



Successful promotion of your Chapter's image rests on a simple premise: More opportunities will come to you when more people know who you are, what you do, what you know and what you can offer them. A strong, positive public relations effort gains the attention and trust of your target audiences. A key target audience is the media. Once the media know who you are, you can readily introduce them to new ideas, and the chance that they will accept these ideas is much greater. Establishing good contacts with the media is critical to increasing your Chapter's visibility.

NIGP Chapters want to be successful in recruiting members and promoting their products and services. Business success often relies on a strong, positive image that gets attention and earns trust. Developing and polishing that image is important:

- Establish realistic image goals and objectives. Know how you want to portray your Chapter, its activities, and policies to the media.
- Know your media marketplace, geographically and demographically. Develop your target markets from this information and analyze how your programs and services fit into the overall marketplace.
- Monitor changes in your market, such as economic fluctuations and educational needs. Look for opportunities to promote your Chapter and NIGP as important players in addressing these issues.

Steps for an Effective Public Relations Plan

- A wide variety of inexpensive, effective public relations and promotional activities can be implemented by your Chapter to increase visibility for an event, your Chapter, and NIGP in general. These ideas can be implemented immediately.
- Conduct an audit of what is happening in your marketplace. Determine industry trends and innovations that will affect the industry, your Chapter, customers and their businesses. This information will give you a foundation to create information that is timely and useful.
- Monitor Trends - follow the trends and news being reported in the media. Keep a scrapbook or computerized list of current events that may influence your present and potential customers. In addition, keep track of who is reporting this type of news. Chances are this is a particular reporter's area of expertise and he/she will continue to want this information.

Know and evaluate your local competition. Know what services the competition is providing - including location and price, so that your Chapter can offer competitive services.

Create a Media List

- Establish a Chapter database of media contacts with addresses and telephone numbers. Make sure you can produce telephone numbers & e-mail addresses as well as mailing labels from the list.
- Media Lists of Other Organizations: Other local associations' media lists may be helpful in developing your own. This is especially helpful if the other organization has some of the same goals and objectives. Benefit from the contacts developed by others.
- Identifying the newspapers, magazines, business, trade publications, and corporate newsletters that reach your target audience is the first step in developing a sound public relations plan.
- Once you have established a media list, don't think that the job is completed or that you never have to go back to it. Media lists become outdated in a matter of months. Update your media lists quarterly.

Look to the Media's Needs

Know what the media's requirements are and include them in your media list. For example, does your target publications have a 2 p.m. deadline? What size and color photographs do they accept? etc. Failure to meet these requirements might cost you the opportunity for coverage.

Generate Your Own News

- What your local Chapter will undoubtedly be dealing with is soft news - news that is timely and interesting but not urgent. Soft news tends to be most effective when it contains a local angle. For example, the building of a new library or shopping mall in town is soft news as is the election of new Chapter officers.
- You can also become part of the hard news. Hard news might be local elections, a corporate buyout, or a new local/state educational policy. You can promote your organization as a source for facts or opinions regarding manufacturing/business news, workforce issues, and adult/vocational education. The media will turn to your organization for quotes or statements.

Topics/Issues that Might be of Interest to the Media

- Newly certified individuals in your agency/Chapter
- Election of officers
- Participation of a well-known speaker at a local/national conference
- Chapter Highlights
- Awards
- Purchasing Month/Proclamation
- Participation in community and philanthropic activities.
- Upcoming conferences/meetings.

Your Chapter can reinforce its public relations efforts by utilizing information in different ways:

- Newsletters are a great way to disseminate information to the media as well as other audiences. If your Chapter does not presently have a newsletter, start one. A good newsletter is informative and educational.
- Trade exhibits and special events are ideal for obtaining media coverage. These activities increase awareness of your Chapter and its activities.

Tips for Positive Media Relations

Having access to the media on a continuing, positive and productive basis gives your Chapter a decided advantage. This advantage can mean enhanced prestige, greater recognition and increased revenues. Following are a few tips for dealing with the media:

- Know how to make your story interesting to the media by finding a local aspect to it.
- Use the telephone to your advantage. It allows you to talk with any contact at any time and pitch your story directly. Make sure you have done your homework. Know the right person to call and why your call is newsworthy. Tell your story in 30 seconds or less, then point out significance and dues value. The media will make their own decisions.
- Timing is everything. Even if a story has news value, that value fades if the information is sent to the wrong publication, the wrong contact, or if it is not timely. Surveys have shown that the news media is most receptive to the new information and phone calls before noon. During the afternoons, reporters and editors are usually meeting a deadline or filing their stories.
- Don't overload the media with paper & e-mails. Decide what message you want to deliver and stake the fact in concise a format as possible. Produce information kits outlining all the basics about your local NIGP Chapter and have them available to all interested parties.

- Stick to the facts - both positive and negative. Don't editorialize or beg for coverage. Journalists take pride in their objectivity and news judgment and will not write about anything that they find lacks news value.
- Answer all questions directly but do not offer anything more unless it is information you desire to be in print or on the air. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know".
- Avoid at all costs, "no comment." This creates hostility and can actually create more negative coverage than if you give a vague response. "Off the record" also is trouble because nothing is ever off the record.
- Remember you want to become a valued source of information for the media. If you are a good source than you are credible, influential, and perhaps most important, familiar to the media. The press will favorably receive your reliability and credibility. The medial will call on you time and again because you make their job easier.

Tools for Promotion

There are several public relations tools that easily lend themselves to putting forth your message in a concise, understandable manner. By providing the information that the media wants and incorporation that information in the format the media desires, your Chapter stands an excellent chance of generating media interest in its programs and activities.