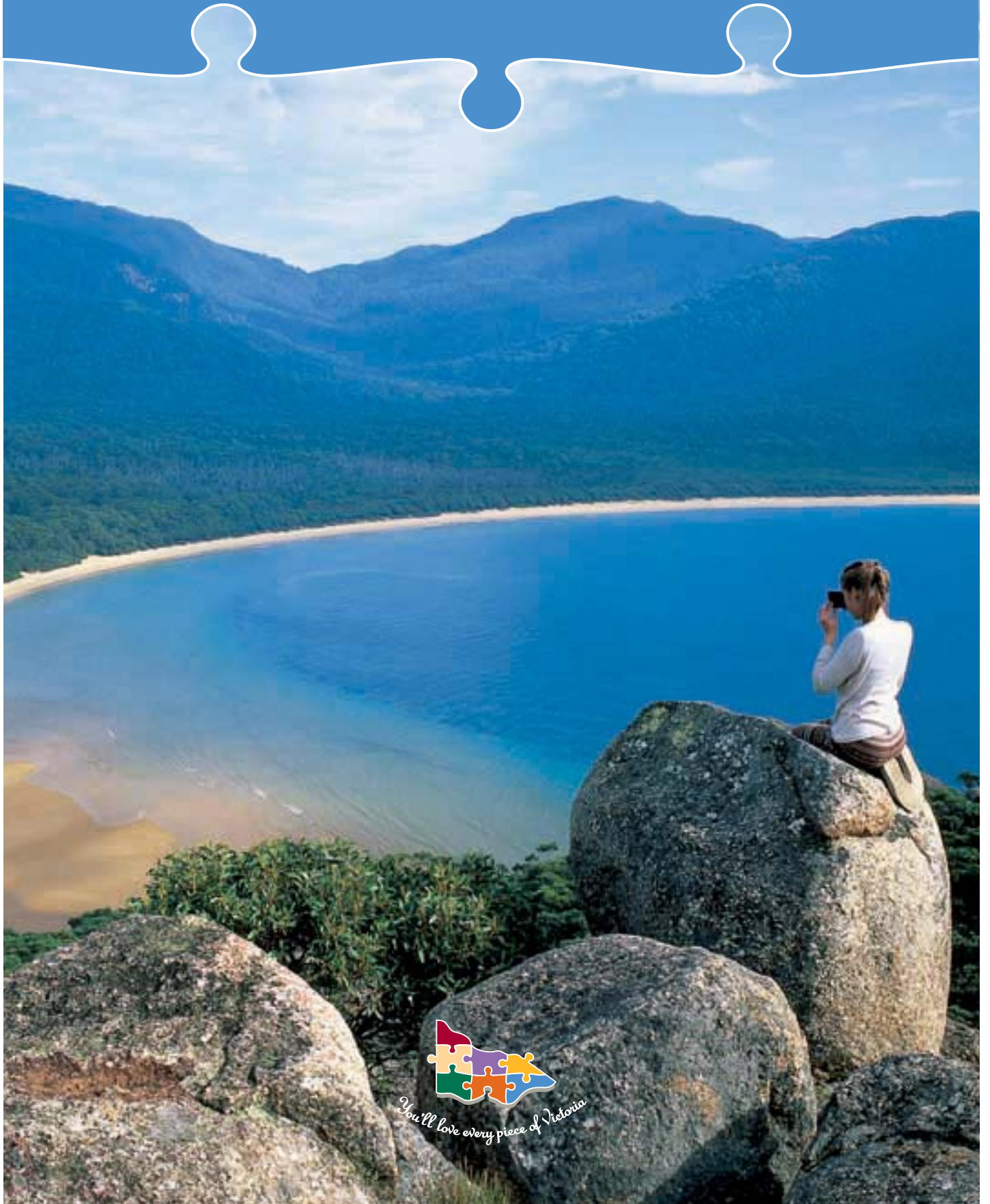


WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

A PRACTICAL MEDIA GUIDE



You'll love every piece of Victoria

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

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1. Introduction

You have just completed your marketing plan and one of your aims is to achieve positive media coverage in the next 12 months. How do you achieve publicity? What do you need to do for media to take note of your business/product/service?

This Media Guide is geared to help you understand what the media is, how it works and how you can better promote your product, service or event through a variety of media channels.

While Tourism Victoria's Public Relations team generates significant amounts of free and positive publicity for Victoria's tourism industry, it is impossible for the unit to highlight every operator, event or place. It is important therefore, for individual operators to generate their own media publicity.

Tourism Victoria makes no guarantees but is hopeful that this guide will assist you in gaining effective media coverage.

2. Why Publicity?

You have a reputable product, service or event that is interesting or unique. Why keep it a secret? The media has an insatiable appetite for new stories, so it's important to know how to work with them to get your story out to relevant markets.

Publicity gained through media campaigns and media familiarisation tours is commonly described as "free" because, compared to advertising, there is little cost involved. There are however, none of advertising's guarantees of placement or message.

Editorial publicity is acknowledged as more valuable than advertising because the consumer knows that editorial has not been paid for, which makes it more credible. On certain occasions editorial will also provide far more detailed information and more visuals than an advertisement.

3. What is the Media?

The media is made up of a variety of different mediums, including television, radio, Internet, newspapers and magazines. Each medium presents information in different ways and through a variety of programs or sections.

Television consists of commercial television stations (eg, Channel 9), non-commercial stations (eg, Channel 2), and pay television (eg, Foxtel). Each of these stations presents information through a variety of programs encompassing news, current affairs, lifestyle/travel, documentaries, dramas, comedy, etc.

Television heavily relies on good visuals to tell a story. Generally, if you don't have a good visual angle to your story, television programs won't be interested.

Radio also consists of commercial (eg, 3AW), non-commercial (eg, ABC) and community (eg, 3CR) radio stations. Radio provides information to listeners via news, current affairs, and talk back programs.

On radio, information is presented in segments as short as 15 seconds or segments lasting five to ten minutes. It relies on brevity and people who are articulate.

Newspapers consist of national daily newspapers (eg, *The Australian*), metropolitan daily newspapers (eg, *The Herald Sun*), suburban newspapers (eg, *The Northcote Leader*) and regional newspapers (eg, *The Ballarat Courier*). Newspapers present information in a variety of sections - news, travel, sport and business.

Newspapers rely on both words and pictures to tell a story and feature articles can be from one paragraph long to sometimes a page or two long. Newspapers provide a number of possibilities for publicity ranging from Letters to the Editor and Coming Events columns to news stories, supplements and feature articles.

Magazines cover a massive range of general and special interest issues, with most published weekly or monthly. There are now magazines covering every thing from women's issues to home renovation, sport to fashion, and food and travel. Magazines are usually weekly, monthly, bimonthly and quarterly.

Magazines rely more heavily than newspapers on good pictures and will also devote several pages to particular stories if they are strong enough.

Many media outlets have developed their own websites on the **Internet**, providing their audiences with the latest news at any given moment, accelerating the delivery of "breaking news items".

Media websites are just another medium for media organisations to convey their stories to a wider audience. It is also used as means of building a loyalty base with TV programs like *Getaway* or *Postcards* offering fact-sheets, tips, giveaways or further information. The advantage of media websites is that information can be stored for longer periods of time, providing users with the ability to see or draw on stories that were published months ago.



4. Study the Media

It is important to familiarise yourself with these mediums and the different titles or programs within them - look at what information they present; how they present the information; and determine who are their audience/readers/listeners.

When deciding what media to target, be realistic. It's a waste of time sending information on a regional event to *Getaway* when the program doesn't feature events, or information about your B&B to a magazine like *New Idea*, which predominantly features news and gossip about celebrities. You would be more successful sending event information to regional press and radio and information about your B&B to the travel editors of metropolitan newspapers.

Generally, the larger the media outlet's audience is, the more difficult it will be to get your information featured because of the increased number of people and organisations trying to use that medium to reach a mass audience. For example, getting information into regional papers is easier than trying to get it into *The Herald Sun*.

Be conscious that journalists work to demanding deadlines and may need information fast. They also tend to work ahead of time, for example if you want to promote your food and wine event in glossy magazines like *Vogue Entertaining & Travel* or *Australian Gourmet Traveller*, they will need your information three to four months ahead. The same applies to weekly travel sections of metropolitan newspapers like the *Herald Sun's Travel* supplement, the travel editor needs to receive your information at least two weeks ahead.

Don't get offended if they don't run your story - there's a lot of competition for media space. You may need to try again later or revise how you pitched the story.

5. Plan Ahead

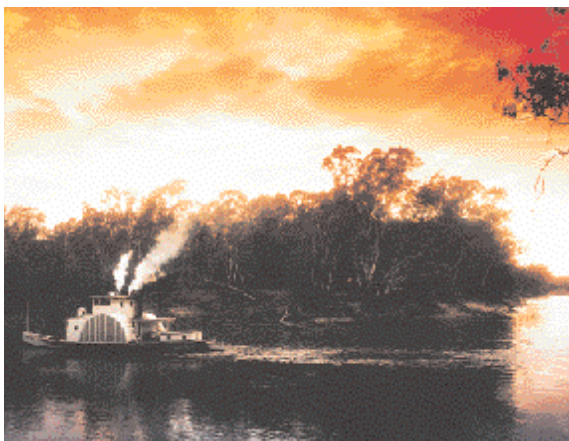
Plan your publicity campaign - don't leave it to chance, accident or the last minute! Do your homework and your publicity campaign will be far more effective. Putting in the leg-work by mapping out key messages, objectives, creating the appropriate materials and having realistic expectations will greatly contribute to your campaign's success.

Work out what it is you want to publicise, how you want to publicise it and where you want to publicise it.

Gather together all your information and think about the best ways to promote your property, service or event.

Draw up a list of the media organisations and their relevant contact people that you want to target. For news items, you will be targeting the chief-of-staff of each media organisation. For television programs, like *Getaway*, it will be the researchers or producers and for feature stories in newspapers and magazines, it will be specialist editors or writers (ie, travel, food and wine, tourism, lifestyle).

Seek help if you need it. You can pay for assistance from a journalist or public relations consultant (check out the Yellow Pages) or you can seek advice from your regional tourism association or Tourism Victoria's Media Unit.



6. Sparking Media's Interest

The media is interested in what interests their readers/listeners/audience. Generally, in relation to tourism information, the media is interested in tourism news and feature stories about properties, events or particular services.

Examples of tourism news items include: new visitation figures; the opening of a new tourism facility; information about a major event. While not always the case, tourism news can also involve controversy: for example, arguments over the location of a large new tourism development.

News that is of interest in one particular community, such as Ballarat, may not be of interest to another regional community like Shepparton or the metropolitan community of Melbourne. Also, the further you go from the community that is directly impacted by the news, the less likely the media organisation will run the news.

Mostly, the type of publicity that tourism operators get is a feature story/article on their service, product or event, which in most cases appear in the travel sections of newspapers. Although not impossible, feature stories in magazines like *Vogue Entertaining & Travel* or on travel programs like *The Great Outdoors* are also achievable.

Whether you have news for the media or want a feature story written, you have to make your information relevant to the audience of each media organisation you are targeting and, if possible, put an interesting angle on the story.

The best way of letting any media organisation know about your product is to send them a media release.

7. Preparing a Media Release

A media release conveys the most important details of your news/story to the media and is designed to entice them to cover the news/story.

Before you start writing a media release consider the following questions and make sure you know the answers!

1. What is the main point of your story?
2. Is your story interesting and if so, why?
3. Is your story suited to a regional, state or national audience?
4. Have you considered different angles to the story? The more unusual or more interesting the angle of your story, the more likely it is that the media will be interested.
5. Who is the best person to act as a spokesperson for your news/story? Remember, it should be somebody who is readily available for interview, knows all the facts and is articulate - you don't want someone who will get tongue tied, particularly if they are doing television or radio interviews.
6. What media organisations are you targeting? Think carefully about what your message is and who is most likely to be interested in it.

8. Writing and Presenting a Media Release

In today's information saturated world your media release is competing with hundreds and sometimes thousands of others. It is, therefore, imperative to communicate your message as clearly and succinctly as possible.

The two most critical parts of your media release are the headline (to attract attention) and the first two leading paragraphs (which must convey key information).

Headlines should be no more than one line. Write them to catch attention - study headlines in newspapers and magazines to see how they catch attention.

The first two paragraphs of your release should contain the most important hard facts. Generally, the opening paragraph shouldn't exceed more than twenty five words.

Ensure you have covered the answers to:

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?

Media release essentials:

- do keep it short - one page is ideal
- do keep it simple - busy journalists want the information quickly and easily and will ring for more details if they need them
- do be objective
- do proof read it for spelling and grammatical errors or hand it to someone else to read
- do put contact details, (name, email address and telephone numbers) at the end of the release
- do date the release on the top left hand corner of your media release

Media release traps:

- don't get facts wrong
- don't use cliches, unexplained acronyms or jargon
- don't exaggerate or make wild unsubstantiated claims
- don't put too many ideas into one sentence
- don't waffle
- don't forget to supply contact details

Presentation is vital for conveying your professionalism. Your media release needs to be presented by:

- using a clear and easy to read typeface (eg Times New Roman or Arial)
- using a 12-point typeface for the main text
- using a 12-point to 24-point bold typeface for the headline
- using your letterhead

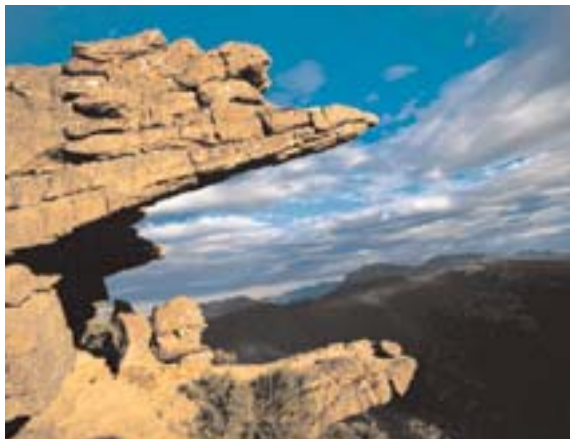
9. Distribution

Depending on timelines and budget, there are various ways to distribute a media release. Some operators/PR practitioners still use mail and fax, others have become wise to the advantages of using email, which is the most immediate and probably the most cost effective method, especially if you have journalists' direct email addresses.

However, the advantage of fax and mail is that if a journalist has moved on, often his/her replacement will still receive the information, whereas with email it just disappears into cyberspace. Email requires diligent updating of media contacts to make sure the right people are being contacted.

It's important to target relevant media organisations that best match your key consumers. It's wasteful to do a blanket fax or mail, it costs dollars and time, while journalists on the receiving end can become resentful and frustrated if the releases are of no relevance to their work and label the release as junk mail.

There are several resources available like Media Monitors Media People guide and Margaret Gees Media guide, which lists key media organisations and contacts and can be used to develop your own media database.



10. Media Kits - Key Information

One-page media releases are ideal for faxing to media organisations to alert them of news items or possible feature stories. However, when you want to profile your property, service or event in more detail to feature editors, like travel editors, the media kit format is ideal.

Media kits consist of media releases that detail different aspects of your business (for example, its history and profile of the owner), brochures, and any relevant transparencies or digital images.

Journalists receive hundreds of media releases per day, therefore, it's important to cut through the paper pile and make your product or service stand out from the rest. Be imaginative in the way you present your product, (for example, dressing them up in boxes or enclosing samples of your product). It doesn't have to be costly but effective. Although it is possible to be innovative with media kits to attract attention, ultimately media will only run a story on the merits of your content and not the packaging! So be mindful that packaging or clever presentation will not win you coverage if the content is not newsworthy.

Media kits are also useful to have on hand to give to any journalists who visit your property, use your service or attend your event. It gives them important background information. They are also effective tools to take to trade shows where media could be present.

11. Visuals

Newspapers and magazines appreciate excellent quality visuals. Visuals often have greater impact than words and by "selling the story" they help secure media space. It is well worth the investment in having a professional photographer take the shots rather than relying on your own Kodak happy pics. A photographer understands lighting, colours, depth of field and angles that will best promote your product.

In this digital age most media outlets prefer receiving digital images as jpeg files, but they have to be 300dpi otherwise they will not reproduce successfully. However in current times, you will still find some media accepting quality transparencies and photos as well. Never send original transparencies to media expecting them to be returned, it will never happen!

In fact never expect any of your visuals to be returned, the average magazine receives hundreds of photos per month and with limited administration resources they are unable to return them. It is also handy for journalists to keep a stock of images on hand, which they can draw on at any given time.

Always caption any visual material you include in the media kit as it is important to identify the people or place in the image.

12. Alerting Media to an Event

If you are holding an event and want media to come, it is a good idea to issue a media alert a few days before the event. A media alert is similar in presentation to a media release but does not contain as much detail. It focuses on the who, what, where, when, how and why of your event and invites the media to attend.

If you are wanting to attract television or press photographers it is important to highlight on the media alert that good pictorial/visual opportunities exist and briefly describe them. Also, include information about who will be available for interview.

On the morning of the event, especially if you are targeting TV news crews, daily newspaper and radio reporters, do a quick follow up call, to gauge whether media can attend the launch. Be mindful that news desks can be extremely hectic, so don't pester but if it is a quiet news day, making the call might spark their interest and result in their attendance.



13. Help! Media is Calling or Coming

1. First of all, relax.
2. Organise a time to meet which is convenient for both you and the journalist.
3. Talk to the journalist on the phone before they arrive to ensure you know what they want so you can have the information ready for them when they arrive.
4. Reconfirm what message you want to get across and ensure you have the information you will need in order to deliver it.
5. Make sure you and whatever it is you are trying to promote looks at its best - this is particularly crucial when television film crews or photographers are coming. Brief your staff accordingly.
6. Listen carefully to the journalist's questions and make sure your answers are to the point and that you know what you are talking about.
7. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't make it up or guess. Explain to the journalist that you will have to call them back later with that detail as you don't currently have it.
8. Don't speak "off the record" and start sharing about local politics or gossip - as it immediately will attract the journalist's attention and could result in a front-page story instead!
9. Don't criticise other operators/operations to bolster your own business.

14. When a Journalist gets it Wrong

Journalists, like all of us, don't always get it right but unlike most of us, their mistakes are far more public, which does cause a problem if the mistake is about your product.

Obviously prevention is better than remedy, so ensure that all the information you provide journalists is correct and make sure, as far as you can, that journalists understand it.

Recognise that a journalist's opinion, however much you are opposed to it, is not a mistake but their opinion, which they are entitled to provide if they are reviewing your product.

If a journalist does get an important fact wrong, ring them up and politely point out the error and ask if it can be corrected in the next issue. If they refuse, you can always try writing a letter to the editor (if it is newspaper or magazine) setting the record straight. However never create a monster out of the situation, if the incorrect fact(s) don't compromise your business and in return you received excellent coverage then it's best to put it into perspective.



15. What Journalists Hate

As mentioned earlier, journalists work to demanding deadlines, are time poor, under-resourced and often work in difficult conditions. Keeping this in mind here are some things that journalists hate:

- Being a pest on the phone. Don't hassle journalists with multiple phone calls.
- Don't do follow up calls unless you really need to know.
- Be polite and call the journalist yourself. Don't get a junior to call who has no idea about the story pitch.
- When leaving a message, indicate what the call is about.
- Large unsolicited email messages, use the blind cc (bcc) function, don't let the journalist know who else the release is going to.
- Don't ask for copies of the story. Try other methods unless you know the journalist well.
- Missing the promised deadline.
- Asking to see the story before it goes to print.
- Time wasting.
- Complaints about cutting or editing a story - if there's a factual error let them know politely.

16. Working with the Media

Building relationships with the media is important for your business and journalists enjoy dealing with people that can assist them in their work.

Tips in building media contacts:

- Become a reliable resource.
- Always provide accurate information on time.
- Invite them to your property, restaurant, tour or event when appropriate.
- Make the effort to get to know your local media as they are often hungry for local news stories.
- Small gestures mean a lot - like spelling their names correctly.
- Make contact on a regular basis, once you have established the relationship, but only when you can provide key information.

17. Maximising your Website

Most businesses today recognise that the Internet is an effective communications tool, which provides powerful and rapid channels of communication, instant outlets to new audiences and interactive links with customers.

If you have a website for your business, consider broadening its use as a marketing tool by building a separate news centre. This subcategory can feature your most recent news, releases, fact sheets, management profiles, reviews, news clippings, interview contacts and digital images, which journalists can download in minutes. By having a separate news centre, you will minimise navigational time, which media will appreciate as it is tiresome to search through pages of text and graphics to find what is appropriate.

Pay attention to details - it's amazing how many websites do not include the company's phone number. Even though people use the net to grab information and exchange email, they still need to communicate the old fashioned way - via the telephone.

Journalists often want to talk to someone in real time to verify certain facts about a story before they run it. Have a section with the relevant contact details and email addresses. However understand that once email addresses are provided, you have to respond to email promptly, or lose credibility with journalists.



18. Familiarisations

Offering journalists familiarisation 'famils' trips (free of charge to the journalist) to sample your property, product, service or event is often a very effective means of publicity. However, journalists taking part in a famil are under no obligation to write or televise a story resulting from a famil trip or to guarantee content.

An invitation to attend a famil should be sent to a journalist along with background information explaining what it is you want them to experience.

If a journalist does accept a famil, they will want to experience your product as an ordinary consumer does. For example, if you are wanting them to experience your bed and breakfast, which you market as a romantic and secluded getaway, do not follow the journalist (and their partner) around like a shadow, but set aside an hour at the end or beginning of the visit where you can meet with them and answer any of their questions or provide them with further information.

Don't provide journalists with extras not provided to consumers - they will write about those extras as if they were included in the price and consumers will rightly get upset if they too don't receive the same level of product/service for that price.

Be friendly but not overbearing, be helpful but not sycophantic, and above all present your product/service honestly.



19. Famils Programs

Tourism Victoria runs two famils programs, one for Australian media and the other for international media. Tourism Victoria's public relations unit organises famils for Australian media, primarily from its key markets being New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Melbourne.

Famils can be designed to highlight one particular accommodation property, a touring route, a campaign, tours, a key destination or product strengths like food and wine or adventure activities.

The public relations team is constantly seeking new quality material to promote and be included in its famils program, so it welcomes constant updates on the latest product and developments from operators.

Tourism Victoria has a dedicated Famils Unit, which organises and hosts famils visits for international journalists and Australian and international travel trade.

Tourism Victoria is a partner with the Australian Tourist Commission and other State and Territory tourism offices, in the cooperatively managed and funded Visiting Journalists Program (VJP). The VJP program targets international media from key markets to experience Melbourne and regional Victoria first-hand. In return, media produces quality travel features in magazines, TV programs and newspapers, which would often be cost-prohibitive in advertising dollar terms.

This program is supported by Victoria's tourism industry by providing free or discounted services/products for media visits.

If your product/service is internationally ready and you would like to participate in the VJP famils program, contact either Tourism Victoria's Product Development Manager or Famils Operations Manager.

20. Crisis Relations

Hopefully, you will not experience a crisis in your business but it is essential that you have a plan in place in case a crisis hits. A crisis is a serious event - perceived or real - that has the potential to impact negatively on your business. A crisis could be food poisoning tracked back to your restaurant, an outbreak of Legionella disease or a death/s related to your business.

The media love nothing better than a crisis - they cover it in minute detail and give it lots of column centimetres and time. By its very nature a crisis will often descend very quickly and a natural reaction is to panic so it is vital to have good management and a crisis plan in place to guide you through.

Below is a crisis check-list, which should help you formulate a plan relevant to your business and provide you with the necessary steps for dealing with the media during a crisis.

CRISIS CHECK LIST

Issues Monitoring

- Monitor issues
- Early flagging of issues that could develop into a crisis
- Attempt to diffuse situations before they develop into a crisis

Establish Crisis Management Team

- Form crisis management team
- Select key members
- Regular meetings
- Share information and ideas

Assess the Crisis

- Gather relevant information
- Assess the type, extent and ramifications of the crisis
- Be aware of rumour and plan to counter it with fact

Choose a Spokesperson

- Must be articulate, well briefed, confident
- Must appeal on a humanistic level: ie compassionate and caring
- CEO/owner is preferable
- Must be available

Message Delivery

- Media release
- Media conference
- Individual interviews

Dummy Run

- Anticipate likely questions
- Draft responses
- Conduct dummy run interview with spokesperson

Dealing with the Media

- Be available
- Be open
- Keep your cool
- Provide honest factual comment, remember the truth always gets out!
- Establish who in your organisation is allowed to talk to the media and brief everyone accordingly

Log calls

- Log all media calls (useful for follow up later)
- Record what was requested and action taken

Cover all Audiences

- Establish key audiences
- Allocate team member responsibility for each audience
- Keep own staff well briefed

Post-Crisis Follow Up

- Assess what went wrong and why
- Formulate steps to prevent similar crisis
- Assess handling of crisis
- Devise follow up strategies

21. Advertorials and Prize Promotions

While this guide has focussed on ways to stimulate free media coverage for your business, it is also worth considering the paid alternative - advertorials.

Advertorials often appear in special supplements or in magazines, which may be aimed at promoting a specific destination, product or service. Advertorials usually look like normal newspaper or magazine articles but in reality are paid promotional stories organised by the advertiser.

The benefits of placing an advertorial are several: it allows the marketer to target a specific publication that is used by its key markets; it can be specific in regards to its placement in the publication; and it can range from quarter to one page in size.

However advertorials do cost dollars to place and it is mandatory that it carries the words **Advertising Feature or Advertorial**, so readers can identify that it is not third party editorial.

Another worthwhile activity to consider in your public relations plan is prize promotions. There are many media outlets that appreciate providing giveaways as an added value bonus for its readers/ listeners/viewers. Consider providing free event tickets, a weekend B&B package or any other service/product to your local newspaper, radio station or further afield in Melbourne and interstate media outlets. Be aware that media outlets usually require flights to be provided for interstate travel.

Research how the media outlets conduct their promotions and the type of exposure given in return for the giveaways, to determine what type of media best suits your needs.

22. Where to from Here?

Reading a positive article about your business, seeing pictures of your product in a publication and/or on television or hearing yourself on radio for the first time can be exciting and rewarding.

And no doubt about it, good publicity does wonders for morale for yourself and staff.

Once the story appears, it is easy to think phone calls for your business will come flooding in and for some it does generate a big boost in sales. But for how long? One good burst of publicity does not make a business, it just adds to it.

Never expect publicity to be the sole generator of your business. Be mindful that publicity is one element of an overall marketing plan and that it should complement your total mix of marketing/ business strategies.

Whatever you do, do not expect the world to come to you, be strategic, develop contacts, hone your skills and always develop stories that communicate fresh angles about your business.



