

Media Advocacy Tools

Media advocacy tools are what we use to attract a reporter’s coverage. Utilizing these tools at the correct “newsworthy” time will hopefully result in media attention. Certain tools can be stand-alone – as in they create coverage or influence public opinion on their own, such as tweets, infographics placed on our own websites or blogs.

The pitch: A pitch can be an email or phone call telling a journalist about an important issue/event/person/organization and persuading the journalist to cover the issue, attend the event, or write about the person or organization.

Media/news/press advisory: A media advisory is an “invitation” or “FYI” for members of the media. It’s usually sent to notify the media of a press conference or an event that is open to the press. It provides contact information, briefly lists the who, what, where, when information about the event and should be less than a page long.

Press release: A press release can serve many purposes, but mostly it should serve as a statement or a document to let reporters and the public know your organization’s stance on a current newsworthy issue. A press release should also stay within the one-page limit and should include direct and indirect quotes from an organization’s leadership or experts. Press releases could also serve as an announcement, convey an important story or provide information for reporters following an event. Reporters are free to copy and paste freely from a press release.

Quick quote: A quick quote is an abbreviated press release and is a way to get out a rapid response on breaking news. It should include a headline and subhead, just like a press release, but should only be 2-3 paragraphs – one paragraph of introduction followed by the quote from an organization leader or expert.

Letter to the editor: Almost all publications have a “letter to the editor” section. These are very short (usually 200 words or less) letters that comment on an article that already ran in the publication. Each newspaper or magazine has guidelines for how to submit a letter to the editor that are usually posted on its website.

Op-ed: Op-eds are guest commentaries that run 500-700 words in a newspaper or online publication. Similar to a letter to the editor, each newspaper or magazine has guidelines for submitting an op-ed. The difference between an op-ed and a letter to the editor is that an op-ed can be on *any* timely topic, not just a commentary on a previously published item. Op-eds are also longer and should make an especially unique argument.

Press event: A press conference, a panel discussion, or any event open to the press counts as a press event. An event gives you a chance to convey your message to reporters, while serving as a

news hook, or something for the journalist to report on as news. It also serves as a way to engage people in conversation on the issue and begin to influence public discourse.

Videos and podcasts: Creating a video or podcast that includes interviews with impacted individuals, or that educates on a particular issue, can be useful to the media. The videos or podcasts should be available for the media outlet to run on its website or include as part of a broadcast. Videos can also exist on a group or individual's website and be pushed out through social media, gaining coverage merely by shares between friends.

Infographic: An infographic – or a pictorial explanation of data – can also be packaged as part of a pitch for members of the media. It should be available for the media outlet to publish if it chooses. It also can exist on a group or individual's website and be pushed out through social media, gaining coverage merely by shares between friends.

Editorial Board meeting: Having the editorial staff of a newspaper write an opinion piece advocating for your issue is a huge win. You can set up a meeting with editorial board staff to try to pitch your issue as something on which they should take a stance.

Tweeting: Reach journalists using Twitter. When you tweet about the courts, use the hashtag #WhyCourts Matter. Tweeting also allows you to engage and influence public opinion directly and to be your own message amplifier.

Blogging: A blog is a website on which an individual or group of users records opinions and information on a regular basis. Similar to tweeting, videos and infographics, a blog serves two purposes – a tool to send to reporters to gain coverage, and a way to serve as your own amplifier of your message.