



MEDIA 101 WORKING WITH JOURNALISTS





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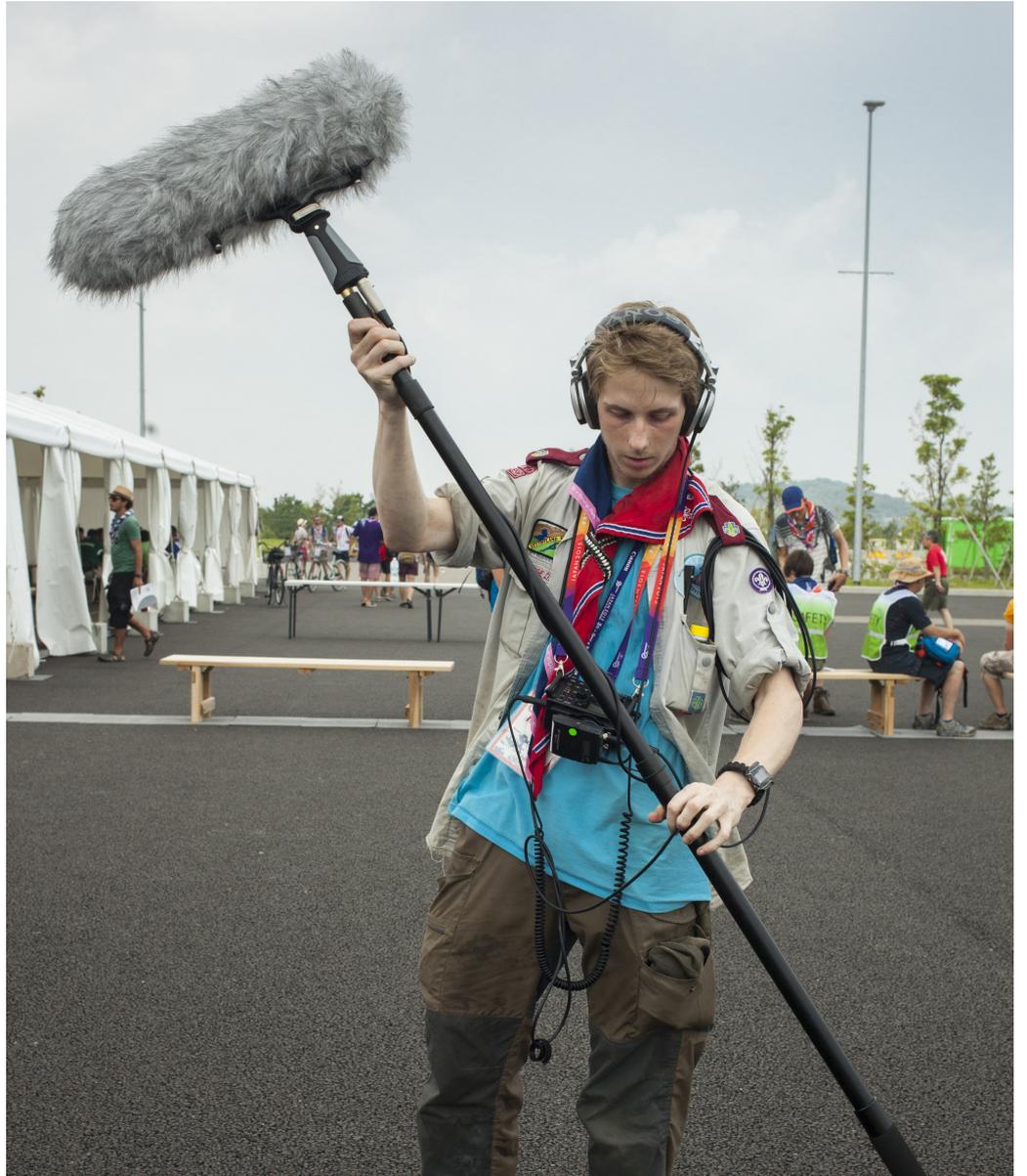
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I SPENT TEN YEARS WORKING IN THE NEWSROOM OF A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL NEWS BROADCASTER, AND WE NEVER COMMISSIONED A STORY THAT HAD BEEN SENT TO US IN A PRESS RELEASE. MOST RELEASES WERE JUST DELETED, USUALLY WITHOUT BEING READ.

The best way to get a story in the media is to ***offer assistance.***

Think about a natural disaster...

Scouts often work to help their local communities after earthquakes, typhoons, landslides, and journalists covering the unfolding events are always looking for people on the ground who can tell them what's going on, and get access to the area. They usually turn to NGOs like the Red Cross or MSF. Why not the Scouts?

There is also a chance to get Scouting featured in coverage beyond straight news. The prison Scouts in Uganda, for instance. A fantastic story and one that has enormous potential in the media.

1. The initial connection

Get to know the journalists in your town/country, and target the *journalist/publication most appropriate* for the story you want to tell. Ask yourself which *audience* you want to know about what you're doing.

Don't just think about newspapers, TV channels or websites. Think about specialist publications – a magazine on education or parenting, for example. Or one targeted at young people themselves.

Create a **media list** (you can find journalists' names through bylines, Twitter and other social media, as well as asking around your network). Your list can be as simple as a Word document or an Excel spreadsheet, but it should include the following and be updated regularly:

Name

Job Title

**Phone numbers – mobile / office
(if they still have one)**

Email

**Twitter and other social media handles
(Twitter is most popular social media
among journalists)**

**Any other interesting info
(professional interests, favourite coffee shop,
former Scout etc)**

Introduce yourself by email. Follow up with a phone call and arrange an informal meeting over coffee. Let them know you exist and get to know each other.

2. Offering a story

Choose the right time to make a call/pitch. Newsrooms tend to hold editorial meetings in the early morning and towards the end of the afternoon. If major news is breaking they're not going to have time to speak to you and might get annoyed.

Think about deadlines. A 24-hour news channel or a newswire will be different to a magazine (monthly magazines sometimes work three months ahead so if you have an event/happening taking place in March then you need to get in touch with a magazine in November/December).

Compile a brief on the story. This should focus on the who/what/where/why and when. The bigger the publication/network, the more questions the journalist is likely to ask. They need to sell the story to their editor, and it's easier for them to do that with more information.

Think about what you can offer the journalist. Interviews, site visits, footage/photographs. Most journalists will want to take their own photos or shoot their own footage, but it can be useful **to provide material** to smaller, poorer organisations. Think about the format and how you can get it to them. Good journalists want to attend the event/site and see things for themselves. You should be open to this (but also remember that the journalist will probably have their own agenda). They are not in the business in PR, but that's why earned media is so much more valuable to a brand than advertising or paid content.

Even if you do not have a story you should continue to nurture your relationship with your local media through regular meetings. This can be a quick chat over the phone or a longer discussion over a cup of coffee or tea.



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