



## Recycle MORE Minnesota

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# Getting your message out to the public

There are several options available to you through the media to promote your message or event. The number of choices you have relates to the size of your community. Some of the more common media opportunities include paid ads in newspapers, television or radio public service announcements (PSAs) or paid ads, local shopper ads, and local organization newsletters or trade publications. Another way to get coverage is to write an opinion piece, commentary, or a column for your local paper. This is a great way to control your message and raise visibility for your organization.

Advertising guarantees coverage of your topic but is sometimes viewed as biased. However, when a journalist covers your topic you depend on that person to carry your message—the results are not always guaranteed but third-party reports have more credibility than ads. The best approach is a mix of advertising and editorial coverage. Each reinforces your message.

## 10 tips for working with the media

1. If you haven't done this already, **get to know the journalists in your community**. Find out who is interested in your topic and keep that person informed about what is going on. Working with the media to get your message out requires that you have something significant to say about your project. Make sure your stories have something to announce.
2. **Create your own media list**. Find all newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations within your area. Call and ask for the names of the journalists that report on environmental topics. Don't forget the economic or personal angles.
3. Find out about and **meet deadlines** for submitting materials. Find out how much advance notice the reporter prefers.
4. **Time your event or story for slow news days** or to piggy-back with a current hot media topic if possible.
5. Once you've sent a press release or contacted the media about an event, **be sure to follow up** with the person involved on the media side.
6. **Make it locally relevant**. Most people want to know what's happening in their communities. Use facts and numbers that are relevant to the community.
7. **Get quotes or involvement from recognized leaders**. Leverage the media interest already focused on recognized leaders in your community or topic.
8. **Avoid jargon**. Keep in mind that your audience may not be familiar with acronyms or the jargon experts use. Keep the message in language that your audience will understand.
9. **Keep it simple**. Don't lose your message in a tangle of details and numbers. Focus on your key messages.
10. **Use your web site** to offer additional information.

## Placing newspaper ads

Advertising in newspapers is often an effective way to promote messages and events. The Recycle More Online Toolkit has a selection of ads that you can use and customize. Some newspapers will modify or create ads for you. Talk to your newspaper about ad size, frequency and cost to promote your topic or event. Don't forget to ask about discounts on ad rates.

Below is a list of the most commonly used terms you're likely to encounter.

**Art:** All photographs, drawings, hand-lettering, etc. and font type that comprises an ad or printed piece.

**Body type:** Type used for the main or text of an advertisement or printed piece.

**Buying space/time:** Purchasing advertising placement in a newspaper or other publication; also a term for TV or radio advertising purchase.

**Camera-ready:** Copy and artwork that has a high resolution so that it can be photographed or scanned.

**Column-inch:** A unit of measure in a newspaper or periodical one-inch deep and one column wide. Column widths vary from publication to publication.

**Copy:** Text to be printed or reproduced.

**Display advertising:** Advertising in a newspaper other than in the classified section.

**Font:** All the letters and characters in one size of a type face.

**Layout:** A pattern to show placement of elements on a printed piece.

**Point size:** A printer's unit measurement, primarily used in determining sizes of type. There are 72 points in one inch.

**Proof:** The first few trial impressions on a press of a printed piece. Used for making adjustments/ corrections.

## Getting editorial coverage

Try to get leaders from your community to get involved in your activities. Having a prominent person involved makes it more likely that the media will cover it. Here are some organizations you could approach to seek support and/or sponsorship for your campaign:

- City and county administrators
- Key business owners/managers
- State agencies
- University administrators
- Superintendent/principals
- Regional environmental education councils
- Conservation/environmental organizations
- YMCA/YWCA
- Girl and Boy Scouts
- Private recyclers

**Press releases:** You can send press releases to the media to inform them about an issue or event. The information you release to the press should be written in a newspaper article style and should answer the questions: "who, what, why, when and where" in the first paragraph. Make the information you want your audience to know stand out, putting the most important information in the first paragraph, or even the first sentence.

The title should also be catchy, yet convey the spirit of the subject. Press releases should also list the date, city, state, and contact person's name and phone number. Your release should be no longer than one or two 8.5" by 11" typed, double-spaced pages.

**Opinion articles:** Opinion articles or commentaries are a great way for your organization to talk about why you are promoting a particular issue.

**Media alerts:** Send media alerts to let the media know about an event. It includes basic information about the event. When planning the event, make it media-friendly by providing good visuals for photographs and TV as well as good sound for radio. Make sure to give news organizations advance notice about an event so that they can plan for it.

**Radio:** Contact the radio stations in your community and find out things such as their advertising rates and whether they offer discounted rates for non-profits. Many media offer public service announcement space or time. Find out from your local stations if they will offer their space or time free-of-charge or for a reduced nonprofit organization rate. If their space or time isn't free, local organizations or businesses may be willing to sponsor your PSA.

## **Budgeting and evaluation**

**Budgeting:** Setting a budget is an important first step in achieving the goals you've established. Be sure that your goals and objectives are firm enough so that you will have concise, persuasive rationales for each of the tools you want to use. When putting together your budget, look into the possibility of attracting local sponsors, donated services, and volunteers for help in stretching your budgeted dollar.

**Evaluation:** Evaluation is important for any kind of outreach. You should continually review and evaluate the effectiveness of your advertising and media relations. One way to evaluate your efforts is by giving your audience a way to give feedback and then measure it. For example, you could ask your audience through an ad to call to get a helpful free brochure. Then monitor how many phone calls you get and keep track of these inquiries. You can make adjustments in your approach based on the response that you get.