

# How to Use Mass Media for Advocacy\*

Mass media refers to the entire array of the media specifically envisioned and designed to reach a large audience, like radio, television, magazines, newspapers and the World Wide Web.

The “traditional” media are traditional means of communication and expression that have existed since before the advent of the new medium of the Internet. Industries that are generally considered part of the old media are broadcast and cable television, radio, movie and music studios, newspapers, magazines, books and most print publications. Many of those industries are now less profitable than they used to be and this has been attributed to the growth of the new media.

The new media usually refer to internet-based communication tools. The latest of these are called Web 2.0 technologies, which include social networking sites, blogs, channels, feeds, readers, browsers and others.

Regardless of these categories, media serve the following purposes in relation to advocacy:

- Provide information;
- Make people decide in your favor;
- Change perception; and
- Change behavior.

## Advocacy as Advertising

All advocacy would profit from the “tricks” of advertising. The word advertising is derived from the Latin “ad vertere,” or “to turn the mind around.”

Campaigners would do well to adopt the following basic principles of the advertising trade:

1. Always take the point of view of the audience (i.e., receiver of the message);
2. Deliver your message like a salesman making a sales pitch;



Source: Ekta Parishad

3. Strive to change your audience’s perception of her/himself; her/his needs; if you’re successful at this, the desired behavior will follow;
4. Persuade your audience that s/he has much or everything to gain from thinking or acting as you would have her/him do. For your audience, the deciding question is: *what’s in it for me?*

## Campaigner, Know Thy Audience

Before you formulate your message, you must first have a clear picture of who your audience is.

The following guidelines will help.

### A - AUDIENCE

- ⇒ Who are they?
- ⇒ How big are they?

### U - UNDERSTANDING

- ⇒ What is the level of their knowledge of the issue/s, information, data, ideas being communicated?

### D - DEMOGRAPHICS

- ⇒ What is their age, sex and educational background?

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**I - INTEREST**

- ⇒ Why are they predisposed to the message?
- ⇒ Who introduced the message to them?

**E - ENVIRONMENT**

- ⇒ How will the message be disseminated?
- ⇒ What outlets will you use, e.g., marches, press releases, interviews, programs, movies, web sites, web 2.0 based materials, social networking sites, TV, radio, newspapers, newsletters, posters?

**N - NEEDS**

- ⇒ What are the needs of the people?
- ⇒ What are your needs as communicator?

**C - CUSTOMIZATION**

- ⇒ What specific needs should be addressed?

**E - EXPECTATIONS**

- ⇒ What are they expected to learn or hear from the message that will motivate them to act in the desired fashion?

Once you've determined all you need to know about your audience, you are ready to prepare your message. The following section provides tips to help increase your chances of getting your message across. Let's start with traditional mass media.

**Dealing with Traditional Media**

Newspapers, television networks and radio stations are ever-hungry for news. Thus, to make sure they "take the bite," your story must be "newsworthy."

A story is newsworthy if it is:

- New/fresh;
- Current/has just happened;
- Affects many people;
- Interesting;
- Involves popular culture
- True, verifiable; and
- Holds human interest.

**Writing for Traditional Media**

The following are simple rules for writing for and dealing with traditional media.

## Head-turning Headlines

What makes a head-turning headline? Here are a few rules:

**1. Use the present tense of the verb.**

Example: Arroyo gov't. declares Martial Law

**2. Keep your headline short and succinct, without leaving out details that catch attention, such as number of fatalities, amounts of money involved, place of occurrence, etc.**

Example: 3 million die in Jakarta plane crash

**3. Use simple action words. Avoid "big" words that are not used in everyday language.**

Example: Court in Mumbai Taking Time to Decide on Case of Act of Lasciviousness Filed Against Member of Parliament Arundhati Rajapaksa

Instead say: Mumbai Court delays ruling on sex scandal case vs. MP Rajapaksa

**4. Look for the most interesting angle in your story and highlight it in your headline**

Example: "Dog bites man" creates no stir.

On the other hand, "Man bites dog" is a sure-fire hit.

**Newspapers**

- ⇒ Write your story the way you would want it to be published.
- ⇒ Decide on the slant (perspective, angle) you want to take and develop your story accordingly.
- ⇒ Focus on 3 or 4 main messages, and use as few words as possible.
- ⇒ Write your story in the past tense, but your headline, in the present tense (see sidebar)
- ⇒ Use an attention-grabbing headline (see sidebar).
- ⇒ Include a Contact Name and contact details.
- ⇒ KNOW WHO CALLS THE SHOTS:
  - Beat Reporters are assigned to a specific topic or place;
  - General Assignment Reporters go wherever they are needed;
  - Features Reporters are assigned to write longer pieces, profiles, etc., that are often not time-sensitive;
  - News Editors decide whether your story is publication-worthy and slants and edits it

according to the newspaper's editorial policies and style guide.

- Deadline for submissions to major newspapers: 4-6pm.

### Television Stations

Besides the general rules for writing a newsworthy story, the following rules apply in pitching stories to TV stations:

- ⇒ Provide a visual (footage or still photographs).
- ⇒ Make sure that your story has **sound bites** (a 5 minute interview is likely to be reduced to a 15-second quote; make sure that your story has such quotable material).
- ⇒ Deadline for news submissions to local television stations: Noon, 4, 5, 6 and 9pm. National television stations accept news submissions 24 hours a day, seven times a week.

### Radio Stations

- ⇒ For live interviews, make sure that you have your story straight.
- ⇒ If you want to get airtime for free, approach local/rural radio stations. They are always on the lookout for well-produced segments.

### Following Up with the Media

- ⇒ Be polite but persistent; media is your ally
- ⇒ The best time to call is in the morning
- ⇒ E-mail is often more effective than phone calls. But it is better to do both.
- ⇒ Cultivate friendly relationships with the media without paying them. Help them to understand your advocacy and win them over to your cause. A media ally is a powerful weapon. ■

## RADIO RULES!

There has been much talk about the end of radio. Yet statistics show that radio is "still lord of the airwaves" in the digital age.

A market research study shows that in the Philippines:

- ⇒ Listeners in Metro Manila and Cebu (the two largest urban centers in the country) are tuned in to the radio at an average of 10 hours a week;
- ⇒ Listeners tune in to radio daily and the rate of listenership is uniformly high across all income classes and age groups;
- ⇒ TV watchers catch the same news or programs on radio.

### Why radio remains relevant

- ⇒ All media use sound.
- ⇒ All electronic pulses are radio waves.
- ⇒ The ear receives information even when the listener is beyond visual range of a television or other visual media.
- ⇒ Sound is accessible anytime, anyplace, anywhere, especially with the new portable devices, like Ipods.