

Abbey PR Guide



PART OF THE SANTANDER GROUP



Foreword

Good Public Relations (PR) is just as essential for charities, voluntary and community groups as it is for commercial businesses. Get it right and your fundraising event will be a roaring success, your campaigns will attract committed supporters and you will secure a distinctive profile within your sector.

Failing to manage your PR, on the other hand, will mean that people are unlikely to know about all the good things that your organisation has achieved and how much you need their active support.

This free guide and the templates that it contains has been published to help you make the most of your PR opportunities. It has been written by PR professionals to give you a head start in getting your message across to supporters, potential supporters and opinion formers in the most effective and efficient way.

The guide will also help you understand how to work with corporate partners, what journalists want from media releases, even what is the best time of day to contact people working in the media. It will also help you evaluate your PR activity and how to place a value on it as well as how to make it even better next time.

Abbey is committed to making a lasting difference for local communities through charitable donations as well as promoting staff volunteering and fundraising. I am delighted to be able to offer some practical advice to third sector organisations in actively promoting their work with what I am sure will be a useful guide to effective Public Relations.

Alan Eagle
ABBEY CHARITABLE TRUST MANAGER

"It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad deed to lose it."

Benjamin Franklin



Abbey's Charitable Trust Initiative

Abbey's Charitable Trust was established in 1990 to boost the role that Abbey branches play in supporting their local communities and charities. The intention of the Charitable Trust is to achieve a lasting difference through donations that help disadvantaged people through one or more of our charitable priorities.

This guide has been prepared by Abbey's Charitable Trust to shine a light on best practice in communications and has been assembled with the help and experience of the many charity communication officers with whom we have had the pleasure of working.

The guide provides a basic introduction to media relations, from interacting with corporate PR teams to hosting journalists at events. We hope that it proves useful.

Focus of the guide

This document is intended for those working at:

- Local charities hoping to raise awareness of their activities
- Regional charities operating in local communities
- National charities executing projects across the UK that include a local dimension

Content outline

1. Public Relations and working with corporate partners
2. Planning media activity
3. Creating and using basic press materials
4. Liaising with media
5. Evaluation
6. Conclusion

A note on Public Relations agencies

Don't be scared about working alongside your patron firm or its external communications agency. PR agencies will, in the main, be as keen to preserve the hard-won credibility and reputation of your charity as they will of their client.

Agencies should be regarded as a source of practical and valuable insight and their counsel can extend the basic lessons included within this guide. It is also worth considering approaching such agencies on a pro-bono basis – often agencies will have their own charitable initiatives.

Public Relations and working with corporate partners

Public Relations is the art of managing an organisation's reputation and influencing how it is viewed by the public. Working with local communities and charities like yours can enhance the reputation and image of an organisation, so corporate partners and their agencies will be keen to increase the visibility of any donations or involvement with your charity.

One of the most common routes to highlighting the relationship between a charity and its corporate partners is through achieving coverage in the press.

This guide outlines how to work comfortably alongside your corporate partners and their PR departments in achieving media coverage. It also provides some ideas of how you might take the initiative in developing your own media campaigns to raise awareness of your organisation.



Benefits of working with corporate partners

Working with corporate partners can be a great benefit to your organisation in two main ways:

1. You can gain additional insight and resources via your corporate partner's own press and PR team
2. The organisation's brand is likely to be well established and known by either the regional or national press and you will be able to harness this awareness and use it to springboard your charity into the public domain

In terms of the partnership, it is a key priority that roles and responsibilities are established as well as shared expectations. There are a number of key points to remember when working with corporate partners which, when adhered to, can maximise the impact of your media relations activity.

PR versus paid-for advertising

Public Relations and advertising are both effective ways of getting your messages into the media, whether on TV or radio, in print or online.

Advertising involves creating a message (the print, radio or TV advertisement) and paying a media outlet for advertising space to deliver this to their readers or viewers. It is a controlled method of communication – you can control the message, the method and timing of delivery.

Public Relations involves offering information to media outlets with the aim of securing editorial space based upon its intrinsic interest to their readers or viewers. The media controls the message, method and timing of delivery. Yet because this information is featured as 'news', it is generally believed that these messages will carry more weight and resonate more strongly with the media outlet's audience.



Do your goals 'fit'?

When choosing a corporate partner, it is important to understand what you want to achieve, not only from a business sense but also from the point of view of the media, and ultimately the public. It is important to look at why you are forging this partnership and how external parties might view the relationship.

Look at creating partnerships that will allow you to reach out to opinion leaders and policy makers through your partner's network. This is likely to extend possible press coverage and will allow you to piggyback on news issues.

Establish how you want to share messaging with your corporate partner

Your main goal is likely to be around raising the profile of the activity you are working together on, and to ultimately generate further funding for your charity. A corporate partner may have stricter commercial goals as ultimately they are answerable to their investors or shareholders.

Taking this into account, it is important to establish how much (and the type) of media coverage you both expect to generate from media activity. This can then be incorporated into a shared strategy to ensure expectations are managed and achieved.

Develop your own strategy in conjunction with your partner

It is likely that your corporate partner will have their own PR or communications team. Use them, they have lots of knowledge and experience and will have a great insight into their own target media that they can share.

Communicate your plans to all stakeholders

Communications is not just about talking to the outside world. It is important to highlight your planned activity and partnership to others within your organisation and within your corporate partner organisation. This will avoid any duplication or clashes of activity within different departments of both parties.

Gain senior management approval for your partnership

Senior management buy-in from both parties will help you raise the profile of the partnership, both internally within each organisation and externally if they are willing to act as media spokespeople. Reaching senior management can be tricky, particularly within international firms. Have patience and remember to allow plenty of time for communications to filter through to them. Having a high profile spokesperson will ensure your story carries more weight with media. Spokespeople must be briefed fully beforehand to ensure they are on message and understand what you are trying to achieve (see section four).

The approval process

It is essential that each organisation and individual involved in your media relations activity is happy with the messages and materials being issued into the public domain.

Approval processes can vary depending on the size of the business that you are partnering with. If it is a small organisation, it is likely that there will be only one or two people to sign materials off. For larger organisations, media materials will need to go through their own press office as well as other departments (such as HR or the Board) before they are happy for it to be sent to the relevant media outlets.

When deciding timelines with your corporate partner, it is important to factor in how long you will both take to approve all media materials. It is likely that changes will be made throughout the process and therefore it's important to allow time for each reviewer to look at a number of different versions.

Planning your media activity

Planning your media activity is vital in achieving the desired results within agreed timeframes. As highlighted in the previous chapter, deadlines can vary and sign off can take much longer than anticipated due to the number of parties involved. Remember to factor in plenty of time for potentially lengthy approval processes and preferably enquire as to the average sign off period before you begin planning.

Allowing plenty of time also applies in dealing with the media. Whether you are inviting them to an event, or asking them to write up a story, remember to give ample notice (see *section four*).

Where to start?

The best way to plan your activity is to envisage your desired end result – a news article and photograph in a national newspaper, for example – and work backwards. The process should be considered in stages:

1. Consider what you hope to achieve in terms of results – where do you want coverage for your story to appear?
2. Consider the story you're telling – is the story on its own enough to grab audience attention or do you need an additional 'hook' (a 'stunt' or 'gimmick' for example) to bring the story to life and make it appealing for media?

3. If further ideas or an additional hook is needed, hold a planning meeting to spark ideas – you might want to involve a wider team at this stage to help spark creative thoughts
4. Decide on your recommendation and agree it in principal with your partner
5. Agree responsibility for any additional investment or activities
6. Draft media materials in collaboration with corporate partners and other parties involved
7. Gain approval from all parties involved – factor in lengthy approval processes
8. Issue sell-in press release and photography to target journalist(s)
9. Follow up with journalist(s)

OCTOBER						
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
			<i>Finalise plan of action</i>			
	6	7	8	9	10	11
	<i>Draft press release</i>			<i>Gain approval of press release from corporate partnership</i>		
		13	14	15	16	17
			<i>Collect media list</i>			
	20	21	22	23	24	25
		<i>Conduct regional and trade sell in</i>				
	27	28	29	30	31	
	<i>Monitor for coverage and update corporate partner</i>	<i>Monitor for coverage and update corporate partner</i>				





Creating and developing ideas

- Whilst you and your colleagues may be able to devise tactics and strategy individually, it is often a good idea at the start of your planning phase to hold a creative session with a wider team.

Try looking over your target media and identify the stories they are particularly interested in. How could your story be brought to life through the story of one individual or perhaps a local event?

- Before the meeting, plan and agree the aims and ensure that everyone participating in the session understands and agrees on what you're hoping to achieve. Keep the objective simple and allocate a time limit
- Allow all participants an equal voice and do not allow one member to dominate. Your job as the facilitator is to encourage everyone to participate, to dismiss nothing and to prevent others from mocking the more creative suggestions.

With the group, assess, evaluate and analyse the effects and validity of the ideas on your list. Develop and prioritise the ideas into a more finished list or set of actions or options

- Hopefully your first meeting will throw up some practical ideas that can then be built up into firm actions to be implemented. However, don't be afraid to schedule a second session to flesh out the initial ideas and agree practical steps to achieving them. As facilitator it is important you maintain perspective. Chiselling your logo onto a hillside might secure headlines but is it achievable?
- Once you feel you've got some strong ideas that can be implemented, work up a plan to outline next steps and agree your programme of activity. Create a timeline, factoring in approval processes, to include key individual responsibilities and accompanying deadlines



Creating and using basic press materials

There are three basic press documents you are likely to utilise in your own PR activity: a press release, a media alert and a photocall notice. The details of how to create them are outlined in this chapter.

- A press release is a detailed written announcement that seeks to draw media attention to an organisation's 'news', which might be the launch of a specific event, a product, a brand, the uncovering of a social trend or so on.
- A media alert informs media of a specific event or press conference, and includes basic information on date, time, available spokespeople and so on. This document is essentially a call for photographers and reporters to attend the event.
- A photocall notice serves the same purpose as a media alert but is used for smaller-scale 'photo opportunities' rather than large events.

Tips on drafting a press release

Before you start, consider the following:

- Is what you want to communicate really 'news'?
- What's the real story?
- Who are you planning to target with the release?
- Do you need to tailor the release to different audiences?




Template press release

The body copy

- The first paragraph is the most important and should be no more than one or two sentences long
- Address the '5 Ws' in the opening paragraphs: Who, What, When, Where and Why?
- Include the most newsworthy information at the top and place the information in descending order of importance
- Include a quote from a key spokesperson if relevant
- If using a quote, avoid bland vocabulary, use natural, conversational language and incorporate your key messages where possible

28th April


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PRESS RELEASE

Abbey assists Great Ormond Street Hospital
– Abbey Charitable Trust Funding for Citizen's Advice Bureau benefits Great Ormond Street Hospital Families –

Abbey Charitable Trust today announces the second venture in its 2008 three year funding project. Abbey will fund a Citizen's Advice Bureau based at Great Ormond Street Hospital, designated to helping patients and their families.

The project will receive £150,000 over the course of three years as part of Abbey's broader scheme to help fund innovative community projects. Great Ormond Street Hospital will benefit from its first Citizen's Advice Bureau, able to support people, no matter where they live in the UK.

Sebastian Carter from Camden Citizen's Advice Bureau said; "Many of the patients referred to Great Ormond Street Hospital for treatment have to remain at the hospital for many weeks, months or even years. This means that often their parents or carers are also required to remain in or close to the hospital. This can create many problems as they are often a long way from home and therefore separated from their usual avenues of support. The Great Ormond Street Hospital Citizen's Advice Bureau will be able to support people in situations such as this and improve their ability to deal with everyday problems whilst their children are being treated."

Alan Eagle, Manager of Abbey Charitable Trust said; "The Great Ormond Street Hospital Citizen's Advice Bureau will provide practical, positive resources and support during difficult times for patient's parents, family members and carers from all over the UK. With our three year commitment we are helping to ensure that it becomes a lasting resource for the community. When deciding which charities to fund, we look for innovative, community focussed projects that help disadvantaged people through education and training, financial advice and community regeneration and this certainly ticks all the boxes."

Further information on the Abbey Charitable Trust and its criteria can be found on www.aboutabbey.com by following the links CSR, Charitable Trust.

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For further information on the Abbey Charitable Trust please contact Abigail Banks at the Abbey Team abigail.banks@banks.com or call 0207 024 0000.

Notes to Editors:
Abbey and the flame logo are registered trademarks.

About Abbey
Abbey is one of the UK's leading personal financial services companies employing almost 18,000 people and reaching over 18 million customers through a network of 712 branches and five main offices. As part of the Santander group, with a global team of over 130,000 people in over 40 countries, Abbey takes its duty to act in a socially responsible manner very seriously. Abbey is committed to being a good corporate citizen, taking into account how it deals with customers and employees, how it manages its ethical and environmental responsibilities, and how it supports the communities of which it is part.

The headline

- Make it short, a maximum of 10 words
- Consider using a sub-header in order to contextualise the headline
- Use a balance between snappy and explanatory vocabulary

Notes to Editor

- This section should come at the end of your release and include a short paragraph on your organisation, brief history, current key facts etc.
- Always include a contact name and phone number so the media can contact you with any questions

Template media alert

Tips on drafting a media alert

Media alerts are usually shorter and punchier than press releases and include basic details about an event that you want media to attend. Use the following guidelines:

- Always include a contact name and phone number so the media can contact you with any questions
- Keep it brief, ideally one page
- Write 'media alert' at the top of the document
- Keep the headline short but include location, time and date

What? →

What kind of event are you publicising and what is it for?

Why? →


Use this section to briefly include any interesting information or statistics

When? →

Date and time of the event

Where? →

The exact location of the event

19th September 
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MEDIA ALERT

Abbey staff to provide makeover to the Thrift Farm and Garden Centre on September 19th at 10am

WHAT?
Staff from the local Abbey head office will be volunteering their time today at Buckinghamshire County Council's Thrift Farm. The team of 20 Abbey staff will be helping to give the farm a makeover by re-fencing the area and refurbishing the poultry houses.

WHY?
Thrift Farm, owned by Buckinghamshire County Council, is run as a Rural Training Unit for adults with learning difficulties. The trainees at the unit run the farm with the help and guidance of an experienced staff team.

The Abbey employees are participating in the project as part of Abbey's national volunteering initiative ACE (Abbey Community Events), to regenerate the communities in which the bank operates.

This year through ACE, Abbey staff have volunteered over 2,500 hours to work on more than 25 gardens, 13 conservation projects and several educational schemes with schools. All projects fall under the Abbey community priorities of Regeneration, Community and Education. Over 400 Abbey staff based at nine head office sites will have volunteered on the community events by the end of the year.

WHEN?
10.00am Friday 19th September

WHERE?
Thrift Farm & Garden Centre, Buckingham Road, Whaddon, MK17 0EQ

SPOKESPERSON AVAILABLE
Alan Eagle
Manger of Abbey Charitable Trust

TO CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE PLEASE CONTACT:
Abigail Banks. 0207 024 0000
abigail.banks@banks.com

----- Ends -----

For further information on the project or on Abbey's volunteering programme please contact Abigail Banks at the Abbey Team
abigail.banks@banks.com or call 0207 024 0000.

Who? →

Are there any key spokespeople or noteworthy figures available for interview?



Liaising with media

Speaking to, meeting and hosting journalists is probably the most vital part of the PR process. There are a number of simple steps you can take to give your stories the best chance of being picked up by your core media targets and achieve some great press coverage, which are outlined in this section below.



Knowing your media

The best way to get to know your media is to read it and watch it. Find out what types of stories appear where. Liaise with your corporate partner's PR teams for advice. Key targets for charity-based press releases include:

- Your local/regional newspapers and radio
 - Charity press – Charity Times etc.
 - National newspapers – Society Guardian
- Think about who your story will be of interest to and consider your media accordingly, based on their audience/readership. Understandably, journalists get annoyed if you send them details that aren't relevant for their publication. For example, you wouldn't pitch a charity story to a journalist who writes about sport. Similarly, you wouldn't send details of an event happening in Bristol to a Manchester radio station



- When selling in, try and use a barometer to see if it'll appear on the outlet you're targeting. Would your neighbour/brother/best friend understand the story and be interested in it? If not, then it's likely that other readers and viewers won't

"As an established charity, generating ongoing coverage is an area that we struggle with. We are often in need of sponsorship, and our sponsors are looking for coverage. Not being a new charity means that we constantly have to think of new ways and new campaigns in order to be picked up by the media – this is something we find difficult."

Jan Alder
Director of Safety Centre

How to pitch an idea to the media

- 'Cold calling' journalists with a story can be tough. If you prefer, you could write a note introducing yourself the day before so they know who you are when you do phone
- When you call, keep your idea 'pitch' to a sentence if you can and remember to pause for breath
- As outlined in Chapter three, journalists need to know the 5 Ws – who, what, why, where, when – so make sure these are covered in your media material and covering notes
- When you send over your media alert/press release, always copy and paste the document into an email as attachments are rarely read

Additional tips

Try not to phone a journalist on a deadline or before a bulletin. As a rule, try to follow these guidelines:

- National newspapers – target before 10am when they go into their morning conference. Alternatively contact them early afternoon
- National broadcast – always ask to speak to the planning desk and target a week before you would like your coverage to appear to ensure time is allocated for you. Follow up a day or two before as a reminder

- National newswires (such as the Press Association or Specialist – these companies place stories on a news feed which is accessed by national and regional press) – contact them the day before sending out to national print media if the story is relevant for nationals
- Regional print – if the publication is weekly, don't target on publication day or the day before. If daily, follow the same rules as national print
- Regional broadcast – speak to planning desks up to a week before you are looking for coverage to allow them to offer feedback. Follow up a day or two before you want them to cover your story if they showed initial interest
- With all stories and all media, judge your circumstances and look at the news agenda before you call. A national broadcast newsroom is unlikely to give you any time to talk if they're in the middle of a plane crash, bomb blast, or election for example
- If you're offering a spokesperson, don't promise them if they're not going to be available or can only do a short slot
- If you have time, you may want to suggest meeting a journalist for a coffee to discuss a story idea
- Make sure you read and get to know the media you are pitching to to ensure you are speaking to the right people



"Time is a big factor for us – planning and running activity takes up a lot of our workload and unfortunately this often means that there is little of it left for PR. We also struggle when it comes to contacts, not only knowing who to contact and when, but knowing how much information to send. We don't want to bombard journalists with too much information but don't know what is the right amount."

Sharon Paulger
Director of Inter-Action MK



How to follow up with the media

- Once you've sent through details of your story, follow up warm responses with a further telephone call checking that the journalist has received all of the information they need
- Do gauge initial responses though – there is no point pestering someone who says they'll be unlikely to run the story

Hosting media at an event

- Check with your media contact beforehand whether they have any specific requirements, such as an in-depth interview with your spokesperson or tailored photography, so you can factor this in when planning your event schedule



- Ensure that you are there when the journalist arrives to welcome them and let them know the running order of the event. Check that they have all of the relevant information they need
- Provide them with your contact details and follow up with them after the event to find out if there is anything else they need

Briefing spokespeople before interview

Whether the interview is face-to-face or over the telephone, you should provide your spokesperson with a briefing document to include the following information:

- Details of the publication the interview will appear in (include information on key audience and a brief overview of content)
- Background on the journalist conducting the interview (recent articles written etc)
- Key messages that your spokesperson should try to include when being interviewed
- Questions that your spokesperson will be asked (some journalists will give a comprehensive list of questions, others may give an idea of the type of information they're looking for)

- If possible, you should talk through the briefing document with your spokesperson in detail before they are interviewed, particularly if they have not had previous experience of the media. Pay particular attention to key messages – where possible, these should be woven in to your spokesperson's responses in a natural manner
- Remind your spokesperson that the journalist needs them to complete their article and that they should try to remain relaxed and focused on the messages of the campaign/issue
- If your spokesperson is needed to do lots of interviews and is not a natural performer, you may want to consider having them media trained by a professional or consult your patron firm or its external communications agency for further tips and guidance

"A key area that we need to constantly develop and is of great importance to a charity is knowing the right journalists to contact and the building of good relationships with these journalists. Finding the best person to write about a particular cause or invite to an event is so important to us, as having these contacts saves a great deal of time and more importantly, raises awareness of our charity!"

Kit Harris

Communication Manager of St Luke's Hospice

Evaluation – how to measure the worth of your coverage

- Keeping track of where your coverage has appeared and how much it is worth can be tricky but it is essential practice in order to put a price on what you have achieved and demonstrate a return on investment for managers and stakeholders
- Unless you employ the service of companies such as Durrants, Presswatch or Precise, who will, for a fee, provide you with copies of all of your press coverage, you will need to get the individual newspapers to each send you copies. They may send you free ('voucher') copies – otherwise you will have to purchase back copies from their libraries
- Measuring the worth of your coverage can be trickier still! Unlike advertising, the space achieved in a newspaper or on radio airtime from a PR story cannot be bought and is therefore difficult to put a price on. People measure PR value using varying techniques, but roughly speaking the standard method used in the PR industry is to work out the equivalent advertising value (EAV) and multiply by three
- It is argued that coverage achieved through a PR story is worth three times that of an advertisement, because the audience 'believe' the messages in PR coverage and view them as news and therefore 'fact'. This is in comparison to advertising coverage which audiences know has been paid for by the company in question and therefore, may recognise that the messages in the advertising are biased
- An additional method for measuring the impact of the coverage you've generated is by measuring a publication's circulation figure. Circulation is the number of copies a publication distributes, on average, for each issue. It is one of the principal factors used to set advertising rates. Circulation is not always the same as copies sold, since many publications are distributed without cost to the reader. You can obtain the circulation figure either by looking online or by speaking to the publication itself



Conclusion

Now you've completed a phase of activity, what next? Are there things that you could have done differently to achieve better results? Have you communicated your achievements to the wider organisation, stakeholders etc? This chapter outlines how to analyse your achievements and consider the next steps to ensure you continually build on your PR successes.

Analysing your success

- As highlighted in the previous chapter on evaluation, there are various calculations you can make to obtain the value of your press coverage
- You should include these calculations, along with scans of coverage achieved, in a review document that you can circulate to the wider organisation. Often one of the biggest jobs in PR is highlighting your own achievements to key decision makers and budget managers
- If you set yourself targets for your PR activity, include details of whether you met these targets or even exceeded them
- Work out a return on investment figure by calculating how much your activity cost your organisation versus the value of the resulting press coverage
- Also include 'highlights' and 'key learnings' sections in your review document, which will allow you to consider which things worked well and which areas could be improved next time

Continuing momentum

- Now you've completed a programme of activity, it's important to build on the momentum you've achieved and ensure that your media profile remains strong
- If there is no 'natural' news for you to announce to media (such as an anniversary, new donations, new premises etc), consider 'piggybacking' on external news hooks that are about to appear on the media agenda. Keep abreast of goings-on in your local area as well as in the national news – could anyone from your organisation offer comment on a current 'hot topic' in the media?
- You should also create a calendar of events that you may be able to link into – for example the following dates may provide you with opportunities for PR activity

Example Diary Dates

1. **National Children's Hospice Week** – 20th September
2. **Child Poverty Action Week** – 26th September
3. **Breast Cancer Awareness Month** – 1st October
4. **International Day of Older Persons** – 1st October
5. **Jeans for Genes Day** – 3rd October
6. **World Animal Week** – 4th October
7. **National Children's Activity Week** – 6th October
8. **Will for Wildlife Week** – 20th October
9. **International Day of Disabled Persons** – 5th December
10. **World Day of the Sick** – 11th February





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