

# WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

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## **PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE MEDIA**

Public relations activity is a powerful and cost effective way to promote your business to targeted worldwide audiences.

Editorial coverage generated by public relations activity is a valuable mechanism. It can position your product, destination and business as a desirable, not-to-be-missed experience and a key part of the NSW visitor experience.

Public relations activity can result in editorial exposure in targeted, credible third-party outlets, which offers legitimacy and considered comment by a reputable source. A journalist will usually produce stories as a result of first-hand experience of their subject matter or via carefully angled news stories generated by a professional practitioner.

Tourism NSW operates an in-house public relations and promotions unit. The unit develops and implements programs that support the Tourism NSW domestic and international brand and tactical marketing activity. The unit also produces a range of programs that add depth and dimension to the Sydney and NSW visitor experience.

## **WHO ARE THE MEDIA?**

Media are the means through which information is transmitted to a large audience. Traditionally, media encompassed print newspapers, magazines, TV and radio. Today, it also includes digital media and social networking sites.

Print, TV and radio journalists should deliver fact-based impartial reporting unless they have been identified as a columnist or write for the opinion page, in which case they are employed to provide a personal view. Actually, most travel stories are a reflection of a journalist's personal experience at a location or with a product, so they usually reflect the writer's point of view.

## **New media and web 2.0/3.0**

New media is a term that refers to digital, computerised or networked information and communication technologies.

Web 2.0 and 3.0 reflect the emergence of community-driven websites that emphasise sharing content, rather than owning it. Termed user-generated content (UGC), it can be presented in the form of either a blog (weblog) or vlog (video log). Well known sites include Facebook, Twitter and MySpace, but a vast range of other blogs can be found, housed within a site or authored independently.

Most traditional media, including metropolitan news press, magazines and television programs have online versions of their content with many now incorporating Web 2.0 applications into their content. Unlike the static online version of newspapers and TV programming, these outlets invite interaction with the reader.



Burrawang West Station, Trundle, Central NSW  
(Mark Pokorny)



Taronga Zoo (Pierre Toussaint)

**HANDY HINT**  
ENSURE MEDIA CONTACTS  
ARE KEPT UPDATED ON  
YOUR PRODUCT. POSITIVE  
MEDIA COVERAGE ASSISTS  
IN RAISING AWARENESS  
OF YOUR PRODUCT.

Bloggers write online journals, usually with a specific area of interest. Their primary motivation is to share experiences rather than expertise. Unlike traditional journalists, they are not held to an enforceable ethical standard and often write opinion-based rather than factual copy.

The nature of digital media means an emphasis on immediacy. Media materials must be relevant and timely, as readers seek information from not just their PCs but also from portable devices such as laptops and PDAs, regularly checking for updates. News angles for digital media need to be breaking – not three weeks old – because there is no production delay with these outlets. Digital media outlets have to work hard to keep their readers coming back for “new” news.

Whereas traditional media reach large audiences, digital and social media can deliver your message to a more targeted audience, possibly offering a greater chance of conversion.

## CREATING STRONG MEDIA CONTENT

The ability to generate positive media coverage is fundamental to establishing and maintaining your reputation as a business entity. Media coverage is generated in a variety of ways and is usually conducted via a strategic public relations campaign.

A strong public relations campaign should include a range of elements, including:

- traditional targeted media relations activity, which targets print, broadcast and online media. The purpose is to communicate your experience or product via a story idea, media release or multi media kit and should include images and/or footage;
- online media strategy targeting social networking sites;
- inviting media onsite to experience your product first-hand;
- a press conference to announce a major new initiative;
- a media stunt;
- celebrity endorsement activity;
- a media or consumer event;
- and a consumer promotion that includes a product prize offer.

## Identifying story angles

- Identify your unique selling point or media angle. It could be your location, a specific environmental element, the history, a personality/chef or a specific experience.
- Investigate unusual and quirky angles and ideas, for example, a New York hotel received worldwide media coverage when they offered “blackberry thumb” massages to all their guests upon check-in.
- Different types of media have different needs. For example, a print journalist will be looking for different angles to a TV journalist, who has a strong need for visual content.
- Deliver new and credible elements about your product. Don’t try to invent ideas that can’t be delivered.

## Media releases

Media releases are the most common form of communication with media and they are often your introduction to the media.

Tips for producing effective media releases:

- Identify key messages and ensure you deliver them early in the release.
- Keep your media release to one page and make it easy to read.
- Use your lead paragraph to sell your idea. Include “who, what, where, why and how” in the lead paragraph, and contain the word count to 25 words or less.
- Use clear and concise language and don’t overuse adjectives.

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- Present the release on letterhead, identify it as a release, date it and provide a contact for follow-up.
  - Ensure your sentence structure is clear and simple. Provide one idea to a sentence. Avoid technical terms, jargon and acronyms.
  - Provide quotes from a credible spokesperson who can be contacted at any time.
  - Use spell check! Ensure you proofread the release and have at least one other person read it before distributing.
  - Make sure you have included the correct contact details – name, email and/or postal address.
  - If sending the release as an attachment, ensure it is a 'Word' document that can be edited.
  - Copy the lead paragraph of the release into your approach email, so the journalist can make a decision on the relevance of the attached media release.
  - Provide quality images at a minimum of 300dpi, or provide a contact for images.
  - Ensure the Tourism NSW public relations and promotions unit is on your distribution list, email: [sydneymedia@tourism.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sydneymedia@tourism.nsw.gov.au)

### Media kits

A media kit should contain a range of tools to assist a journalist to produce an article about your product. It doesn't need to be expensive, but should look professional and provide easy to navigate inclusions. Consider delivering your media kit in an online format as well as hard copy.

A good media kit might include:

- a news release highlighting your unique selling point;
- background or profile on your product or experience;
- image CD;
- maps, for example, for trails or walks;
- fast facts, outlining key angles (no more than one page long);
- contacts and links to websites for additional information;
- and a gift or gimmick that represents your product and experience, which will grab the attention of the receiver.

### Images

- Provide high resolution images at a minimum of 300 dpi (standard reproduction quality).
- Consider engaging the services of a professional photographer to create images of your product that will enhance it and show it in a contemporary light.
- Reserve some of your best images for editorial use.
- Ensure images are copyright free. Be sure you have a signed talent release form from all talent appearing in the images and that publishing credits are clearly stated.

### Advertorial /marketing features

Marketing features can be purchased via media advertising sales personnel from many media outlets. Advertorials are often written to reflect the editorial style of a newspaper or section while delivering the key messages of the company/product/ experience.

The page or section will be marked as "advertorial" or "special advertising feature/promotion", so the reader is aware the piece is commissioned and not held to the same journalistic standards as editorial. These features are an effective marketing tool. They guarantee a mix of editorial-style key messaging and advertising, presented on a fixed date and time.

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## WHICH MEDIA?

There are a number of reliable resources available that can assist you in compiling a broad media target list for your product and business. The Margaret Gee Media Guide is one such list and it is available in hardcopy or online:

[www.crowncontent.com.au/mgeesmediaguide.html](http://www.crowncontent.com.au/mgeesmediaguide.html)

Travmedia [www.travMedia.com](http://www.travMedia.com) is an online news portal, which services the travel media and industry professionals. Travmedia operates in six regions of the world: the United Kingdom, USA, Middle East, Asia, New Zealand and Australia. Globally, more than 10,000 journalists use TravMedia as an information source to help them research and write their stories. Tourism operators will need to subscribe to TravMedia to access the facility.

Tips for media targeting:

- Consider all media when looking at who might be interested in your story – suburban, regional, local radio – not just the major metropolitan and interstate newspapers, national magazines or top-rating television programs.
- Are the travel pages the most relevant pages to target for your product, or would your story/angle fit in another targeted section, such as in lifestyle, food and wine or a personal profile section? There are a vast range of targeted sections in newspapers and websites, all with editors looking for relevant stories.

- Research niche publications, especially industry-specific publications, such as caravan guides, motoring, or backpacker publications.
- If a journalist approaches you to write a story, you may wish to verify their credentials. A staff journalist's contact details will generally reflect the publication, but a freelance journalist may not have secured an outlet for their story. Before you invest a significant amount of your time or support, ask to see a copy of the correspondence from the editor confirming that the journalist has been commissioned to write the story.

## MEDIA DEADLINES

Most publications are printed well in advance of distribution dates. For example, the Sunday newspaper travel sections are printed earlier in the week. So don't send a press release to the editor on Friday morning and expect it to appear in that weekend's edition.

Magazines work on a three month advance deadline. Start thinking about spring stories in June; if you leave your Christmas copy until September, you will be too late – the editor will already have finalised the Christmas edition!

## MEDIA RATES AND DISCOUNTS

Consider offering a discount, or free of charge (FOC) visit or stay, to media who are able to guarantee their story objective and can produce a confirmed commission from a credible media organisation.

Remember, publicity is not guaranteed, so you should consider the publication, audience and your occupancy when extending media rates. Always ask for a business card from the journalist so you can follow-up.

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## MEDIA FOLLOW-UP

Because you have sent a media release or media kit, it doesn't mean your story will automatically appear or be published. It is important to follow-up with a telephone call to the journalist, to check they have received your information and to check if they require additional information.

Study the target media outlet's most recent issues before making your approach, to ensure you are up to date with their subject matter, style of coverage and hot news topics.

Generally, you will not be able to request approval on a story you have pitched to a journalist. The editor has the final sign-off on all published articles.

It is important to remember that the media is a fiercely competitive industry. Editors, TV researchers and writers keep an eye on what their competitors are reporting. This means:

- if competing publications or programs have run your story, find a different angle before pitching to other outlets;
- have a range of images available – competing publications won't run the same picture;
- and if your story is published, send the editor, writer or researcher a thank you note, or call them to say thank you.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

Getting a story published is not just about column centimetres. It is about story placement, headline, image, tone and story content. A full page story about a bad holiday experience will not help your business.

To track your media exposure, you may wish to engage a media clipping service. They can provide you with a daily, weekly or monthly clipping summary across a range of media, using keywords. It is a fairly cost-intensive exercise and should really be undertaken only if running a significant media campaign.

A cost-free alternative is to set up a Google Alert for your product name. It is not as comprehensive as a commercial clipping service, but it can be a useful tool. Go to [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts)

You can ask a journalist to send you a copy of the story, but remember journalists often don't see the final copy as it goes through sub-editors and copy layout, as well as the editor.

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## HOW TO WORK WITH TOURISM NSW

Tourism NSW is keen to work with tourism industry suppliers to tell the story of the NSW visitor experience.

There are a number of programs you can participate in:

- a targeted and proactive national and international media relations program (including print, broadcast and online media)
- national and international media hosting programs
- promotions
- media events
- major broadcast assistance
- Tourism NSW is a key partner in Tourism Australia's International Media Hosting program (IMHP). For further details visit [www.tourism.australia.com](http://www.tourism.australia.com) and click on the Industry Resources tab and select Global Public Relations.

In addition, Tourism NSW requires story updates for inclusion in media newsletters and good quality, high resolution, updated images to assist with media enquiry servicing.

To secure media hosting opportunities, Tourism NSW requests industry to provide media hosting at reduced or free of charge rates, depending on the value and worth of the proposed media coverage.

Tourism NSW hosts approximately 400 media nationally and internationally each year. The coverage generated equates to more than \$120 million in publicity and reaches an audience of more than 1 billion worldwide.

For further information on the media programs and how to become involved, contact the Tourism NSW Public Relations and Promotions Unit on (02) 9931 1111 or e-mail [sydneymedia@tourism.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sydneymedia@tourism.nsw.gov.au)

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