

COLUMBUS SPORTS PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDE

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This guide will help you gain more exposure and generate more interest for your sporting events in Columbus’ news outlets.

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STRATEGY TIPS

Here are top public relations strategies that can complement your marketing efforts.

- 1. Create a Top 10 List** — Brainstorm with your staff and the media contact at the Greater Columbus Sports Commission to identify what is new or different about your event. What are the highlights of the competition? Are there any special appearances by professional athletes or other celebrities? What are the interesting, newsworthy photo opportunities? Whatever your top 10 may be, make sure items have mass appeal so local consumer media, including television, radio, online and print outlets will be interested.
- 2. Target Your Stories** — The Greater Columbus Sports Commission maintains local media lists for your use. As soon as your sporting event is booked, request media lists and add appropriate contacts to your database. Target the best sports contact at each outlet.
- 3. Look for Locals** — Are there local athletes participating in your sport that might make a great story? Often, reporters, especially at major daily newspapers, need a strong local angle to cover an amateur sporting event.
- 4. Tell the City's Story** — From the day your attendees learn about the selected host city for a sporting event, educate your attendees about the host city. We can provide you with a feature story about the city and photos that can paint a picture of the destination, keeping your attendees interested and informed and attendance up. You might want to include a feature on Columbus in a print publication, newsletter, e-mail or Web site one month prior so attendees can start planning their visits.
- 5. Provide On-Site Media Assistance** — Make sure you have a staff person on-site at your event to assist the media if you invite them to cover your event. Also, provide the media with the staff member's cell phone number so that they can follow up on site or afterward, if needed.
- 6. Promote Only if Prepared** — Plan for media being in attendance at the events that you promote. Get consent from all pertinent participants prior to inviting media and have specific materials prepared, including player and coach information and a schedule of events. Send a media alert out via a newswire service one week prior with event highlights. Re-release this information on a daily basis and make lots of targeted follow-up pitch calls.
- 7. Be Accessible** — List a specific room where your event is taking place. Media who cannot find an event cannot cover an event and sometimes are not able to wait until a public relations representative is found on site. If you release information through a press release, be accessible and list phone numbers where interested media can reach you at all times.
- 8. Keep it Simple** — You may know what certain sports industry terms mean, but that doesn't mean that the media and public do. Media will be more apt to cover events if news items have mass appeal and can be understood by anyone. Make the connection between your sports event and public interest.
- 9. Timing is Everything** — The key to promoting a sports event is an early start. If you are trying to increase attendance, do not rely on the local media. Your best bet for driving attendance is to focus marketing efforts on your core audiences. The local media may cover your event, which will be excellent for exposure, but cannot be counted on to build attendance. Paid advertising is another opportunity to reach local audiences.

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With your strategy now in place, it is time to develop the tools necessary to gain media coverage for your sports events in Columbus.

PRESS RELEASES

A press release is written and distributed to get your message in front of a large public audience through media outlets. A press release should include newsworthy and important information in an organized and concise manner. Visit http://www.columbusports.org/media/press_releases.cfm for examples.

Press Release Elements:

1. Issue the release on company letterhead. It looks professional and credible.
2. Include a short, descriptive headline to grab the reader's attention.
3. Include where the press release was written and date released.
4. Put the most important information at the beginning. Provide answers to who, what, where, when, why and how in the first paragraph.
5. The remaining body of the release should include further details, background information, quotes and additional relevant information.
6. Use a quote by a league or team representative. This adds credibility to your release.
7. Include a contact for members of the media to reach for additional information, or to set up an interview. This person should be familiar with all of the information in the release and be able to answer questions.
8. Include a boilerplate. (Information about your company or organization.)
9. Center three pound signs (###) or the number thirty (-30-) at the bottom of the page to indicate the end of your release.

***Be sure to proofread your release twice, preferably by two or more people, before you send it out!**

MEDIA ALERTS

If you are interested in having media cover a specific segment of your event, including a press conference, you should send out a media alert. The alert should provide key information about the event and entice media to attend and cover the event.

Media Alert Elements:

1. Issue the media alert on company letterhead. It looks professional and credible.

If there is a photo opportunity, state it at the top of the alert; it is more likely to generate coverage.

2. Include media contact information for press seeking additional information.
3. Use a short, active and descriptive headline to entice the reader.



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4. Use a block format for media alerts, so the news desk or reporter can quickly and easily find the specific information they need. Describe what the media will see and hear, where and when it will take place and background details.
5. Include a boilerplate. (Information about your company or organization.)

MEDIA LISTS

Now that you have your press release and/or media alert ready for distribution, it is time to build your media list. A media list includes key contacts who may cover your story, or who would benefit from receiving your press release or media alert.

Effective media list tips:

1. When laying out your media list, use whatever format is most helpful to you – an electronic database, collection of business cards or a spreadsheet. There also are companies that can create media lists for you, primarily if you plan to send out releases nationwide.
2. Next to each medium, note the contact name, phone number(s), fax number, e-mail address and Web site. Also note how each wants to receive information – some prefer fax or e-mail, while others prefer phone calls.
3. Find out when their “crunch” periods are. This is the time just before a deadline when calling would really put you on their black list. This shows you are considerate and interested in making their job easier. Also, keep a running log of phone calls and conversations with each publication.
4. It is important to know the media outlet’s audience and editorial focus before pitching items. If possible, read, watch or listen online to the media outlets you plan to pitch *before* pitching them!

TIPS FOR PITCHING THE MEDIA

With your information ready to go and your media list developed, you are now ready to begin pitching your event to the media. Here are some helpful tips on how and when to reach out to certain Columbus media, as well as a list of media including their Web site’s where you can find ways to submit news online.

Daily Newspaper

At *The Columbus Dispatch*, coverage of your event may be assigned to any one of the paper’s many reporters or editors. Unless you have a working relationship with a specific reporter or editor, advances and news releases should be directed to the Sports Editor, who will be forward to the appropriate person. Deadlines should be kept in mind, both for news releases and scheduled events. In some cases, you may wish to provide the newspaper with an advance release on such developments as awards or speeches that take place on or near their deadline.

You cannot deliver a news release five minutes prior to deadline and expect to see it in the next edition. You’ll have a better chance of obtaining coverage if you send your news release to the newspaper early.

The Columbus Dispatch

34 S. Third St., Columbus, OH 43215
614-561-8522, sports@dispatch.com
www.dispatch.com



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Community News

The key to story placement in a weekly or community newspaper is that it must have local application. The publications are receptive to stories about people in their circulation areas or events that affect these locales. (Stories on individuals should carry a street address.)

More than one weekly or community newspaper may serve a specific area. Usually, news releases must be sent to each newspaper, but sometimes one release to the parent company will cover all editions. In our summary of community newspapers, we have listed multiple editions published by a company.

Deadline for all – noon Thursday prior to Wednesday publications

Suburban News Publications

5257 Sinclair Rd., Columbus, OH 43229
614-785-1199, www.snponline.com

CNS/ThisWeek

670 Lakeview Plaza Blvd., Ste. F, Worthington, OH 43085
614-841-1781, www.thisweeknews.com

Specialty Publications

614 Magazine

P.O. Box 163096, Columbus, OH 43216
614-488-4400, www.614columbus.com

The Columbus Post

172 E. State St., Ste. 203, Columbus, OH 43215
614-224-6723, www.columbuspost.com

Business First of Columbus, Inc.

303 W. Nationwide Blvd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-461-4040, www.columbusbizjournals.com

DublinLife Magazine

4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
614-572-1240, www.dublinlifemagazine.com

Call & Post

750 E. Long St., Ste. 3000, Columbus, OH 43203
614-224-8123, www.callandpost.com

The Lantern (The Ohio State University student newspaper)

242 W. 18th Ave., Rm. 271, Columbus, OH 43210
614-292-5721, www.thelantern.com

The Catholic Times

197 E. Gay St., First Floor, Columbus, OH 43215
614-224-5195, www.ctonline.org

The Minority Communicator/The Minority Communicator Times

76 Parsons Ave., Columbus, OH 43215
614-621-8740

CityScene Magazine

4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
614-572-1240, www.columbuscityscene.org

Ohio Jewish Chronicle/Senior Times

2862 Johnstown Rd., Columbus, OH 43219
614-337-2055, www.ohiojewishchronicle.com

Columbus Alive

1079 N. High St., Columbus, OH 43201
614-221-2449, www.columbusalive.com

Columbus Messenger Newspapers

3500 Sullivant Ave. Columbus, OH 43204
614-272-5422, www.columbusmessenger.com

The Other Paper

5255 Sinclair Rd., P.O. Box 29913, Columbus, OH 43229
614-847-3800, www.theotherpaper.com

Columbus Monthly (magazine)

5255 Sinclair Rd., P.O. Box 29913, Columbus, OH 43229
614-888-4567, www.columbusmonthly.com

Outlook Weekly

406 E. Wilson Bridge Rd., Columbus, OH 43085
614-268-8525, www.outlooknews.com



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SBN Columbus

300B E. Main St., Ste. 254, Columbus, OH 43209
614-237-4469, www.sbnonline.com

Specialty Publications (Cont'd)

Upper Arlington Magazine

4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
614-572-1240, www.upperarlingtonmagazine.com

Television Stations

Westerville Magazine

4500 Mobile Dr., Ste. 100, Columbus, OH 43220
614-572-1240, www.westervilemagazine.com

Columbus' commercial television stations are WBNS (Channel 10, CBS), WSYX (Channel 6, ABC), WCMH (Channel 4, NBC) and WTTE (Channel 28, FOX). WOSU is a Public Broadcasting System station. The four commercial stations have live broadcast capability for local breaking news such as accidents, disasters or crime.

News conferences or interview sessions should be scheduled for the convenience of news media. For example, a 2 p.m. news conference is more likely to receive same-day coverage than one at 4:30 p.m., because reporters need time to write stories and assist in editing tapes. Certain hours of the day are traditionally favored for news conferences. These include 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Making the event "photogenic" can increase the possibility of coverage. While statistics are not television favorites, an interview can be enhanced with charts or graphics. All graphics illustrating the topic should be in color.

A news crew needs more than just an individual for an interview. It needs visuals for what is known as a cutaway, or film shown while the audio portion of the interview continues.

ONN, Ohio News Network

175 S. Third St., Columbus, OH 43215
614-280-3600, www.onnnews.com

WOSU-TV 34

2400 Olentangy River Rd., Columbus, OH 42310-1027
614-292-9678, www.wosu.org

WBNS-TV 10 (CBS Affiliate)

770 Twin Rivers Drive, P.O. Box 1010, Columbus, OH 43216
614-460-3758, www.10tv.com

WSYX-ABC 6 (ABC Affiliate)

1261 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-481-6667, www.abc6onyourside.com

WCMH NBC 4 (NBC Affiliate)

3165 Olentangy River Rd., P.O. Box 4, Columbus, OH 43202
614-263-5555, www.nbc4i.com

WTTE-FOX 28

1261 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-481-6659, www.myfox28columbus.com

Radio

News operations for Columbus radio stations range from headline services to all news and talk programming. In many cases, a company operates both an AM and FM station with one news department serving both. Normally, the AM station operates the news department. Most stations concentrate their longer newscasts to the morning and afternoon drive times.

Since radio news is the most immediate of all media, including the name and telephone number of a contact person on a press release is essential. The station may want a taped interview on the telephone and the reporters need instant communication. For that reason, the contact person should be near a telephone after a release is delivered. Most stations prefer electronic news releases. However, in the event of a last minute news conference or important news development, the assignment editor in the news department can be called.



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The station's format should be considered when targeting news releases. For example, WBNS is a sports-oriented station and interested in events relating to athletics. WCVO is religion-based, although it carries general news, too.

Often the assignment editor will not have sufficient personnel to cover your event. You may be asked to have the person of interest call the station for a taped telephone interview. A press release of what occurred during the event should be delivered immediately following the conclusion of the interview.

WBNS 1460 AM / WBNS 97.1 FM (Sports)
605 S. Front St., Ste. 300, Columbus, OH 43215
614-460-3850, www.1460thefan.com

WCBE 90.5 FM (NPR News, Alternative)
540 Jack Gibbs Blvd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-365-5555, www.wcbe.org

WCKX 107.5 FM / WXMG 98.9 FM / WJYD 106.3 FM (Urban Contemporary)
1500 W. Third Ave., Ste. 300, Columbus, OH 43212
614-487-1444, www.power1075.com / www.magic989.com / www.joy106.com

WCVO 104.9 FM (Christian)
881 E. Johnstown Rd., Gahanna, OH 43230
614-855-9171, www.1049theriver.com

WHOK 95.5 FM (Country)
2 Nationwide Plaza, 10th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215
614-229-3819, www.whok.com

WJZA 103.5 FM (Smooth Jazz)
655 Metro Place S., Ste. 100, Dublin, OH 43017
614-889-1043, www.wjza.com

WLVQ 96.3 FM (Classic Rock)
2 Nationwide Plaza, 10th floor, Columbus, OH 43215
614-227-9696, www.qfm96.com

WMNI 920 AM / WBZX 99.7 FM / WEGE 103.9 FM (Adult Standards / Rock / Classic Rock)
1458 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-232-0289, www.wmni.com / www.wbzx.com / www.eagle1039.com

WODB FM OLDIES 104.3 (Oldies)
4401 Carriage Hill Ln., Columbus, OH 43230
614-573-8400 x204, www.b1079.com

WOSU 820 AM / 89.7 FM (NPR and Local News / Classical)
2400 Olentangy River Rd., Columbus, OH 43210
614-292-9678, www.wosu.org

WRFD 880 AM (Christian Talk)
8101 N. High St., Ste. 360, Columbus, OH 43235
614-848-3108, www.wrfd.com

WTVN 610 AM / WZNW 1230 AM / WNCI 97.9 FM / WCOL 92.3 FM / WFJX 105.7 FM (News, Talk and Sports / Fox Sports / Adult Contemporary / Country / 80's Rock)
1301 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215
614-487-2480, www.610wtvn.com / www.progressive1230.com / www.wnci.com / www.wcol.com / www.1057thefox.com

WSNY 94.7 FM (Adult Contemporary)
4401 Carriage Hill Ln., Columbus, OH 43220
614-451-2191, www.sunny95.com

WWCD 101.1 FM (Alternative Rock)
503 S. Front St., Columbus, OH 43215
614-221-9923, www.cd101.com