



PUBLIC RELATIONS 101

Special Events: Time-intensive with a news angle

Special events planning and promotion are not for the timid or unorganized. Go to any event and you can generally pick from the crowd the event organizers - they are usually sporting blurry eyes, glazed over smiles and seem to be waiting for something to go wrong. Despite the fact that events will wrack your nerves, planned well they are excellent vehicles for public relations and marketing. However, marching blissfully into the sunset and tackling event management is not recommended. Please go armed with planning tools, lots of information, support from your business or organization, and of course, volunteers, professional help, a budget and some luck.

Here are some important things to consider when delving into the world of special events:

- **Plan with a goal in mind.** Sounds basic I know, but you'd be surprised how many times this area is ignored. Events are extremely time consuming and may not be the perfect vehicle for what you are trying to accomplish.
- **Schedule promotion and plan 6 weeks out.** Repetition is key. Calendar listings, pitched stories, news releases, news advisories and follow up news briefs are all part of the process. Start about 6 weeks out and work up to the event. That isn't to say you keep bombarding the news media with the same story. What you do is remind them to remind their readers, viewers or subscribers of your event using slightly different formats at different times.
- **Think media-friendly.** As far as I'm concerned if you don't shape your event to be visual, interactive, or newsworthy

it is a huge waste of time.

Bold statement? Perhaps.

But after months and hours and hours of planning, if you don't get advance, day of or post-event publicity you are going to feel short changed, and you should.

- **Budget.** A tough one, I know. Events do not have to be expensive though. You don't need to execute a lavish affair to get news coverage, great attendance and meet your event goals. You do, however, need to figure out how much money you do need to effectively pull off a solid event.
- **Know your limits and ask for help.** If you are a great organizer, but don't know the first thing about a nuance on the proposed event, pull in help even if you need to pay for it. It will be worth it in the

long run. Spreading out responsibilities based on skill makes a lot of sense. Often you have someone in your inner circle either professionally or personally who may be able and willing to help.

- **Get professional (decent, usable) photography.** This is very important for getting post event news coverage. Develop a shot list and make sure you get everything you need - both the posed (for the thank yous) and the candid (for the news media). Also, make sure you plan the "money shot" - THE elusive photo that you can use as the shot that summarizes your event. You will use this as one of your main photos for post event publicity.

Events can provide your organization or business with a perfect news angle to help you gain visibility. It essentially becomes an excuse for the news media and others to talk about you. Plan it wisely and the attention will serve you well.

