

Bianchi PR Tipsheet #2

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→ Six News Conference Prep Tips

Hosting a press conference can be a successful, excitement-building way to announce news. If you've got something to announce that is of interest to your community or industry -- a new business or product, a new contract that will have a big impact, an important discovery, major results, etc. -- a press conference might be in order.

But before you throw up a podium and toss an executive up there, take a few minutes to review the handful of preparation tips below. A news conference gone wrong can be damaging to your company's reputation, so it's worth taking the time to plan, plan and plan some more. Even under tight time constraints, the following can be done:

1. Let's cut right to the obvious - **having a breaking, important news topic is essential**. Without it, there's no point in holding a news conference. If there's no big news, not only will you receive a poor turnout, but you'll also risk damaging your relationships with journalists.
2. Consider what **type of media** attention makes sense for your announcement. Is it a visual event that photographers and TV stations should attend? Does the news have local impact or does it affect a larger area?
3. Remember to **take outside factors into consideration** when planning the date, time and location of your news conference. Are there any other events going on that day that might entice reporters? Is it a holiday week? What location will best suit the style and size of the news conference? (Some rules of thumb: holding a news conference during the middle of the week is better than on a Monday or Friday. Also, the best time is between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. - not too early and not too late).
4. **Give reporters fair warning**, if possible. A "save the date" email a few weeks out helps, as does a media advisory issued at least a week before the conference. Reporters work hectic schedules and it can be tough for them to attend last minute, so try to give them enough time to schedule it in. On the flip side, you don't want to send out an advisory too early and risk the media forgetting about your event.
5. **Have a thorough practice run** of the news conference to cut down on any big day hiccups. Like a wedding or a play, we have rehearsals for a reason - stuff can, and often does, go wrong. Have speakers run through their speeches and follow up with a mock Q&A session using possible questions the media may ask.

Take note of how long the practice runs and trim time if necessary. Test any visual or audio equipment that may be used. If possible, name a moderator who will keep the event flowing on the day of, in case there are any road bumps.

6. Prepare media kits to have on hand the day off the event. The kits should include a news release summarizing the announcement, images or other supporting materials and contact info so reporters can call to arrange interviews or get more information. Make it easy for the media to cover your story; don't make them dig.

Bonus tip - these days, some companies host news conferences on their websites with streaming video in lieu of an actual in person conference. This affordable option allows for more flexibility, since media in different locations and time zones can log in at a time that is convenient for them.

Want to learn more about planning for a news conference? Have an important announcement to make and need some support? Contact us at bianchipr@bianchipr.com or 248-269-1122.

In the meantime, check out why reporters might **not** have attended your last press conference:
<http://jbianchi777.wordpress.com/2010/02/10/why-reporters-didn%E2%80%99t-attend-your-press-event/>.

