

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL
CAMPAIGN ACTIONSAMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

HOW TO USE THE MEDIA



Participants at the World Social Forum,
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GETTING MAXIMUM PUBLICITY FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN ACTION WILL HELP
MORE PEOPLE TO HEAR ABOUT AND ENGAGE WITH DEMAND DIGNITY

Here are 10 “golden rules” to help make your campaign action become news:

10 ‘GOLDEN RULES’

1. Make your campaign action newsworthy

- Your campaign action has the potential to become news if you provide the kind of information that journalists want. Some of the ways to make your campaign action newsworthy include:
 - making sure there is local relevance,
 - keeping it simple,
 - using personal stories,
 - using visual impact,
 - using humour and irony.

2. Find the audience for your story

- Think about who will be interested in your campaign action and contact the media organizations that have audiences with a similar demographic. For example, a women’s magazine might be interested in running stories about the right to maternal health.

3. Sell your story to journalists

- Find out how individual journalists like to be contacted – for example by phone or by email. Building a relationship with them means that they may contact you for your opinion about other stories.
- Write – and practice – what you are going to say to a journalist before you phone them. Have written material available so that you can fax or email it after your call.
- Give advance warning to the media about any campaign action that you are planning.
- If you are reacting to something that has just happened, contact journalists and producers as quickly as possible.
- A press conference might be appropriate if you have something very interesting to communicate or when you have special guests available to give interviews.

4. Good press materials can ensure coverage

- A press release is a single sheet of information written in a way that is useful to the media. Use short sentences, clear paragraphs and quotes from relevant people. Remember to spell out acronyms – for example UDHR.
- If the heading and the first paragraph don’t sell your story, then the journalist might not keep on reading. Try to answer the following questions: what, when, where, who, how and why. Press releases should be structured like an inverted pyramid: with the most interesting information at the top and organized in descending order of importance, ending with the more general details.
- Use real case studies to make your story more human and colourful.
- Always include the name of your organization and the contact details of the relevant person.



Speakers at Amnesty International India's "Stand Up and Take Action against Poverty" event, New Delhi, 17 October 2008.

5. A good event at the right time is always news

- Public events – for example, a demonstration, concert or open-air gala – are good for attracting the attention of the audiovisual media. TV stations are always looking for pictures and stories with colour for their programmes and an event of that kind can help you spread your message.
- At your event, have people who are prepared to give interviews, especially for TV. It is also a good idea to have copies of your press release or any other written material containing facts and figures available so that it is easy for journalists to consult them.

6. News is made with interviews

- Most of the news that appears in newspapers and on TV or radio news bulletins is based on interviews.
- Keep the conversation simple and interesting. Mention one or two main messages, including some specific examples that illustrate them. Repeat these key messages during the interview to give them more emphasis.
- Try and use short sentences or quotes – “soundbites” – that explain an issue in a simple and succinct way – for example, “Every 60 seconds a woman dies of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth”.

7. Use your knowledge

- One of the strengths of an organization like Amnesty International is the information and knowledge it can convey through its members.
- Many of the journalists with whom you develop relationships will remember you – and contact you – because of the specialist knowledge and information that you can provide.

8. Develop a media strategy for your campaign

- Think about both the objectives of your campaign. Will media coverage help you achieve those objectives?
- If the answer is yes, you should think about the audience you need to reach to bring about the change you want and the ways in which you can effectively reach that audience.
- Think about how to convince key media to publish your information at a time that is strategically important for you.

9. Develop a good list of contacts

- Many media outlets now have websites where you can find a contact address or phone number. Contact local and national media organizations and get the name of individual journalists. Introduce yourself to them and establish yourself as a potential source of information.

- Some of the most important media to contact include: daily newspapers (including news, feature articles, readers' letters, guest columnist), TV news bulletins, radio news bulletins, weekly newspapers, magazines, general interest TV programmes, news agencies and general radio programmes.

10. Be persistent

- Even if your story did not get media coverage on one particular day, it does not mean that it will not get covered on the next. On a slow news day, anything can be news. If journalists don't cover your event, take photos and send a follow-up press release – you might still be able to get them to run a story.

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Keep track of all media coverage that your action gets. Make a note of:

- How much coverage you get.
- Whether the coverage is positive or negative.
- Where you get coverage – for example, on TV, radio, local or national newspapers, magazines, and so on – and the kinds of people you are reaching.
- What you would do better next time.

