" centered at the bottom of the first page and succeeding pages with the exception of the last page. On the last page enter "-30-".

Example of a Press Release

Insert Your Organization's Letterhead Here

NEWS

From (Insert Your Organization's Name Here)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

(Enter Release Date Here)

Contact:

(Enter Contact Name)

(Enter Contact's Phone Numbers Here)

Insert Headline Here In Boldfaced Type

(Enter Name of Your City or Location) – Start Lead Paragraph Here

Start Body Copy Here

Start Final Paragraph Here

One Page Press Release - Enter "•••" centered at the bottom of the first page if there is only one page.

Multiple Page Press Release - Enter "More" centered at the bottom of the first page and succeeding pages with the exception of the last page. On the last page enter "-30-".

NEWS

From: Organization

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, January 3, 2005

CONTACT:
Name of Contact
Contact's Telephone Number/s

Media Advisory **SAMPLE**

***Organization Name* Kicks Off Charitable Bingo Activities**

(City)—The *Organization Name* was recently licensed by the Charitable Bingo Operations Division of the Texas Lottery Commission to conduct charitable bingo at *Location Name*. The *Organization Name* will conduct its first bingo game charitable bingo on Friday, January 10, 2005, at *Location Name* located at *Street Address*.

Proceeds from the organization's bingo activities will be used to benefit the health and welfare of the elderly, provide scholarships, and support worthy community causes.

Following the first bingo event *Organization Name* will conduct bingo every week from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at *Location Name* located at *Location Address*.

...

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

NEWS

From: Organization Name

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, January 10, 2005

CONTACT:

Name of Contact

Contact's Telephone Number/s

Press Release **SAMPLE**

***Organization Name* Kicks Off Charitable Bingo Activities**

(City)—The *Organization Name* was recently licensed by the Charitable Bingo Operations Division of the Texas Lottery Commission to conduct charitable bingo at *Location Name*. The organization will kick-off its charitable bingo activities on Friday, January 10, 2005, at *Location Name* located at *Street Address*.

Proceeds from the organization's bingo activities will be used to benefit the *Recipient Name*. The group assists eligible elderly citizens in the city's West Side with transportation to medical appointments Monday through Friday.

Transportation is provided for both early and late appointments. Specially equipped vehicles are provided for individuals needing extra assistance.

The organization hopes that the funds derived from conducting charitable bingo will enable them to expand their services to include more clients, purchase additional handicapped assisted vehicles, and provide transportation to week-end and holiday therapy sessions.

...

NEWS

From: Organization Name

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, January 16, 2005

CONTACT:

Contact Name

Contact's Telephone Number/s

Media Advisory

SAMPLE

Special Event

(City)—The *Organization Name* will hold a special *Name of Special Event* charitable bingo event next Saturday to benefit the *Name of Recipient*. The group assists eligible elderly citizens on the city's West Side with transportation to medical appointments. Local county and city officials will call the numbers and distribute prizes.

Name of Special Event begins at 7:30 p.m., Thursday January 25, 2005, at the *Location Name and Street Address*. Contact *Contact Name* at telephone *number* for more information about this event. Proceeds from this event will benefit the *Recipient Name*.

WHO: Organization Name

WHAT: Name of Special Event

WHEN: Saturday, January 25, 2005

WHERE: Location Name and Street Address

...

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

NEWS

From: Organization Name

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, January 24, 2005

CONTACT:

Name of Contact

Contact's Telephone Number/s

Press Release **SAMPLE**

Organization Name “Name of Special Event” Bingo Event to Benefit Name of Recipient

(City)—The *Organization Name* will hold a gala event —“*Name of Special Event*” bingo event to benefit *Name of Recipient* on Saturday, January 25, 2005, at 7:30 p m. at the *Location Name and Street Address*.

Local city and county officials will assist by calling numbers and distributing prizes. In addition to bingo the formal affair will include an auction of items such as a one week cruise, one month of housekeeping services, a new car, hot-air balloon rides, to name a few. There will also be drawings for door prizes. All auction items and door prizes have been donated by individuals, businesses and civic organizations. The event will include a five-course meal catered and donated by *Name of Catering Company*.

The *Name of Special Event* provides an opportunity for the community to come together for an evening of fun and contribute to improving the lives of the elderly in our community. Proceeds from the event will be used to purchase much

More

needed handicapped equipped vans, add additional drivers, and expand service days and times providing transportation to the elderly to medical appointments. Tickets can be purchased by calling *Telephone Number*.

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

NEWS

From: Organization Name

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, May 20, 2005

CONTACT:

Name of Contact

Contact's Telephone Number/s

Media Advisory

SAMPLE

Announcing Charitable Distributions

(City)—The *Organization Name* announced *Insert \$ Amount of Charitable Distributions* in charitable distributions made to *Name of Recipient*. The distribution was made on May 27, 2005, in the form of six new handicapped equipped vans to transport the elderly to medical appointments. The charitable distributions were made possible by *Organization Name* charitable bingo activities. The organization has been conducting charitable bingo since January 10, 2005, and is very pleased with the success of charitable bingo and the benefits it has made possible to *Name of Recipient*.

Charitable organizations conducting bingo in Texas are required to disburse for a charitable purpose an amount not less than thirty-five percent of the organization's adjusted gross receipts from the preceding quarter, less the amount of authorized expenses not to exceed six percent of the gross receipts.

WHO: Organization Name

WHAT: Presents *Name of Recipient* with Six
New Handicapped Equipped Vans

WHEN: Friday, May 27, 2005

WHERE: Location Name and Street Address

NEWS

From Organization Name

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, May 26, 2005

CONTACT:

Name of Contact

Contact's Telephone Number/s

Press Release **SAMPLE**

Organization Name Provides Recipient Name with *Insert \$ Amount of Charitable Distributions in Vans*

(City)—The *Organization Name* announced it will present Recipient Name with six new handicapped equipped vans valued at *Insert \$ Amount of Charitable Distributions* on Friday, May 2, 2005, at the *Location Name and Street Address*.

The purchase of the vans has been made possible by the charitable bingo activities of *Organization Name*. The organization has been conducting charitable bingo since January 10, 2005, and is very pleased with the success of charitable bingo activities. Charitable organizations conducting bingo in Texas are required to disburse for a charitable purpose an amount not less than thirty-five percent of the organization's adjusted gross receipts from the preceding quarter, less the amount of authorized expenses not to exceed six percent of the gross receipts.

The presentation of the six vans to *Name of Recipient* is just the first of the benefits *Organization Name* plans for the organization. Future plans include the expansion of personnel to provide expanded service hours, the addition of service on Saturdays and Sundays to physical therapy and rehabilitation appointments, and a nutrition program to provide meals for the elderly.

•••

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

NEWS

From Organization Name

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, May 26, 2005

CONTACT:

Name of Contact

Contact's Telephone Number/s

Media Advisory
SAMPLE
Announcing Prizes

(City)—The *Organization Name* announced Friday, May 27, 2005, that total prizes paid to bingo players at the organization's charitable bingo games totaled *Insert \$ Amount of Prizes* in the first quarter of 2005. Included in this amount were prizes paid to winners of regular bingo, electronic bingo, and pull-tab bingo.

Charitable organizations conducting bingo in Texas are allowed to award up to \$2,500 per four hour occasion and \$750 per game of bingo. Bingo is a way for people of all ages to get together and have fun while benefiting charitable organizations in Texas.

WHO: Organization Name

WHAT: Pays *Insert \$ Amount of Prizes* in bingo prizes to players in the first quarter of 2005

WHEN: Friday, May 27, 2005

WHERE: Location Name and Street Address

•••

Organization
Name

PO Box #0000
City, Texas
00000-0000

Phone:
(000) 000-0000

FAX:
(000) 000-0000

NEWS

From Organization Name

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, May 26, 2005

CONTACT:

Name of Contact

Contact's Telephone Number/s

Press Release **SAMPLE**

Organization Name Pays Out Insert \$ Amount of Prizes in Bingo Prizes

(City)—The *Organization Name* announced Friday, May 27, 2005, that it paid out *Insert \$ Amount of Prizes* in bingo prizes during the first quarter of 2005. Included in this amount were prizes paid to winners of regular bingo, electronic bingo, and pull-tab bingo.

Charitable organizations conducting bingo in Texas are allowed to award up to \$2,500 per four hour occasion and \$750 per game in prizes. *Organization Name* conducts charitable bingo every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at *Location Name and Address*.

The organization first started conducting bingo on January 10, 2005. *Name and Title of Individual Being Quoted* for the organization's bingo activities says he is very pleased with the success of their bingo activities. Included in the bingo fun are theme nights, Wednesday paper specials, door prizes, and Friday snack bar specials. In addition to prizes the organization prides itself on the quality of food

More

at the snack bar. They also provide party rooms for groups that want to celebrate a special occasion such as a birthday, play bingo and win prize money.

Organization Name invites everyone to come to their bingo games for a chance to be a winner and share in the prize money.



—TEXAS—
LOTTERY

Texas Lottery
Commission

PO Box 16630
Austin, Texas
78761-6630

Phone:
(512) 344-5000

FAX:
(512) 344-5490

NEWS

*From the Charitable Bingo
Operations Division of the
Texas Lottery Commission*

CHARITABLE BINGO FAST FACTS

- In November 1980, Texas voters approved a constitutional amendment that authorized Charitable Bingo on a local option basis. The amendment requires all bingo proceeds to be spent in Texas for charitable purposes.
- The first bingo licenses were issued in 1982, when Charitable Bingo was a division of the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts.
- The regulation and administration of Charitable Bingo was transferred to the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission in January of 1990.
- The administration of Charitable Bingo was transferred to the Texas Lottery Commission, where it remains today.
- Charitable Bingo activities have resulted in more than \$773,663,956 in charitable distributions from 1982 to 2004.
- A minimum of 35 percent of adjusted gross receipts, less authorized expenses, must be disbursed from an authorized organization's bingo account for charitable purposes.
- The Charitable Bingo Operations Division is divided into three sections that regulate Charitable Bingo activities in Texas: Licensing, Accounting, and Audit.

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For more information about the Charitable Bingo Operations Division, visit the Charitable Bingo Operations Division's web site at <http://www.txbingo.org>.



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

by Jim Cameron, President Cameron Communications Inc., Darien CT

It's perhaps every business person's worst nightmare: you return to your office from lunch and find Mike Wallace and a crew from "Sixty Minutes" waiting in the lobby. "We have only a few questions," intones the prosecutorial journalist as you are videotaped running down the hall and into your office, slamming the door in his face.

Not all media interviews need be as frightening. In fact, knowing how to get your message across to the media can do a lot to actually promote your business. The trick is to be prepared.

You must go into every media encounter with your own messages... two or three points that you want to get across regardless of the questions you're asked. What that message is depends a lot on who is reading/viewing/hearing the interview and when. You must tailor your messages for that audience in terminology they can easily understand.

Not all media were created equal. Print interviews, for example, are much harder than broadcast despite their lack of intimidating cameras and recorders. Print reporters take advantage of this seemingly conversational approach and can keep you chatting for hours... if you let them. You must set the guidelines for the interview: who will speak for your company, on what issues, where and when.

Radio interviews offer an opportunity to narrowly focus your message to a particular demographic or psychographic niche audience reached by the station you're on. On call-in shows you'll have plenty of time to deliver your messages... even from the comfort of your own home, as stations now can have guests by phone as well as callers.

Television is perhaps the most challenging of the media because of its brevity, complexity and reach. Even a lengthy interview may be distilled down to a "sound bite" of but a few seconds. But, with training, you'd be surprised at how much information can be conveyed in that limited time... and how well you can control what gets electronically quoted from your interview. Being a visual medium you'll want to keep viewers focused on your message rather than your flashy attire, ineffective body language or shifty-eyed glances off-camera.

Here are a few media DO's and DON'Ts which I stress in my Media Training Workshops:

- Know what you want to get across in the interview. Build a bridge of words from the reporter's question to your messages... and say them several times during the interview.
- Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know the answer to a question but instead offer to find the answer and get back to the reporter before their deadline. Never respond to questions based on unfamiliar facts.
- Don't be rushed into answering. Don't feel obliged to fill "dead air" after a tricky question. Just pause, think... and then answer.
- Don't use professional jargon. Keep your message simple, but not condescending
- Find out as much as you can about the reporter and his/her story before you agree to be interviewed. Have they covered your business and its issues before? Who else are they talking to for this story? Do you really want to be in that mix? You can always politely decline an interview. Nobody can force you to talk if you don't wish
- On TV, always dress your part, projecting a cool, clean-cut professional image
- Don't look into the camera. Instead, look at whomever is talking. Avoid the temptation to look at the monitor or acknowledge other distractions out of camera range. And remember: you are always potentially on camera, even if someone else is talking. TV Director's love "reaction shots" of your expression or body language when someone else is verbally skewering you.
- Project enthusiasm for your messages. That attitude is contagious. And if you're not excited about your message, the reporter and audience never will be.

Finally... don't wait for the media to come looking for you. Reach out to them with story ideas, professional commentary and fresh ideas. Call your local papers and radio/TV stations and introduce yourself to the reporter(s) covering your business. Briefly tell them about your work and offer to be "on call" to them should they need your expertise. And follow up with a note, a fact sheet and business card. You'll be amazed at their reaction as very few business professionals are so proactive.

With a little practice, these interviewing skills will become second nature. So the next time Mike Wallace is waiting to ambush you, instead of fear your reaction might be more like: "Sure Mike. I'd be glad to chat. In fact, I have a few questions for you!"

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JIM CAMERON is President of Cameron Communications Inc. in Darien CT. He has trained hundreds of CEO's , authors and celebrities for everything from "Sixty Minutes" to The Wall Street Journal. An award winning journalist and former News Director at NBC, he is also the founder of JFORUM, CompuServe's online service for journalists. He can be reached at (203) 655-0138 or by e-mail at JIM@CAMCOMM.COM

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