

Chapter Public Relations Tips

It is recommended that each chapter have a public relations (PR) committee to communicate information about the chapter's existence and activities to both internal and external groups. Good publicity leads to additional and more active members and volunteers, better attended events, and ultimately a stronger chapter.

The information provided below will help the PR committee prepare newsletters, advertising sales, and news releases.

Chapter Newsletters:

One recommended form of communication is the Chapter newsletter. Newsletters can be mailed, emailed, or posted to the Chapter's group page in the BCA Social Community. A newsletter should be produced on a regular schedule (bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly) with relevant and well written content. Below are some helpful tips to consider when creating a newsletter:

- **Use the headline** to summarize or emphasize the most important aspect of the article.
- Lead sentences should be **short and simple**.
- Articles should be based on **objective and accurate facts**.
- **State the source** or give credit to the material from which it came.
- **Use third person** unless you are writing about your own impressions and experiences in a commentary or op-ed piece.
- **Identify people** you are writing about. On first reference use first name, last name, and title; subsequently use a consistent short form.
- **Be concise**; eliminate repeated words or unnecessarily extending the article.
- Use **short paragraphs** to improve reading pace.
- **PROOFREAD!** Check grammar, punctuation, and tense for consistency and accuracy.

Avoid:

- Using words such as many, few, and several. Use exact amount.
- Copying previous-published material unless you are familiar with copyright laws.
- Avoid words that could cause a second meaning or connotation.
- Avoid using newsletter content to pitch or promote a particular company or service.

Advertising Sales:

The PR Committee has the responsibility of pursuing advertising commitments for the Chapter. These advertisements can be included in your chapter communications. It is important to set goals and start with a plan.

- **Prepare a cover letter** for new "leads" and send with some promotional material. Cover letters should be upbeat and create a sense of urgency. The opening sentence is most critical; consider the reader to get and keep them interested. Include pertinent information about circulation, readership, and discount rates, if available.
- **Select the potential advertiser.** Target quality leads rather than quantity distribution to save time and money.
- **Follow-up phone calls.** Calls should be made with enthusiasm and a positive attitude; believe in the value of what is being sold.
- **Follow-up on the follow-up phone call.** Be persistent and take notes about your communications. Record how and when they were contacted as well as the result of the communication.

Press/News Releases:

The PR committee should prepare and distribute news releases about important Chapter happenings including public events or the achievement of key milestones. Remember that a News Release should be newsworthy.

The tips described for newsletter preparation above are also relevant for news release production.

Basic News Release Format

The format below can be used as a general guideline for how to structure a news release.

- Top of cover page should contain:
 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (always in caps)
 - Title
 - Contact Information
- First paragraph should start with:
 - City, State, and Date
- If there is more than one page - the bottom of the first, second, and following pages (do not put on last page) should contain the word – (More)
- Top of second and/or following pages:
 - Title – Continued – Page Number
- Last paragraph (optional): Contain a brief summary about the organization writing the News Release. Such as:
 - As one of the predominant professional associations in the commissioning industry, and the only one dedicated solely to the practice, the BCA strives “to guide the building commissioning industry through advancing best practices and education and promoting the benefits of building commissioning.” Its members include commissioning providers, architects, engineering consultants, owners and other members of the building industry.
- Bottom of last page: Type: ###

Once complete and carefully proofread, the news release can be submitted to local newspapers, other trade associations, organizations that publish relevant newsletters, etc. Most organizations that accept news releases will provide some guidance around what format and to whom the release should be submitted. Submission timing will vary based on the source and frequency of the publication.