

Marketing – What is Public Relations?

Public relations is concerned with the reputation of an individual or organisation: how it is perceived by the public, how it can be understood and how it can persuade people of the value of what it is doing.

When drawing up a PR strategy, it's best to consider:

- whom do you want to communicate with? – potential service users, beneficiaries, sponsors, funders, volunteers, people who are unaware of an issue, decision makers etc
- what do you want to communicate? – the service you provide, the issue you are campaigning, the cash you need to keep going etc
- how do you want to communicate? – the media outlets available to you, events, launches, networking etc
- when do you want to communicate? – draw up a calendar of key dates for PR activity.

Public relations starts from the moment you answer the phone or give someone a business card!

Building up good relations with the media can help you to reach a variety of audiences – local, regional, national, professional or specialist – but beware! The composition of an article, feature or programme is down to the journalists concerned, so make sure that you are not misrepresented.

It is good practice to nominate one person in your group as media spokesperson, with a delegate if necessary. This ensures that conflicting or inaccurate information is not given to the press.

When dealing with the media, don't forget to mention your sponsors – this is included in the terms and conditions attached to most grants.

(This information was prepared by Lynn Leadbeatter from bfunded, based at Keighley Voluntary Services, and is reproduced with permission.)