

'Best practice for engaging media in good times and bad'

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How to best get the positive stories out there:

1. Identify the 4-5 best news stories in your annual calendar well in advance;
2. Share those stories with Kristen @ WRFL media as early as possible;
3. Build a local media contact list and keep media informed of those 4-5 good news stories;
4. Maintain active social media / website;
5. Seek to enhance the relationship with local media – extend invite to a luncheon, a game etc.

The 9 principles for working with media during 'crises'

Crises: events/occurrences that may draw negative media attention to your club and/or league.

1. 'Identify the embers'.

Most crises aren't complete surprises – they're slow-burning issues that suddenly ignite. Look to intervene before the minor problem becomes a major one.

2. Form a united front with league HQ – adopt a 'no surprises' approach.

If you think you may have a negative issue hit the media, whether substantiated or not, contact the league at your earliest opportunity. The office can help you prepare a statement for your website in the event you need to use it.

3. League-only communication unless otherwise agreed in step 2.

Sometimes there will be a need for statements to be issued on both league and club websites, and at other times having one statement on the WRFL website where all media are directed is best. Talking through a plan with league HQ is key.

4. The president is the sole point of contact – make that known as best you can club-wide.

Communicate with your members that in the event of media contact for anything relating to the club, the president is the sole communicator. If making this known to your membership only after a media crisis has emerged, it is too late.

5. Put the statement on the website and direct all enquiries to that one statement.

Answering media phone calls and providing comment may lead you places you don't necessarily want to go and may also lead to misquotes. A website statement provides a controlled message that cannot be misconstrued. If media contact you for comment before you've had an opportunity to contact the league and develop your website statement, simply say that there will be a statement on the club's website in due course.

6. Emotive language fans the flames.

It's natural to want to defend our patch. But emotive language and finger-pointing leads to a greater story lifecycle, playing into media's hands. Avoid emotive language or comments about the opposition.

7. Comment further only when you have something to say – i.e. education, sanctions etc.

If a matter is being investigated or there is no definitive outcome yet, avoid making a further statement unnecessarily.

8. Build a club contact list now – but be aware your comments to members are never private, especially when it involves social media.

Sometimes a club will issue a statement on its website, and then send an altogether, more detailed message to its members, which inevitably finds its way to media. It is best to have the one message that goes on the club website and to members.

9. If in a position where speaking to media directly, stick to your message, repeat it and don't be drawn into other areas.

If you find yourself inadvertently talking to media, stick to your message and direct back to the website.

What makes a good statement:

1. Acknowledges the occurrence;
2. Indicates the positive work the club does;
3. Focuses only on itself & does not provide a commentary on the alleged incident, circumstance and/or opposition club;
4. Expresses a desire to cooperate;
5. Provides a position as to any further statement(s);
6. Is clear and succinct.

Example:

'The F&Y Socials Football Club is aware of an alleged incident occurring at its senior match on Saturday May 21.

The club has worked tirelessly in its efforts to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all, and is proud of the reputation it has established in the community. The alleged incident that occurred in no way reflects the values or environment of the F&Y Socials Football Club.

The club is cooperating fully with the league's inquiries, and has no further comment at this time.'