

# PUBLIC RELATIONS AND YOUR CLUB

This *Public Relations and Your Club* textbook is partly extracted from RI online Learning Center course. Please visit the Rotary Learning Center for further information needed on the Rotary website: [Rotary.org](https://www.rotary.org)

Translating Committee  
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# Public Relations and Your Club

## Course Description

This course outlines strategies to use media and public relations to gain visibility, increase awareness of club initiatives, and promote your impact in the community.

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## Content

What is public relations? .....	<b>1</b>
Telling your story for print .....	<b>4</b>
Telling your story aloud: Giving interviews .....	<b>7</b>
Public relations tools .....	<b>10</b>
Communicating during a crisis .....	<b>13</b>
Review and resources .....	<b>16</b>



# What is public relations?

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One of the priorities of Rotary's Action Plan is to expand our reach. We can do that by building awareness of our impact and our brand through the stories we tell and the connections we make. Public relations amplifies those stories.

## What is public relations?

Public relations is a strategic communication process that uses a variety of media tools to promote a favorable image and develop positive relationships with the public.

Media relations, or working with journalists and editors to tell our stories, is part of public relations.

Any club that includes public relations and media relations in its communication efforts can increase the community's understanding of Rotary and promote a favorable image of itself and its activities as well as Rotary and Rotary's programs.



### **Get your club involved**

All members can participate in your club's public relations and media campaigns.

That can be as simple as wearing your Rotary shirt or pin, or as detailed as helping to plan a multiyear marketing campaign.

## How can members participate?

Every club member has knowledge, experience, and relationships that can be used to promote your club. Look for members who have:

- Public relations or media experience, or family members who have such experience
- Media contacts
- Knowledge of community partners, such as nonprofit organizations, government offices, schools, and businesses
- Project or event planning experience
- Rotary program experience

Remember to work with other Rotary and Rotaract members in your community to expand your reach. Find more information, examples, and tips in the Rotary Public Relations Guide.

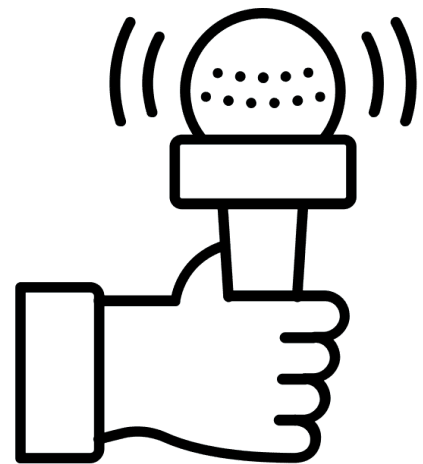
## Using media to reach your audience

Before we talk about how you can use the media to promote your club, it's important to understand the types of media coverage. Select the tabs below to learn about earned, owned, and paid media coverage. In the lessons that follow, we'll talk more about how to use them to reach your audience.

### Earned media coverage

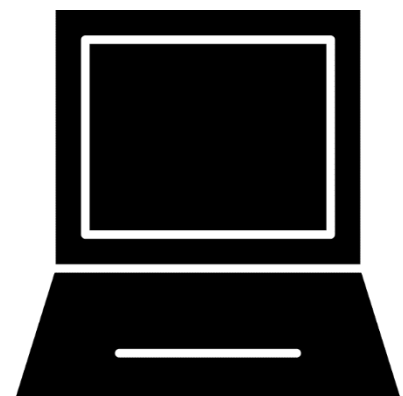
**Earned media coverage** is content about your club that someone else creates and publishes. It can include news media and blog posts or social media mentions, shares, and retweets by others.

Earned media often carries more credibility than owned and paid media, but it requires you to cultivate relationships with journalists, influencers, and your target audience.



### Owned media coverage

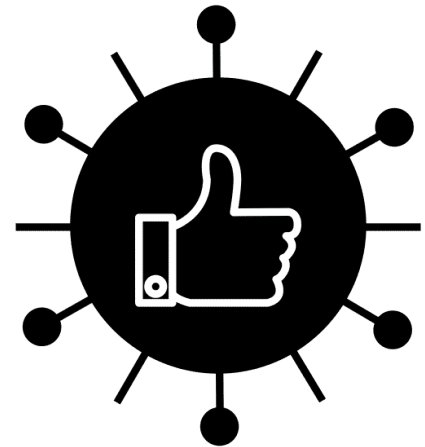
**Owned media** refers to any media channel that you control and maintain, such as your club's website, its social media channels, and its blog. You control both the content and the channel.



## Paid media coverage

Paid media coverage is any form of media coverage that your club pays for. This includes club sponsorships, advertisements, and posts by social media influencers. You control the content but not the media channel.

Social media influencers often give you an effective way to boost your message. Using their trusted reputation and broad exposure, influencers can promote your cause to a new audience and encourage people to get involved. Learn more about social media influencers in the **Public relations tools** lesson.



Media relations is about building a connection with the media by being supportive, encouraging thoughtful dialogue, and developing trust. Follow these steps to become a reporter's valued resource:

1. **Research.** Before you take your story to a reporter, review their recent articles and social media archive. Familiarize yourself with the topics they're interested in and how they prefer to be contacted. Then strategize how you can show a connection between your story and the topics they cover.
2. **Respect.** It's important to respect reporters' time, because they are busier than ever. Provide as many relevant resources as you can to help a reporter deliver a high-quality story.
3. **Follow through.** Media relations doesn't end after a story is published. Use social media and other promotional channels to make sure great coverage is seen and shared.

## Promoting Rotary's brand

In all of your public relations efforts, it's important to use Rotary's logos, fonts, colors, and photography consistently and correctly. By following Rotary's brand guidelines in your communications, you help the public immediately recognize your club as part of Rotary.



Use your customized Rotary or Rotaract club logo when you communicate with the media or post information on your social media accounts. Find templates for creating your logo in the Brand Center and instructions for using it in [Brand Elements](#).

# Telling your story for print

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## What makes a good story

To project a positive image and create a connection, your stories should focus on Rotary's impact, feature visually compelling images, and reflect Rotary values.

Select each number below to learn what journalists and reporters look for in a good story. Then include these elements in your news release or email when you pitch stories to the media.



### ① Problem

What is the problem that your club wanted to address? Include relevant statistics and research that could support a story.

### ② Decision

Why or how did your club choose this issue? Explain how the problem got members' attention, what made them want to commit to addressing it, or how it affected members personally, if it did.

### ③ Action

How did the club get expertise, resources, and partners it needed to take action? Describe any obstacles you faced. If possible, include elements that elicit sympathy or another emotional response, or that convey tension and suspense.

### ④ Impact

What was the result? Give information about how many people were helped, how their lives were affected, or how even the people themselves may have changed. Include a quote or interview from a beneficiary or someone else if you can. If you have it, include data that demonstrates the impact.



## Find your club's story of impact

Look for stories that demonstrate how your Rotary or Rotaract club is making a positive difference. Make sure that they show members as problem-solvers who are driven by a desire to create opportunities, strengthen communities, and find solutions to the toughest challenges that affect people.



The best stories show members in action and explain how lives and communities were changed.

For example, here's an article about a tiny house project that was done by the Rotary Club of Mercer Island and its partners. It shows how the project has affected underserved families in the community.

Review the "Growing Safe Harbor" article below.

### File: Growing Safe Harbor – Queen Anne & Magnolia News.pdf

These are the elements in the tiny house story that made it newsworthy:

- ☐ **News hook:** It described how Rotary clubs provided resources to build homes for families in need.
- ☐ **Timeliness:** The building project was ongoing. The story included details about the potential expansion of the project.
- ☐ **Proximity:** It told the story of how a local Rotarian and her club helped address a local problem.
- ☐ **Human interest:** Readers follow the story of a tiny house resident and what the home means to him.
- ☐ **Visual impact:** The image shows a crew of volunteers building homes for incoming residents.
- ☐ **Prominence:** The story quotes a past RI director and shows how he participated in the project.



## Develop media relationships

You can increase your chances of getting your club's stories into the media by developing relationships with journalists, bloggers, and social media influencers in your community. Learn what topics interest them by reading their articles or listening to their interviews.

Review and respond to the questions in the scenario below to learn how media relationships can benefit your club's public relations efforts.

You've submitted a story sharing the problem your club was addressing, why you chose the issue, the community action you took, and the people that were impacted. But it wasn't published.

What do you do when a reporter rejects your story? Choose the correct answer below.

- A) Keep sending the story and hope they'll eventually use it.
- B) Research what kind of stories interest the reporter and try again with a new story.
- C) Argue with the reporter to make them understand the importance of your story.

**Answer: B)**

That's correct. Read or listen to stories produced by the journalist so you can send them stories they'll want to use.

Find more strategies for sharing your stories in the Promoting Your Club as People of Action course in the Learning Center.

# Telling your story aloud: Giving interviews

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Not all of your stories will be in writing. Be prepared to talk about Rotary, your club, and its activities in interviews for TV, radio, or podcasts. Your public relations plan should include designating a spokesperson for your club, developing messaging, and planning for interviews. Having someone serve in this role effectively is vital to building your club's public image and reputation.

## Choose a spokesperson

The ideal spokesperson should have a basic understanding of the media, the audience, and of course, Rotary and your club. When you choose a member to talk about something your club is doing, make sure they can convey what you want the listener to know or do. It's often helpful if the spokesperson has a connection to the story.



### What a spokesperson does

The role of a spokesperson is to give your story a human face. A spokesperson should give information about your club, project, or event clearly and concisely in interviews, using terms that the audience will understand.

## Messaging

Does your spokesperson need help with messaging? You can find key organizational messages on the Rotary Fact Sheet and Rotary Key Messages. Contact your district public image committee or Rotary public image coordinator for more help with messaging.



What should your message be? A simple explanation of your viewpoint in one or two sentences that are easy to understand, easy to remember, and repeatable. To craft your message, choose three things you want to say no matter what questions you're asked:

- The first point should define the problem.
- The second point should explain the solution.
- The third point should describe the benefits and call to action.

Each message can be supported by facts, statistics, examples, anecdotes, quotes, analogies, imagery, or personal stories.

## How to give a media interview

A media interview is an opportunity to tell your story and compel your audience to take action. Start with a clear understanding of what you're trying to achieve, the people you want to reach, and their preferred media, such as TV, radio, or podcast.

Use your own voice. But don't assume everyone knows about your club or what Rotary accomplishes. Remember to give a little background information before launching into your story. Finish with a call to action and information about getting involved.

## Interview tips

Here are some tips to help you give an interview that accomplishes your goals:

- Speak and gesture naturally.
- Focus on the key points you want to make, but remember to give enough information so that the listener will understand.
- Use short sentences.
- Talk to the interviewer, not to the camera. Treat an interview as a conversation.
- Respond to the interviewer's questions, but then return to your message.
- Keep a positive facial expression and tone of voice. Smile and relax.
- Avoid wearing distracting clothing or busy patterns. Keep pins and jewelry to a minimum.

**Listen to the interview below to test your knowledge.**

Click on the image below to watch a television interview about a club's efforts to help mothers in Uganda. We recommend using the Chrome browser, and you may want to check your volume settings and make sure the video isn't muted before you play it.

Then answer the questions that follow.

CTVNEWS



### Calgarian champions for mothers in Uganda

Jaclyn Brown speaks with Christina Hassan, the Calgary woman who has been recognized for her efforts to improve maternal health in Uganda.

[READ MORE CTVNEWS >](#)

Why was the district governor a good choice of spokesperson for this interview? Select one answer.

- A) The governor's role gives the story prominence.
- B) The governor has a natural connection to the story being told.
- C) Everyone recognizes a Rotary district governor.

#### Answer: B)

Great choice! It's important that the spokesperson have a natural tie to the story being told. In this case, the governor represents Rotary International and knows about Christina's work.

What were the main Rotary messages in the story? Select all that apply.

- A) It's important to listen to communities to determine their needs.
- B) Rotary recognizes humanitarian efforts in various parts of the world.
- C) Rotary encourages innovative solutions to the problems people face.

#### Answer: A, B & C

That's correct! The governor mentions all of these points in his brief appearance in the video.

Let's look at some other ways to tell your story.

# Public relations tools

You can generate awareness of and interest in your club and its activities through ongoing public relations outreach. In addition to media stories and interviews, you can send your messages through:

- News releases
- Letters to the editor
- Opinion pieces

Find examples of each of these in the Brand Center. Refer to the table below to determine which public relations tool is right for your purposes.

Public relations tool	What to use it for	For more information
News release	Use news releases to announce a major initiative or milestone achievement. Include information about what is happening and when and where, who is involved, and why it's happening or why it matters.	Visit Rotary's Press Center regularly for inspiration.
Media advisory	You can use media advisories, or media alerts, to invite members of the media to cover an event. These should also include information about who, what, when, where, and why.	See the example media advisory below.
Media interview	<p>To add human interest and credibility to a media story, suggest that the reporter interview project leaders, beneficiaries, or partners. (First find ones that are available and willing.)</p> <p>Help spokespeople or other interviewees prepare for interviews by giving them the story topic, information about the media outlet, and relevant talking points or other briefing materials.</p>	Review the interview tips in the <b>Telling your story aloud: Giving interviews</b> lesson.



Social media post	Use social media to feature compelling images, news, and personal stories about club projects and events. Invite your followers to learn more by including links to your club website.	Read the Social Media page on the Brand Center
Letter to the editor	Letters to the editor can be used to publicize your club's work in the community. You can also use them to comment on or correct earlier news coverage.	Find sample letters by searching for "public relations resources" in the Brand Center.
Opinion piece	Opinion pieces written by experts offer readers diverse viewpoints on timely news issues and community concerns. They often include substantial factual information. They can also suggest a course of action.	Find tips on writing an opinion piece in Rotary Public Relations .



## Social media influencers and bloggers

Social media influencers and bloggers are always looking for positive stories to feature on their channels.

You can find influencers and bloggers by following social media hashtags or searching for topics of interest to your club, such as the environment, maternal health, or peace. Then contact them directly to learn how you can work together to promote your shared causes.

## Rotary's media templates and materials

Visit the Brand Center to download templates and other materials to use in your public relations efforts. For example, use a one-page media advisory to invite members of the media to report on an upcoming event or project. Add your headline and a brief description of the story or event, including the details about who, what, when, where, and why. Don't forget to give them your contact information.

Below you'll find an example of a media advisory that was made using Rotary's template.

**File: TinyHousesMediaAlertRotary\_V2.docx**

As you develop your media relationships, you'll be able to tailor each story or advisory to the interests of your contact.

Next, let's look at how to interact with the media during a crisis.



# Communicating during a crisis

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Effective crisis communication protects the reputation of your club and its members. Be prepared when a difficult situation occurs by having a crisis communications plan ready. Here's how.

## Work with your club when a crisis occurs



Club leaders should appoint a crisis management team that includes the district governor and other members as needed. Make sure to talk with team members about their responsibilities.

As soon as a crisis occurs, contact your team first and discuss what needs to be done.



## Step 1

### Gather the facts and designate a spokesperson

Having one person speak for your club will help keep your response to a crisis clear and consistent.

## Step 2

### **Tell club members to refer all media inquiries to the spokesperson**

It's important that all messages come from a single Rotary spokesperson to ensure that the message is clear and consistent. Share needed information with your members and ask them to refer inquiries to the spokesperson.



## Step 3

### **Prepare a statement that accurately explains the facts and uses the appropriate tone**

Respond to individual media inquiries with a statement.

## Step 4

### **Develop key messages to convey Rotary's position**

The messages should express empathy, explain the action taken to address the issue, and commit to preventing it from occurring in the future.



## Step 5

### **Offer timely briefings to team members**

Share factual information about the situation with the crisis management team members through ongoing updates. Monitor news coverage and social media engagement.



## Step 6

### Contact Rotary staff immediately if the issue is of national or international interest

Write to Rotary's Public Relations staff at [pr@rotary.org](mailto:pr@rotary.org) for help with crises that could attract national or international media attention.



### How would you respond to this crisis?

Your club is holding a holiday event at a restaurant when an explosion occurs. Members and guests are injured, and the building is immediately evacuated.

Who should you contact first?

- A) The media
- B) Your crisis management team
- C) Club members

**Answer: B)**

That's correct. Contact the team to decide what's needed and who will do each task.

Find more information in Rotary's Brand Center. Search for Public Relations Resources. Then, within the results, search for the **Media Crisis Guide**.



# Review and resources

## Your public relations plan

A public relations plan can help you promote your club and its activities and build awareness of Rotary in your community. We've given you a variety of public relations tools and ideas to help you create a successful plan. You can find more information in the Rotary Public Relations Guide in the course.

Your plan will be fully effective only if everyone in your club is involved. Here are some reminders of how your members can help promote your club.



### Involve everyone

Get members' ideas about how to promote your club's activities. Involve them in planning your community outreach and media campaigns. Designate people to maintain your club website and social media sites.

### Build relationships with local media outlets

Help get your club's stories into the media by developing relationships with journalists, bloggers, and social media influencers in your community. Learn what topics interest them by reading their articles or listening to their interviews. Then invite them to cover your events and activities.



### Develop community relations

Connect with government officials, business professionals, teachers, and civic leaders who will bring attention to your club's work. Organize special events and fundraisers or join established community events like health fairs or networking nights to show how Rotary makes an impact.

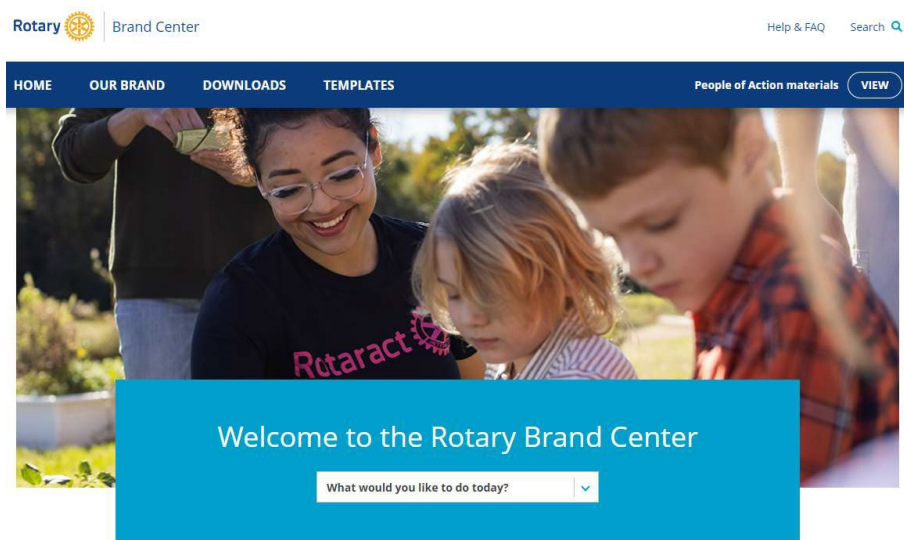
## Use social media

Promote events, post photos, and blog about club activities and your members' accomplishments on your social media accounts. Don't forget to include hashtags and contact information so the community knows how to get involved. And encourage members to share your club's posts on their social media accounts.



## Share news in your club's newsletter and on its website

Finally, share news, updates, events, and activities with your club's members. Remember to include links to local news stories and send them to your Rotary public image coordinator.



## Looking for more help promoting your club's activities?

Rotary's Brand Center has templates for news releases, media advisories, and letters to the editor that you can use to promote your club's activities. Search for "Public Relations Resources" to quickly find these tools.

## Resources

### **News & Features page on Rotary.org**

Share Rotary news from the News & Features page with your local media.

Link: <https://www.rotary.org/en/news-features>

### **Public Relations page on My Rotary**

Find more resources about public relations.

Link: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/learn-topic/public-relations>

### **Rotary's Brand Center**

Find sample press releases and media templates in the Brand Center.

Link: <https://brandcenter.rotary.org/en-us>

Telling the public about your club's impact and its value to your community increases awareness and appreciation of Rotary and your club.