

GOING PUBLIC: THE GUIDE TO CREATING ART IN PUBLIC SPACES

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMMUNICATIONS

**“WHEN NIKE SAYS, JUST DO IT,
THAT’S A MESSAGE OF
EMPOWERMENT. WHY AREN’T
THE REST OF US SPEAKING
TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN A VOICE
OF INSPIRATION?”**

NAOMI KLEIN

IN THIS CHAPTER

Communication allows you to reach your neighbors, sponsors and fans when developing and creating public art. This is best achieved with person-to-person outreach. However, it would take countless hours to speak to everyone in person about your work. As you advance your work to new levels and to reach a broader audience, take advantage of the media identified in Chapter 2 to maximize your efforts. In this chapter, we will learn how to write a press release and how to make sure that busy reporters will pay attention to your work. Our projects receive the most attention when we send multiple press releases out during every stage of the process.

Your first press release can inform the public about your intention to create public art and invite everyone to participate in its creation. The second press release tells everyone that the artists are at the wall and people can come over to see them at work. Don't forget, sometimes the most important press release is the last one you send, inviting the entire community to come to the unveiling of the new mural. For greater exposure, you might also invite city officials or local celebrities to join you.



The artist's work does not end when the mural is finished. Here, DECOY is explaining her art to the news team from BBC World News. The mural in the background is "From Edgewood to the Edge of the World" by Chor Boogie, Pose 2, Joshua Mays, Quest Skinner and DECOY.

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

by Sarah Massey

Title of press release: This must be a catchy and interesting, yet short and informative, summary of the message you are trying to convey with the press release.

Contact information: Make sure that this is accurate so that the reporter can easily reach you for additional questions, interviews or photos.

Date of release: The date should make it clear that this information is current. Also, double-check that you've included the date, location and time to attend the event you are promoting.

In the body of the press release:

1. Describe the project/event: The first sentence is the most important as it must catch the reporter's attention. They read hundreds of press releases every day and you want to make sure that they pay attention to yours.

Clearly state the purpose of the press release and why they should cover it in their media outlet.

2. Identify who is working on the project. Who is the contact person and leader of the project? What is the organization or group that you represent? Include a description of the group, if applicable.

3. Location, date and time. All essential information should be presented clearly, so try not to have too much unnecessary information. A great alternative to press releases are press advisories that contain only the essential information: What, where, when, who, why...

4. Include other information and important details, such as appearance of celebrities, community leaders, and government officials, or further information about the purpose of the project/event.

5. At the end, include the contact information again. Also, describe what additional materials the reporters can contact you for, like images, etc.

6. Traditionally, on the last page “# # #” indicates the end of the press release.

How to deliver the material to the reporter: Email or fax your press release to the reporter. You may try to deliver it multiple times, a week before the event, 48 hours and 24 hours before the event. When possible, always follow up with a phone call to make sure that they received it and to see if they are interested in covering the story. Maintaining

excellent personal relationships with members of the press can be the key to your success in gaining media attention, so always be friendly and courteous! Make sure your press release looks professional; always ask a teacher, colleague or parent to edit and check for any errors.



DECOY and Chanel Compton being interviewed as a part of their appearance on Extreme Makeover: Home Edition show.

MAKING PITCH CALLS

By Sarah Massey

Pitch calls are the communicator’s bread and butter. We use them to alert members of the press about important stories, to promote an event, or to let them know about our cause. Catchphrases and interesting facts are a significant part of delivering a pitch and often determine whether the reporter will get interested in your story.

1. Begin by taking a look at the press list. Often times, you may be given a certain color (if contacts are color-coded) or specific group to ‘pitch’. These are your responsibility to call.

2. Prior to pitching, you need to review your pitch plan. Write a pitch script, use a press release or create your own “5 W’s”: who, what,

where, when and why this is an important story.

You need to communicate this information to the reporter in short, direct sentences. You want to get your message out in a quick, succinct manner that includes all of these major points, but is also interesting. Think like a reporter; what would interest you if you were writing a story? This is the information the reporter needs and wants.

3. Before making your calls, review the press materials and talking points. Rehearse it once or twice by yourself or with a partner. It is important to have all of the facts straight in your head so you do not fumble while you're on the phone with the reporter.
4. When you call, politely yet firmly ask for the person that you need to talk to. State your name and the group you represent, and then ask to speak with your contact.
5. If you get a voice mail recording be sure to leave a message which states your major talking points. It does not need to be as detailed, but you still need to give them enough information to spark their interest. The reporter/organization needs to know: who you are and what group you're representing, what is the event, where and when it is happening, and why people should care. Also, clearly state your name, the client's name, and your phone number at the beginning and end of the message.
6. If they do pick up, follow the pitch script you've practiced. Follow the "5 W's." Remember, you are essentially "selling" them a story or event so be as persuasive as possible without being too pushy or offensive. And always, SMILE when you dial.
7. At the end of a pitch, make sure to ask for the reporter's full contact information and follow up. You will need their name, phone number, and email address. Make sure you write them down, as well as any pertinent notes regarding the call so that in the future you can follow through in the future.

CONGRATULATIONS! When you have mastered the pitch call, you start creating important press relationships for your event, issue, or cause!

Sample of Pitch Call Script: Remember, Smile When You Dial!

For Albus Cavus' Edgewood Mural project, Massey Media drafted a pitch script for the nonprofit to use in its own media relations. Below is an example of one such script:

"Hello (smile)! My name is [your name] and I am calling with the Edgewood Mural project. We're a group of 45 youth participants from around DC who are working with Albus Cavus and the city to transform the Edgewood

neighborhood with a 300 foot public art mural.

(Pause) Ask, “Do you have a moment or are you the right person to talk to?”

“As part of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Summer Youth Employment Program, we’ve been working since late June to create the largest public art project in DC.

We’ve been collaborating with the community to create a work that is uniquely representative of Edgewood and DC, showing hope and change. The 300-foot mural will be seen from the Rhode Island Metro Stop and run alongside the new Metropolitan Branch Trail. We hope this mural will be a starting point to show how public art can transform lives.

(then ask) Would you be interested in interviewing the participants and

artists and coming out on a day when we are painting?

(wait for response and write down what the reporter says)

Going forward, there are two important dates. On August 15, we are hosting a mural jam when we’ll be joined by 100 artists to paint the remaining walls. On August 22, we will celebrate the completion of the mural with a public unveiling and art event. Can I call you back to invite you to these events?”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Making the Call

Kimi Killen

<http://www.ownthepresscom/?p=601>

Step by Step

Kimi Killen

<http://www.ownthepresscom/?p=553>

Art Makes Headlines

Sarah Massey



The main character in this mural is John Philip Sousa surrounded by his marching band. The character is based on a famous composer that was born and lived in the neighborhood where this mural is located. It was created by DECOY and Chanel Compton with students, supported by MuralsDC 2010 program.

Photo by Mika Altskan

QUESTIONS:

These questions will help to guide your own approach to knowledge collection. Choose some or all, then figure out an approach that works for you to answer these questions before creating your own public artwork(s).

1. Why do we do media relations? Why is it important for your project?
2. What makes a good story? When you read a newspaper or a blog, what is it that captivates you?
3. Who is in press all the time? Why?
4. What are you trying to get across? What do you want people watching TV news to remember
5. about you? Describe elements of your story: problem, solution, action.

ACTIVITIES:

Create a press list – Collect contact information for all reporters that you think may be interested in your story. This includes your favorite blogs, TV and radio stations, newspapers, and magazines. Keep track of who responds to your press releases. You might want to use Google docs to share an Excel sheet of press contacts if multiple people will be using and updating the list.

Interview a friend. Practice questions that a reporter may ask. This is a good exercise to think like a reporter and to begin to really understand what you would want if you were the one writing the story.

APPENDIX:**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE: PUBLIC ART CREATES COMMUNITY**

(Washington, DC, August 5, 2009) - You are invited to come out and watch the District's largest public mural take shape. The Edgewood mural project team has started painting the 275-foot long wall that's two-stories high. Over the next 10 days, artists and DC youth will cover a wall space that is larger than a football field with a public art piece called "From Edgewood to the Edge of the World." The project and the resulting art seeks to reflect its home community of Edgewood and be a window into the souls of the artists.

The Edgewood mural project is sponsored by the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities and the DC Mayor Office's Summer Youth Employment Program, and directed by public arts non-profit Albus Cavus. The mural wall is located along the new Metropolitan Branch Trail for cyclists and walkers and visible from the WMATA Rhode Island metro stop. What was a grey retainer wall will be transformed into a beautiful creation.

Drawing in visitors fills in the vision of public art to create spaces where people come together and interact with the art. The quality of open space affects how walkable and safe neighborhoods are for residents. Public art can promote creativity and healthy spaces; and, as in the case of the Edgewood Mural, it will promote healthy bodies. "From Edgewood to the Edge of the World" connects art and health, because it is strategically located along the new Metropolitan Branch Trail for cyclists, joggers, walkers, and families.

The new Metropolitan Branch Trail will connect all parts of DC from Union Station to Silver Spring, Maryland. The trail will bring visitors, residents, and commuters together, serving as a recreational opportunity and an alternative transportation route. Weaving through parks, major roadways and revitalized urban zones, the new trail will take visitors past major landmarks and a significant piece of public art. "The Edgewood mural will not only be a beautiful aesthetic addition to the trail, but it will draw people to the trail to look at the mural," says Heather Deutsch, Bicycle Program Specialist/Trail Planner, Transportation, Policy and Planning Administration, District Department of Transportation.

"The current reality of public urban spaces, many times, is bleak, unsafe, ugly, and covered with litter," says Peter Krsko, Director of Albus Cavus. "Public art changes how residents spend time in public spaces. They meet at public art, they take care of the space, communities hold events next to

the art and draw people into social interactions. While we create engaging art for people to enjoy, an additional result is safer, cleaner, and more enjoyable urban spaces."

On August 15, the public is invited to participate in and view a mural jam for local artists to contribute their work and extend the mural down the sprawling wall to the street. The event invites the community to learn and appreciate the artwork and will feature live music, deejays, giveaways and an artist market.

To view more background on the Edgewood Mural process and photos, please visit: <http://createpublicartdc.ning.com>

For photos or interviews, please call XXX XXX XXXX.

Additional sponsors: Rhode Island Avenue Shopping Center and Beacon House.



Reporters at the mural in Edgewood, DC.

NOTES

USE THESE PAGES FOR RESEARCH/SKETCHING

SUMMARY:

If we want the attention our public art projects deserve, we have to learn to communicate with representatives of press and media in a language that creates a response. Pitch calls are one great way to speak to reporters about our projects, and to become comfortable talking about them with the press. This mastery of communications is not only helpful with the media, but also with donors, project sponsors, and potential volunteers for our organizations. It's important to think about media relationships as ongoing, and not just to call the media when you want them to cover a story. Keep in touch with your local press outlets through newsletters and try to develop strong relationships with multiple representatives of news outlets; even small blogs and other community publications can be valuable allies to spread your message to a larger audience.

