



THE AMERICAN LEGION

PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLKIT

Produced by the National Public Relations Commission of The American Legion



THE AMERICAN LEGION PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLKIT

Handymen are known for the old adage, “Be sure you use the right tool for the right job.” The text you are now reading is part of a system of public relations tools designed to give you a complete kit of easy to use media products that can be tailored to promote your American Legion post, unit or squadron activities throughout the year. Whether you are reading this in a book, on the Internet or from a compact disk or flash drive in your computer, this toolkit will arm you with the print, PowerPoint, Internet, video and audio products to get the job done with confidence in today’s high-technology media world. Best of all, this all-mode system utilizes the KISS principle for ease of use. It has been designed to give you the tools you need to be successful with the easiest possible methodology. From writing a news release to planning a major community event, this PR Toolkit will help you get the job done.

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SECTION ONE

The Changing Media World

...and how to engage it with your post public relations plan



SECTION ONE | THE CHANGING MEDIA WORLD

Just as the invention of the transistor began the space age rush to microchip processor computers that get smaller and more powerful every day, the explosion of the Internet has had a profound effect on the way Americans get their news and information.

In the late 1990's, the Internet and websites were considered by some to be just "fads." Today, due mainly to the exponential growth of the Internet, the communications paradigm has shifted and created new digital information sharing technologies that are dominating the way people can - and must - be reached. Many daily newspapers across the country have literally "folded," or given way to all electronic versions. As a result, many journalists are now doing double and triple duty. Reaching out to them in pitching story ideas requires a whole new approach - and toolkit of ready materials - to compete for their attention and time.

An entire new genre of social media has sprung up, leaving those public relations practitioners who have not embraced their use, in the dust. Television stations have cut back staff, including reporters and photographers, requiring many to become "one-man-bands," reporting and shooting the video themselves. Radio stations are moving to more "syndicated" programming, requiring fewer staff and live shows. Satellite radio offerings have increased dramatically, reaching national audiences while offering little to no local access opportunities.

At the same time, Internet technologies offer limitless access to both general and targeted audiences. Harnessing these new opportunities is critical to a healthy and effective communications outreach for American Legion family activities both at home and abroad.

Developing a communications/public relations plan that addresses the use of today's media technologies is the first step in successfully reaching the target audience(s) needed in your community.

But while the tools have, and continue, to change dramatically, the basic techniques of communications and public relations remain the same.

What is Public Relations?

As the term implies, public relations (PR) requires that you relate to the public in some manner. The question is, "What is a 'public' and how do we relate to it?" Several 'publics' require our attention as American Legion public relations practitioners. These include but are not limited to:

- Our members
- The media
- Local and national elected officials and decision-makers
- Local community members
- The public

You can narrow it further to specific target audiences, such as participants in The American Legion programs and recipients of our support and charitable contributions.

HOW you relate to the public depends on which public it is and what your message is.

In a nutshell, public relations is primarily about IMAGE. And every member of The American Legion plays a role in communicating our image to the various publics to which we relate. The positive and negative things seen and heard at every level of the organization affect peo-

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ples' perceptions of what The American Legion is and what we stand for. Perception is reality for most people.

The familiarity and reputation of its name are two of the greatest assets of any product or organization. In modern advertising terms, it's called "branding." It's the first thing you think of when you hear a name. For instance, what is the first thing you think of when you hear the word "Lexus"? Do you immediately think of luxury and quality? How about "McDonald's" or "Hyundai"? Now apply the same exercise to "The American Legion." Just remember that your perception will be different than anyone else's, because your image of a product or organization is based on your experiences and knowledge.

An organization's image is based on the character, integrity and total performance of the organization. It consists of every contact the organization has with its various publics. It is a composite of:

- The organization's history in dealing with people
- Internal attitude toward members
- External attitude toward community responsibility and involvement
- News releases, interviews and other dealings with the media
- Internal and external publications
- Institutional advertising

What is the image of The American Legion today? It depends on which public you ask. To the media in general, we are the largest veterans organization in the nation and are considered to be a reliable source of information relating to veterans issues. In some local communities, The American Legion has no image because no community

programs are conducted. In other local communities, members of The American Legion are champions of social issues and pillars of the community. Still others may view an American Legion post as a watering hole for older veterans without offering much for younger Iraq-Afghanistan veterans or their families. Each public's perception is its reality.

Responsibilities of a Post PR Officer

Public relations representatives might have any number of titles in corporate and government circles. Public affairs, communications, publicity, marketing, media relations, new media and several other like titles may be used. As discussed here, all these roles are combined into your job description as public relations officer or chairperson for your post or department.

In many ways, the public relations function is the most important function at any level of The American Legion. It is our job to inform, enlighten, persuade and convince our many publics of our beliefs, events and goals.

The first responsibility should be to determine your image in your community, if you don't already know. And you should constantly re-view your organization's standing on the image meter. Ask media representatives how they perceive your organization when you talk to them. Talk to your community leaders and to your post's neighbors. Talk to your members – not just those who are always there to help, but the members who seldom show up for meetings or events. Find out why they don't show up so you can begin to change their perceptions about the post and get them involved.

Your primary responsibility now will be to alter or maintain the image of your post and/or The American Legion and to communicate

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your various messages to each of your many publics. Based on your knowledge of what your image is, you can better focus your message(s) to achieve your goals, whether it is to garner support for a veterans issue or convince members to support a post function.

Good public relations begins with the post commander establishing policies and practices that are ethical, honest and in keeping with the public interest. Then the PR officer can take those policies and practices to the public for acclaim, understanding and, if need be, for clarifying any misconceptions.

The post PR officer is expected to provide four basic services:

Advice and Counsel

The PR officer should advise post officers of the PR impact policy decisions will have on the media, on the community and on members.

Communications Service

The process of letting the members and the public know about events and policies via newsletters, booklets, speeches, news media, good citizenship, examples and other means.

Public Relations Research

Identifying, evaluating and communicating information of community or world events to the post leaders and members who would help the post manage its affairs better.

Public Relations Promotion

Development and execution of a variety of programs and activities designed to gain acceptance for the post among members and within the community.

The Military Public Relations Model

For years, the United States military has successfully utilized a three-tiered public affairs (relations) paradigm. From the Pentagon down to the post/fort/base level, military public affairs offices divided the PR mission into three separate, but related, functions:

Media Relations

Outreach to the general public is crucial to the success of any corporate or private entity. While there are varied ways to disseminate information, the media offer the best way to reach the largest number of people with your information.

Why won't your local newspaper run your story about this weekend's fish fry? What is that TV reporter doing inside your post at the bar with a photographer interviewing your members? How did that story get printed without me (or the post commander) knowing anything about it?

Effective media relations mean that you and the various media in your area have a good working relationship. It's a mutual relationship based on trust and honesty. They call you when they need answers on veterans' issues, and you know who to call to provide a local angle to a national story regarding The American Legion. Building these personal relationships will require real time and effort but the payoff will be well worth it.

Internal Information

Notify your members through newsletters, the Internet, email, and social media of what is going on at your post, as well as passing on local and national policy and program issues of importance to all members.

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Don't assume that just because your members pay their dues every year that they understand what The American Legion is all about. Keeping our members informed of ALL of the issues is critical to keeping them motivated and active at all levels. Members who are constantly kept in the communications loop about what your post is doing are much more likely to renew their memberships.

Community/External Relations

Whether you are inviting members of your community to attend a ceremony or function at your post, having a membership drive or conducting an area-wide information campaign, you will need to reach people who are not members of your post. This will involve coordination with not only the media, but all other elements in your community to include outreach to businesses, elected officials, schools and religious leaders as well as other civic groups in your town or neighborhood. It may involve obtaining sponsorships for post events.

As good citizens of your community, your post members should ask to be represented at various civic functions or meetings. While the post commander will most often be the point of contact for civic and community functions, the PR officer should be the one to advise the commander on specific issues and will act as spokesperson on occasion. Good community relations should also include a post speaker's bureau to be able to tell The American Legion story in speeches to other community groups.

Continuity Is Critical

Public relations requires development of relationships with various officials, media representatives, and department and national staff members. It's critical to have some form of continuity in your efforts to

maintain these relationships. In a volunteer organization, it's difficult to saddle one individual with this much responsibility for an extended time. As an alternative, try to spread the responsibilities to several individuals, allowing them to specialize in various areas.

At the very least, maintain a comprehensive PR log or computerized spread sheet at your post/district/department to provide continuity for each person assuming the responsibilities. The data should include contact names, deadlines for various media, submission procedures for articles or public service announcements (PSAs) and a contact history for various individuals to include what was discussed, etc. (See sample contact sheets in [Section 4](#).)

Conducting a PR Campaign

Quite often as we plan events, we will know where every table and chair will be placed and exactly when everything will happen to the minute. But publicizing the event is frequently done at the last minute, sometimes to the detriment of success.

Planning

Because much of what we do in The American Legion is cyclical, creating an annual calendar should be the first step in the planning process. You also need to make sure PR is on the agenda for all planning meetings. Each aspect of the event should take into consideration the impact on public relations as it applies to all of the areas discussed above.

The [Event Planning section](#) in this PR Toolkit will enable you to develop a comprehensive package including a publicity plan based

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on deadlines and submission requirements for the various media you intend to use.

For special news events and campaigns, your plan should include an objective statement and a detailed outline on how you intend to reach your target audience(s) with your message. What is your goal and how do you intend to reach that goal? How will you know you've reached your goal? Take advantage of the many products available in this PR Systems Toolkit, such as press releases, speeches, message points, etc.

Documenting

As an event or media campaign develops, document your activity and the results. This is done not only for you, but also for the person in charge of next year's event. Document anything you think might be useful for planning future events, including:

- Helpful contacts not listed in your manual.
- Missed opportunities or things you WISH you had done.
- Which media attended your event and/or reasons others gave for not attending.
- Things that went right AND things that went wrong, including the reasons why.

Evaluating

As part of the documentation phase, make sure you provide an honest evaluation of how you think the event turned out. Whether it's a media event or a post holiday party, take the time to ask some hard questions and provide honest answers.

- Did we reach the target audience with our message?
- Although our message was included in various media, did we reach the people we needed to reach?
- What was the reaction to the message? Did it cause people to react and/or take action as we intended? Why?

When you have everything documented and evaluated, make sure someone else knows about it. Share your plans and evaluations with others. Mentor new members and bring them in to help you so you will have some continuity for next year's event(s).

Conclusion

For many reasons, public relations can be considered the single most important function within your post, district or department. Every member is involved in it, most without even realizing it. Public relations will have an impact on everything you do at your post, and everything you do at your post will somehow impact public relations.

SECTION TWO

Public Relations Tools

Components available to you



The American Legion Public Relations Toolkit is intended to give you the basic tools and ideas to work with regardless of your level of experience and responsibility in The American Legion.

Can you imagine a plumber trying to fix a leaky faucet without tools?

Or a dentist filling a cavity without a drill and instruments?

The use of PR media tools in executing a post public relations strategy is just as crucial. Armed with an array of new high-tech media products that can be adapted to meet the needs of any situation and publication standard, a post can easily reach out to media outlets in the area and successfully market these products. Getting placement means public outreach, education and image enhancement for The American Legion, its programs, and its services to veterans, their families and young people in the community.

What Are PR Tools?

Public relations tools are stand-alone, print or broadcast-ready materials that can be taken directly to media, or sent electronically, for publication or broadcast. They promote The American Legion, its programs, membership, latest advocacy campaigns and patriotic holidays. They are professionally produced by the national public relations commission office and are available FREE upon request in quantities needed by each post or they can be found [here](#) as part of this toolkit package.

All media tools in this system are designed to be adapted to your post information needs. Templates for proclamations, news releases and advisories, letters to the editor, etc., are fill-in-the-blank. Whether the PR tool is print or broadcast, space or time is left open for post

contact information. For example, a 60-second radio spot might leave 10 seconds of music only at the end (no announcer's voice) in which the local station announcer, or post spokesperson, can add, "For more information, call American Legion Post XXX at 222-2222." Digital ads will allow you to enter your local contact information.

Why Use PR Tools?

Every newspaper or website wants to publish the best, most professionally produced and eye-catching ad. Reporters today look for more than story ideas - they look for great quality photos, website links and even short videos of your story they can post on their newspaper's website. Every electronic media wants the most eye-catching, hard-hitting and great sounding spot for their medium. The post public relations officer who can provide such a product enjoys a distinct advantage over others who may approach a media outlet with just notes scribbled on a piece of paper. Additionally, a professionally produced product is the end result of extensive research, editing and polishing of message points in compact, efficient packages.

American Legion PR media tools use advanced digital-editing techniques, professionally experienced talent, gifted writers, wide-ranging musical arrangements and sound effects. State-of-the-art graphics enhance television productions. The television spot available free to American Legion posts would typically cost more than \$10,000 to produce by a regional production facility. A professionally produced CD of a variety of 30- and 60-second public service announcements costs between \$6,000 and \$10,000, depending on studio time, talent fees, production technician hours, music license fees, CD packaging materials and complexity

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of different production elements. American Legion media products are all produced at The American Legion's own in-house, state-of-the-art, digital production facility at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The public relations staff has worked professionally as writers, broadcasters and editors for both the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service and commercial stations and newspapers. Thus, PR materials can be developed and distributed on a continuous basis to meet the emerging issues of American Legion advocacy in addition to the perennial requirements of membership recruitment at NO COST to the post.

Variety

What works at one media outlet may not work some place else. Some radio stations will readily air 60-second public service spots, while others may not accept any that are more than 30 seconds in length. Still others only have time for quick 10 to 15-second tags. The media products available for your use are designed to include a variety of sizes, lengths, formats and themes to accommodate nearly every type of print or broadcast station or cable system. The public relations officer can approach program and public service directors armed with confidence and a full media tool kit to fit virtually any media requirement. Written copy for radio spots is included with each CD to enable stations that prefer to produce their own spots with their own announcers to use Legion materials.

Marketing

PR media tools can be made more effective by getting your message printed, put on the Internet, spread by social media, broadcast or distributed. While emails to local media may work, that correspondence

becomes just one of hundreds received by the station or newspaper. The tried-and-true, most successful method to get American Legion public service materials placed on a broadcast schedule, short of paid advertising, is through personal contact with station directors or editors who have cognizance over the schedule or layout of the publication. **Section 4** discusses marketing techniques in detail.

Bottom line: nothing is more effective than establishing amiable face-to-face relationships with area media executives.

In this section you will find a background information sheet and significant dates in the history of The American Legion for use in developing a post media kit. Every post should have at least five media kits on the shelf, ready to be given to reporters who may show up at the post on short notice. These materials should be augmented with another background information sheet listing the specific accomplishments of your post, including ongoing projects. Additionally, create the media kit digitally to have available to reporters. **See Annex A**

Print Media

Ads and posters are available from the national Public Relations office on a variety of Legion programs. They are available in **Annexes K & M** of this toolkit. Editing fields in each of them enable you to insert contact information, post number and telephone number along with any specialized message that might be appropriate. Simply enter the information and save the print ready file for use in publications, Legion newsletters and commercial newspapers. Creativity is key. For example, some posts have added contact information, made 1,000 copies and placed them on the windshields of cars in shopping malls as handbills.

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Because most shoppers may not be veterans, this is a hit-and-miss technique. But if just five new members sign up, they can become active volunteers. Others have used the one column-sized ad slicks to reproduce and pass out as bookmarks at recruiting booths and area schools. Many post the slicks in windows of area businesses, the post office, National Guard Armory bulletin boards, etc.

Message Points

Every post should maintain a set of American Legion message points. These are bullet points for virtually every issue of The American Legion as authorized by National Executive Committee or National Convention resolutions. They are sound-bite-sized and extremely useful in preparing for interviews with local media on veterans issues, national defense and the programs of The American Legion. Because they are updated constantly based on new resolutions passed during National Convention or by the National Executive Committee, they can be downloaded anytime by going to the message point page on legion.org by visiting www.legion.org/publications. The section on Media Interview Training Techniques includes a discussion of how to use them for a variety of media opportunities.

Proclamations

Preparing a proposed proclamation for the mayor or county executive significantly increases the probability of having it signed and ready for use on an appropriate holiday. Positive news coverage can be garnered through use of proclamations to recognize veteran-oriented holidays and activities. The following is a suggested proclamation for

The American Legion birthday. See [Annex C](#) for other suggested proclamations. Using these as a guide, proclamations can be crafted for nearly any occasion or event. Try to get a draft to the mayor's office at least 30 days prior to the event.

EXAMPLE

The American Legion Birthday

WHEREAS, The American Legion was formed in 1919, shortly after the termination of World War I hostilities; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans united by a common bond of continued service to God and country; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion will observe the (number) anniversary of its founding, March 15-17, as an organization comprised of nearly 3 million men and women who have served their country with honor during one of the wars since the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, By giving meaningful service in conjunction with the theme "Still Serving America," Legionnaires have made significant contributions to American thought and deed; and

WHEREAS, Endeavors of The American Legion, which strengthen our freedom and perpetuate our free institutions, characterize this gigantic fraternity of service as one of the great bulwarks of the American way of life; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has achieved its position of high esteem through programs of service to community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Such programs have become an integral part of (city or county, state); now, therefore

I (full name and title) of (city, county or state) do hereby proclaim the week of March (Sunday through Saturday of week of March 15-17) 20XX, as American Legion Week, and do call upon all citizens, companies and organizations to join with me in commending the good works of this organization as an expression of appreciation for the wartime and peace-

time services of our Legionnaires. They are truly “Still Serving America.”
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be af-
fixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number)
day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

See Annex C for other suggested proclamations.

NALPA

National American Legion Press Association

The National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) is an association of editors, writers, business managers, historians, public relations officers and staff personnel who are members of The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and other subsidiary organizations.

Founded in 1923 as an adjunct to the Legion’s early publications committee, NALPA was established to facilitate communications, from the national organization to the post level, within The American Legion. Through a network of active members, NALPA fulfills the mission by encouraging idea exchanges among members; promoting the development of local communications; advancing training through information dissemination; enhancing professional development; promoting the Legion’s goals; and acting as a voice of the association’s membership.

We like to think of NALPA as the “image-makers and communicators” of The American Legion, and we strive to let people know what The American Legion is – especially on the post level.

Members of NALPA are strong, loud voices of The American Legion.

NALPA is a professional association of American Legion public relations officers, editors and staff members of publications who come together to enhance their trades. Through local publications, NALPA encourages posts and departments to promote The American Legion objectives to the membership. All members hear about the national agenda from National Headquarters’ publications and mailings, but many don’t always know what is happening in their own back yards. A well-done post newsletter bridges that gap.

We have found that posts with newsletters have a more active membership that is greater in numbers. When people get that post information in their hands, they know what is going on in their area and can share it with potential members, as well as take action to make a difference for veterans and their families.

Post newsletters also assist older veterans who can’t get out much. This might be the only communication they have with the post. They, like everyone else, deserve to be informed about what is going on. *Items of interest to the veteran that occur in their cities, towns and villages can be included in the post newsletters.*

NALPA’s association with the National Public Relations Division and *The American Legion Magazine*, has made it easier for the average NALPA Legionnaire to keep up-to-date on the happenings of The American Legion if he or she is a NALPA member. In recent years,

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belonging to NALPA has created extra perks through the national organization. *The American Legion Magazine* and *The Dispatch* publications are offered to NALPA members at a cost of only \$6. That's a savings of \$9 off the annual subscription rate. This is especially beneficial to members of the Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion who belong to NALPA.

NALPA conducts an annual "Best Papers" contest with categories for the best competing publications nation wide in The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and other affiliated organizations.

The annual "Best Papers" competition provides NALPA with an avenue to recognize local publications that go the extra mile to inform their members. The competition is open to publications of all sizes. Awards are given in various categories, including editorial, newsletters and websites. Competition categories are:

NALPA Press Awards

Competition Categories and Rules

1. Department — George W. Hooten Award

For Department-wide publications

- Department publications for departments over 70,000 members
- Department publications under 70,000 members
- Other department publications (SAL, Auxiliary, press associations, etc.)

2. District, County, Regional — Emerson O. Mann Plaque

For district-wide, county-wide or region-wide publications

- Legion publications
- All other district, county or regional publications (SAL, Auxiliary, etc.)

3. Larger Posts — Al Weinberg Plaque

For all publications produced at the post level.

- Posts over 750 members
- Posts with 250 - 749 members

4. Smaller Posts, Units, Squadrons — R. C. Cann Plaque

For all publications produced at the post level.

- Posts up to 250 members
- All other unit/squadron publications (SAL, Auxiliary, etc.)

5. Websites - Mary B. Howard Award

For all websites created to support the American Legion family

- Department websites
- All other websites

6. Editorial — William E. Rominger Plaque

Must have appeared originally in an American Legion or member publication within the contest year.

- Original effort of editor
- Guest editorial (by lined or author identified)

Rules

Basis of Judging

Newspapers will be judged on: Content; clear, concise and bal-

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anced writing; make-up; design and appearance; use of photos and illustrations.

Editorials will be judged on: Headline and lead arousal of interest; clear, concise and imaginative writing; research and grasp of subject; timely and appropriate objectives suitable to public.

Websites will be judged on: Local information, site design, links, appropriateness of information and attractiveness.

Entry Instructions

- Must be current member of the National American Legion Press Association.

- For categories 1, 2, 3 and 4, submit three (3) papers, one each of three separate issues.

- For category 5, submit the electronic address for your website.

- For category 6, submit only one (1) editorial. Send entire paper or tear-sheet containing the editorial, and date of issue.

- For all newspaper and editorial entries, an identifying cover sheet must be submitted, with the following information, typed or printed neatly:

- a. Name and number of post, district, unit, squadron, etc.
- b. Full address of post, unit, squadron, etc.
- c. Name of publication.
- d. Frequency of publication.
- e. Average circulation number.
- f. Name mailing address, phone number of editor.

g. Name, mailing address, and phone number of entrant, if other than editor.

- For website entries:

- a. Name and number of post, district, unit squadron, etc.
- b. Full address of post, unit, squadron, etc.
- c. Address of website.
- d. Frequency of publication.
- e. Name, mailing address, phone number of editor.

Entry Fee

An entry fee of \$10 for each entry must accompany the submission. Entry fee can be paid check payable to NALPA.

Entry Deadline

Entries must be postmarked not later than May 31 of the contest year and mailed to:

The current president, his/her address may be found in the NALPA newsletter or on the web at www.nalpa.org.

Please mark the lower left corner of your mailing envelope: "CONTEST" and indicate the entry category for judging.

Awards are presented at the annual NALPA awards luncheon in the national convention city just prior to the formal convention sessions.

NALPA, through association membership, provides its members with a quarterly newsletter at no additional cost. This newsletter provides a forum for the NALPA membership to gain and share information to enhance their local publications. Contributions to this publi-

cation come from various sources, such as the national commander, national public relations staff, past national commanders, NALPA members, and other interested individuals wanting to spread the news of The American Legion. You can not only receive the newsletter in a printed format, but also in a digital format by requesting a digital of the newsletter by emailing your request to nalpanewsletter@gmail.com

Department Press Associations

A department press association is just as vital and necessary as the department itself in the set-up of The American Legion organization. If a department does not have an active press association the department leaders should seek a Legionnaire to organize an association, and actively promote communication through the post and district editors. Good communication is a key to education and membership.

A department press association can tie all its papers, websites and e-mails together for the purpose of mutual helpfulness. Editors can create a network of fellow editors department wide and exchange ideas, newsletters, information and publications which will keep the membership of their department informed and encourage the spread of information. A press association can carry on an active campaign, post by post, to create new publications. It can publish its own monthly newsletter, designed to help post publications through suggested material, suggested editorials, and by calling attention to various programs and events that posts should publish. It should spearhead the yearly Legion membership drive by seeing that all its post publications use all printed and electronic media methods to stimulate these drives.

A department press association is a subsidiary of the National American Legion Press Association (NALPA), and wherever possible, collects national dues at the same time it collects department dues. NALPA dues should be sent to: The American Legion Public Relations Division, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Include with your check a transmittal list of names and addresses of those covered by the payment. NALPA membership cards will be mailed at the close of the National Convention. The NALPA fiscal year is from August 1 to July 30 of each year. The membership year coincides with the fiscal year. NALPA has a membership meeting at the national convention at which time officers are elected and area vice presidents and committees give their reports.

It is suggested that a department press association meet at least twice a year: the department convention and mid-winter conference are considered the best times. A public relations and publicity workshop should be conducted at each meeting.

A department press association can make yearly awards to the best publications as an incentive to increase effectiveness, as well as an award for a job well done. The suggested time to make these awards is at the annual meeting in conjunction with the department convention.

It is suggested that the close of the fiscal year for a department press association be at the time of the annual department convention. Yearly reports should be made at this time, and officers should be elected for the coming year. The president should appoint a nominating committee and an auditing committee at least two months prior to the annual meeting.

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A department press association can be organized even though only two or three post publications are in the department. The prime purpose of a department press association is the creation of new post publications. The department press association can be the conduit through which information and education can flow from the National Public Relations Division to the blue cap Legionnaire.

NALPA encourages the widest use of the electronic media for communications. The National Headquarters as well as your departments are making use of the websites and e-mails and newsletter editors should make use of this type of communication.

Every organization is the sum of its membership and through membership comes the power to pave the road that NALPA will follow into the future. The greater the membership, the smoother the road.

Increased membership is needed to carry on programs and ensure the future of The American Legion. Department press associations, with initiative and determination, can lead the way to a greater American Legion that will more effectively represent the majority of America's veterans.

Twenty-one departments now enjoy the presence and assistance of NALPA. Each of these associations take on a local name to reflect the department's overall image. For example, the Department of New York uses the name, "New York American Legion Press Association (NYALPA)".

If you have a desire to become an "image-maker" and "communicator" for The American Legion, or if your department is interested in starting an association, visit the National American Legion Press Association website at www.nalpa.org.

Or write to:

Michael P. Duggan
Executive Director – NALPA
P.O. Box 334
West Seneca, NY 14224-0334

E-mail: mdug1015@roadrunner.com

SECTION **THREE**

Public Information Campaigns

A multi-media effort



SECTION THREE | PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

There will be times when just issuing a press advisory or a news release will not achieve the desired coverage by the media. Depending on the specific desired outcome, a full blown, multi-media information campaign may be warranted.

A campaign is designed to reach a desired audience over a specific period of time to achieve a desired outcome. For example, conducting an annual membership campaign over a period of one or more months would involve sending out news releases, letters to the editor, radio and television spots and morning show appearances, calling local talk radio shows, giving speeches to local groups, writing letters to local businesses, and perhaps even staging a large public event where new members could be recruited.

Other public information campaigns could include: Get Out the Vote; advocacy campaigns such as support of the flag amendment or enforcement of immigration laws - all positions of The American Legion. The objectives could be as simple as just letting the public know about the services of The American Legion or more impactful, getting a majority of citizens to contact their elected officials to vote on a specific piece of pending legislation.

Whatever the reason, a successful information campaign requires planning well in advance; the establishment of objectives and the clear statement of a desired outcome. Setting milestones is critical to ensure sustained progress.

Media Campaign Kits

A number of American Legion information campaign guides are available on Legion.org. They include campaign-specific materials

including planning booklets, ad slicks, radio and television spots, milestones, sample letters and more.

Campaign-specific media kits will be developed as needed to address breaking veterans and national security issues of importance to The American Legion. All are designed to facilitate ease of post participation with fill-in-the-blank news releases, letters, editorials, speeches, milestones, event planning, etc. and will be electronically included in this system toolkit as they come online.

Electronic Media

Radio Public Service Announcements

PR radio media tools include two formats: written and produced. Written copy included in the Radio Copy section of *Annex F* can be used by filling in the blanks with the appropriate local information and post contact, placed on post letterhead and marketed to area radio stations. The spots can then be read by the station's on-air personalities when no commercials are sold for the time block. Additionally, a radio station may turn the copy over to the production department to add music, sound effects or multiple voices. The produced version would then be used during the normal PSA rotation within the station's broadcast day.

Produced radio-spot packages are available on CD, or for download from the American Legion website, including:

- Membership, including women and minority, recruiting
- American Legion programs & issues

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- Patriotic holidays
- Blue Star Service Banner

Membership recruiting spots may or may not be accepted as public-service announcements by stations. Since a fee is charged for membership, some stations consider these spots advertising and require payment for broadcast. **Section 6** will address the best methods of approaching this technique of reaching out to the community. Other stations will air The American Legion membership spots once they are aware that The American Legion is a tax-free 501(C)19 veterans service and patriotic youth-oriented organization.

Most radio spots have music beds at the end over which post contact information can be given by the announcer.

Television Public Service Announcements

The current inventory of television PSAs includes:

- Various membership PSAs
- Youth program PSAs
- Patriotic holidays
- Other PSAs promoting Legion programs

PSAs can be downloaded directly by a television or cable system, recorded on a DVD for direct marketing or ordered from the National Public Relations Commission office to present to television stations and cable systems. Professional BetaSP format tapes can be sent directly to the broadcast facility by the National Public Relations office when a commitment to use is provided to the post. This service is free to the post or the broadcast facility.

Videos

There are numerous videos including instructional videos, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and briefing videos on The American Legion and its many programs. Videos are provided on DVD at no cost, or they can be viewed on the Internet at LegionTV (www.legion.org/legiontv) or on the American Legion HQ channel of YouTube. Many of the videos are also available for download on legion.org. If you need a video in a format to post on your post website, contact the Public Relations Division to make a specific request.

For a current list of available videos, see **Annex I**. Most of the videos available through your Public Relations Commission are free of copyright restrictions unless otherwise noted on the disc or in the program. You are free to copy and distribute within The American Legion and to show publicly at any Legion function. If you plan to air programs other than PSAs on broadcast or cable please contact the Public Relations Division at pr@legion.org to make sure proper clearances have been obtained for your use.

Other PR media tools produced by The American Legion:

Suggested Speeches

The National Public Relations Division office writes prepared public remarks every year for the following observances:

- American Legion Birthday, March
- Memorial Day, May
- Flag Day, June
- Veterans Day, November

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Each speech can be read without modification or used as a basis to adapt for delivery to specific audiences as appropriate. These speeches are normally available about four weeks in advance of the day. You can download them from www.legion.org/publications#speeches or request them by phone, mail or email.

Stock speeches also are available by request from the public relations office for the following special events and programs:

- Dedication of a New Post Home
- Women Veterans
- Presentations to Civic and Community Groups about Legion Programs
- “We Call Ourselves Legionnaires”
- Americanism
- Flag Retirement Ceremony
- POW/MIA
- Our Preamble

Legionnaires frequently called upon to provide remarks are invited to add their names to the speeches mailing list to automatically receive them as they are written and distributed.

PR Tools on the Internet

As media technology evolves, so does the ability of The American Legion to provide media tools directly to Legionnaires via the Internet. Nearly all American Legion media tools are available in this toolkit.

As your American Legion national staff produces new media products, they will be electronically added to this system. The PR staff

stands ready to answer any questions on PR media tools or conducting your community public relations campaign.

All American Legion PR Media Tools are available FREE upon request. If you cannot access what you need through this PR System Toolkit, call **(317) 630-1253** or e-mail **pr@legion.org**. Write to **The American Legion Public Relations Division, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**.

Social Media

Introduction

One of the most difficult aspects of communication today is capturing your audience through the many avenues available via social media networks, websites and blogs. The vast universe of these communities is almost overwhelming and far beyond the scope of this toolkit to address in sufficient detail. The key to making this medium work for you is to understand how your specific audiences use them and how to take advantage of that use to communicate your key messages.

To begin, we offer a few tips on how to get started in a few of the social media and suggest that you study your audiences and take a few classes in new media to orient yourself. This is a perfect example of an opportunity to bring someone familiar with the technology and concepts of social media to assist you in developing and implementing a campaign. The best way to start, however, is to jump right in.

What exactly are social media?

Social media refer to activities, practices and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media.

Conversational media are web based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, photos, video and audio.

Like all practices, social media have rules to follow:

- Social media are all about enabling conversations.
- You can't control conversations but you can influence them.

You need to understand that the social media ecosystem will rapidly change with the possibility of 80 percent of present tools used in social media to either end up out of business, merge or purchased by larger companies. For this reason, understand the categories these tools fit into so that the social media strategy you formulate is not tool dependent.

It is important to create a strategy to incorporate social media into your public relations endeavors. Resist the urge to sign up for everything that makes the news because it appears that it is the cutting edge technology that all would want. Like all campaigns and strategies, the determination of who your audience is and how best to reach them should be the determining factor. The more you know about your audience, the better you can fine tune any tool or application you put into place.

Social media are driven by text, photos, audio and video and simulated environments. The goal of all social media is to engage people.

Four Pillars of Social Media

Just as the Legion's strengths lie on four pillars, a social media strategy requires four pillars to make the entire strategy work.

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Education
- Entertainment

Communication

Are you really communicating your message and how it is being perceived by your audience? Is there any way to measure the effectiveness of your communication?

With some social media tools, you can measure things that eventually will translate into something tangible whether it is an increased membership, or renewal, a larger corral of volunteers or just a more informed membership base taking the organization's story to others.

With an email newsletter in place through an inexpensive solution such as Graphic Mail (www.graphicmail.com), you have at your fingertips information such as how many people opened your email, clicked a link or gave answers to a survey. Given this information you can tailor your content to fit what it is your audience wants to read.

Quick Start Strategy

Create and send a basic newsletter using an email delivery service. You can obtain a trial account at Graphic Mail (www.graphicmail.com)

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that will allow you to import an email list, create and send a newsletter to the list for 30 days before any cost is incurred.

Collaboration

Joining with like-minded people on subjects the Legion supports and collaborates together in a blog setting or forum.

Quick Start Strategy

Find two blogs that complement The American Legion. Read recent posts and join into the conversation. You can quickly find blogs that are in the desired subject matter by searching Technorati (www.technorati.com). Results from searching there will also show an “authority” rating. This rating is how many times other blogs link to that particular one which gives you a good indication as to the blog’s popularity as an influencer.

Engagement Through Education

Your ultimate social media strategy should be to leverage your expertise about the Legion, its programs and the developments within the Legion.

Quick Start Strategy

Start your own blog and include it on your post or department website. The goal is to educate viewers on subjects pertaining to The American Legion. You can easily set up an account at Blogger (www.blogger.com). Google owns Blogger and is the host for it giving the user much ease in setup and utilization.

Work on the quality and relevance of the content. More than likely your readers will provide feedback that will help improve that quality.

Entertainment

A picture/video is worth a thousand words. Tell the story in pictures. Share the experience with others through video.

Quick Start Strategy

Create a YouTube account and upload a video. The goal is to get some basic experience with the tool. As you sign up, note members are encouraged to comment, rate and make video responses to your favorite videos. YouTube is another conversation starting tool.

Categories of Social Media

Categories are those areas within the four pillars of social media that you choose to incorporate within your strategy of taking advantage of social media ventures.

Category 1 – Social Networking

Social Networking versus Social Media

There is much confusion between the terms social networking and social media, often using them interchangeably. They do not mean the same thing.

Social networking is one of the categories of social media. Social networking as a human activity predates all forms of digital technology. Conversation is the natural result when two or more people get together.

What Social Networks Accomplish

A trusted network is a group of like-minded people who have come together in a common place to share thoughts, ideas and information about themselves or a subject they relate to.

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Social networks have been around as long as there have been humans to create them.

A social network, trusted network, virtual community, e-community or online community is a group of people who interact through newsletters, blogs, comments, and email and who use text, audio, photos and video for social, professional and educational purposes.

The social network's goal is to build trust in a given community.

Example:

“Is it going to rain?”

“I don't know, but my sister said it was snowing yesterday in Philadelphia.”

“I didn't know your sister lived in Philadelphia. I've got a meeting there at the beginning of the month.”

With social networking tools, using the above example, you would then be able to connect your friend with your sister in Philadelphia who on her Facebook page lists her favorite restaurants downtown. Even though your friend may not know your sister, your friend looks upon her as a trusted source because she is part of your trusted network.

There are social networking tools that allow you to share information with others by creating profiles and allowing you to post content.

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Facebook (www.facebook.com)

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)

MySpace (www.myspace.com)

Ning (www.ning.com)

Category 2 – Publish

This category includes email campaigns and blogging.

Blogging

A blog is a website that is maintained by an individual with regular entries or posts that include commentary, thoughts and ideas and may contain photos, audio or video.

Blogs usually have text, images, videos and links to other blogs and websites that relate to the blog's subject matter.

One of the most important features of a blog is the reader's ability to interact with the author through comments.

Remember that conversations can't be controlled within the realm of social media but they can be influenced; strive to become known as an “influencer” on a subject - highly desirable not only for increased readership, but reputation building.

Tips for Serious Bloggers:

- Post often
- Use catchy blog post titles
- Ask open-ended questions
- Comment on other blogs – OFTEN

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- Use Twitter (microblogging tool)
- Create a Facebook page for your blog. Import your blog posts as notes to Facebook
- Use videos within your posts
- Link to other, related blog posts regularly within your own posts. Outbound links are relished by search engines

Twitter

Microblogging began with the advent of the blog. People began to post more condensed, portable versions of their conventional blog posts which were subsequently called a microblog.

One of the first on board to offer a tool for Microblogging was Twitter, which debuted in October 2006.

Twitter is a microblogging and social networking tool that allows users to send a brief (140 characters) text-based post (called Tweets). The post shows either on a user's cell phone, website or Twitter site along with also being delivered to anyone who has signed up and been accepted to "follow" your posts. The same is true of any Tweets you have requested and been approved to follow.

As your presence on Twitter grows, people you don't know will begin to follow you. This is like people reading your blog or visiting your web site. They are interested in what you have to say, so keeping that in mind and remembering that content is "king", build your reputation on Twitter as an influencer.

Tweeting and following constitutes the two-way communication and trusted network that drives the microblogging community. Any time someone you're following ceases to deliver relevant content, you

un-follow the person. This is the power of permission based marketing where you choose who is allowed to communicate with you and who isn't.

With the ease of creating a micropost, Twitter's popularity is understandable. Posts are also less complicated to digest than traditional blogs. Information tends to be current and rapid-fire, which often times leads to being more likely to be read.

Jargon of Microblogging on Twitter

- A Twitterer is a person using Twitter to send out posts or tweets
- A tweet is a post or text message sent from one Twitterer to another
- The Twittering community is called the "Twitosphere"
- Remember: Once you hit send, your tweet is out there. No turning back. A regretted tweet is called a "MisTweet"

EXAMPLES OF PUBLISHING TOOLS

Blogger (www.blogger.com) (free blog setup site, owned/hosted by Google)

Wordpress (www.wordpress.com) (free blog application – to be installed on your server)

Typepad (www.typepad.com) (minimal cost blog application – installed on your server)

Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) (email delivery/list management company)

Graphic Mail (www.graphicmail.com) (email delivery/list management company)

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Category 3 – Photo sharing

A picture is worth a thousand words, and the value increases exponentially when you upload, sort, organize and share photos with those interested in the functions of your post.

As you upload and organize photos of the various happenings at your post, it is important to also include as much metadata information as possible. By including descriptive information, you successfully optimize them for increased ease of search engines to index them, ultimately assisting your target audience finding them from their searches.

There are a number of photo sharing sites that are easy to use and manage.

EXAMPLES OF PHOTO SHARING TOOLS

Flickr (www.flickr.com)

Photobucket (www.photobucket.com)

Both of these sites not only allow you to share photos, but are additionally social communities themselves. Groups can be formed and commenting allowed. Accounts are free to set up and uploading of photos is easy. Both easily integrate to other sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Blogger.

Category 4 – Audio

Think about how many automakers today are in the game to make their cars iPod compatible. So many people who drive frequently enjoy listening to news, music, weather or other audio information. Radio historically has filled this role. Today, it is different.

Podcasting is a way to bring The American Legion message to an audience who embraces this form of media. Like nearly all of the present social media tools, it is basically free.

Podcasting is simply an audio expression of user generated content. Everything you need to create a podcast is right inside your computer. Add an external microphone, free audio recording and editing software and your creativity, then click “record”, input your message and click “save”.

For distribution and additional help in creating your podcasts the following sites are a few of the many that allow ease of account creation and file uploading:

EXAMPLES OF AUDIO TOOLS

iTunes (www.itunes.com)

Podcast.com (www.podcast.com)

Rhapsody (www.rhapsody.com)

Category 5 – Video

As with photos, sharing video is an easy and free opportunity to incorporate. Human psychology suggests that the more robust or stimulating the experience, the more engaging it is along with the increased retention of the message. In short, an engaging video will be watched to its conclusion.

Creating video of your post activities can be relatively inexpensive with today’s affordable video equipment. Uploading the content is easy and free.

YouTube (www.youtube.com), is the well known video sharing website that allows you to customize your group or channel and then upload, share and organize your videos.

YouTube is only one of the video sites available. You can utilize the services of heyspread.com which provides a single point for deploying uploads to the top video and social media sites. Using the service also gives access to analytics on who, what, and how your videos are being viewed.

Additionally your video content should be embedded into your website.

Category 6 – Live Casting

Broadcasting information online is all about creating live content that uses the Internet to distribute that content.

Do-It-Yourself Radio is a form of live casting. The shows are usually limited to one hour. BlogtalkRadio (www.blogtalkradio.com) is a platform that allows a user to host a live Internet radio show. The only tools needed are a telephone, Internet access and a browser. It can be thought of as the audio version of the Internet blog.

It is designed to be a simple process to set up and once the broadcast is concluded. A listener can download a podcast version for later listening and/or sharing. This is another powerful, yet easy and free opportunity to reach out with The American Legion message.

Getting your feet wet in the social media ocean will acclimate you to the thinking and purpose behind it. By understanding its simplicity you will have equipped yourself with the knowledge that will allow you to grow and morph right along with the social media movement itself.

The Website: Your Window to the World – An Invitation for All to Look Inside

Website Design, Usage, Tips and Info

A well-designed, user-friendly website can help you engage new members, communicate with them and involve them in your post or department. Finding the right tools to build it and host an affordable website can be a daunting task - especially if those in your post or department have little or no web development experience.

However, today, it is easier than ever to create a strong web presence without being a programmer or having a large budget. You just need to know where to look to get started.

Register a Domain Name

If you don't already have a domain name, even if you aren't yet ready to build your site, it is important to sign up for this.

Most nonprofits choose domain names which end in .org, but it is also advisable to register the .com and .net versions also. It's easy to register domain names for a number of years at one time and there are a number of reputable companies to go to when purchasing a domain name.

EXAMPLES OF DOMAIN REGISTRARS

NameCheap (www.namecheap.com)

Go Daddy (www.godaddy.com)

There are many others that can easily be researched by searching on Google or your favorite search engine. Just keep in mind you never should be paying over \$10 a year for a domain name.

Evaluate Your Needs

Determine what kind of web presence you want, how you plan to maintain and fund it before jumping into the creation of your website. Determining your website strategy will ultimately save you much time and make your mission much clearer in the long run.

- What resources do you have to build your site? Do you have staff available to help plan, build and maintain your site? Do they have the knowledge to do this from scratch, have just some knowledge or know absolutely nothing when it comes to building and maintaining a site? There are solutions for each of these scenarios.
- How will your site incorporate your current graphic look and feel? You want to make sure that your website and other printed materials have the same look and feel. It is easy to realize that the Legion emblem will be predominant on websites along with printed material, but the style of fonts, the colors and overall design that is evident on your print material should echo what is on your website.

Determine a Web Development Tool

Whether you have experienced volunteers within your post or department will determine what web development tool you ultimately choose. Building the site is half the battle. Maintaining it is the other half. Keeping information up to date is paramount for a number of reasons. You want your visitors to return, to become involved; in short, you want to hear from them. If your information is old, what reason would a visitor have to return? If you are constantly updating your content, the search engines will re-index your site more often and this helps boost you in the search engine ranking pages.

If there is no one within your organization who can create your site, or has the time to devote to this, The American Legion does sanction a company that has been providing pre-built websites to posts and departments. This company is Legionsites and they can be found at www.legionsites.com. They will provide you with a pre-built website and the ability to easily maintain the information along with hosting it and setting up your domain name.

If you choose to create your site on your own, there are many web hosts available at affordable pricing to get you started.

You could start your search with whatever internet service provider you have for Internet presently. Many of these “ISP’s” offer a hosting program for websites. You can also research easily by searching on your favorite search engine.

Blogging Software

By incorporating a blog into your website, you are giving visitors a great opportunity to interact and become involved with you.

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If you are hosting your website at any one of the many independent hosting companies, you will find that they already have one of the blogging software files installed on their servers. In many instances this is Wordpress (www.wordpress.com). To use it within your site it becomes as easy as “turning it on” in your administration area of your web host. Wordpress is one of the most popular and easy to use blogging software applications today.

If your web host doesn't offer this option, you can easily sign up for an account at Blogger (www.blogger.com). It takes about five minutes to set up your blog and you can easily link it to your website.

Integrate E-mail with Web and Social

Even with the increase of social networking sites as a prime source of community building, it is still important and viable to incorporate into your online strategy communication with an email newsletter. Keeping in touch and offering subscribers valuable information will continue to drive them to your website and keep them involved.

Keeping track of the statistics from sending an e-newsletter provides vital information. You want to know who is opening, reading, clicking on further information and forwarding your e-newsletter on to friends. The best way to do that is to use a service expressly to do this. They are called ESP's (email service providers) and their services are available at a variety of prices and can handle from very small to large lists.

EXAMPLES OF EMAIL NEWSLETTER SERVICES

Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com)

Graphic Mail (www.graphicmail.com)

Exact Target (www.exacttarget.com)

Website Content

Make Your Site Media-Friendly

Attracting media attention can have a huge impact. Whether the media attention brings in more members or simply raises your profile, getting attention from journalists, bloggers, and anyone else with an audience is important.

Make It Easy for Journalists to Find Information.

Include profiles of your officers. Make sure you include contact information (email and phone) for each of these key people. Have a downloadable media kit that includes everything your print media kit does.

Offer downloadable images (hi-res and web ready) from your site so journalists and bloggers don't have to contact you and wait on a reply. Make it clear that journalists and other organizations may use these items in news coverage without contacting the organization for prior permission.

Make Your Site Volunteer-Friendly

Make it easy for visitors to your site to find information on how they can get involved. Whether you provide detailed information about volunteering directly, steps people can take on their own, or just contact information for your volunteer organizer, make sure you don't overlook this crucial bit of information.

Make Sure the Mission is Immediately Obvious to the Visitor

How many times have you gone to a website and not had a clue what the site was about? This happens all too often. Too often, those who create websites know the organization so well they take for granted what visitors to their site will already know about it. Do not assume.

Considering how much information is pushed into small pieces on sites like Twitter and Facebook, there's no telling how much or how little visitors will know. Put an abbreviated mission statement on the home page and include a link to a page that will take the visitors to an "About" page that goes into greater detail.

Make Sure Your Content is the Focal Point

Design on any site should be transparent. That's not to say your site can't have an interesting design, just that the design should revolve around your content and your mission, not the other way around. Take into account the types of information you'll be providing on the site and the formats that will be used.

Consider up front how many multi-media items will be used. Consider if they will be on every page of your site or if there will be a separate section or gallery for the various multi-media formats. Make sure your columns are wide enough to accommodate an embedded YouTube video if this is in your site plans. If the columns are not wide enough, an embedded video or other similar element will literally "break" the site design and look terrible to the visitors.

Always Proofread

Make sure the content is consistent which means proofreading and copyediting your web site in the same way you do your print materials.

Although it is easy to change content on a website, errors give a negative impression overall.

And remember, throughout your website, you should always be telling the Legion's story!

Internet Advertising

After the dot com bust in 1999 and the subsequent re-building of the advertising and other commercial segments of the Internet, revenues have gradually built to substantial amounts. Despite a global recession in the latter part of the first decade of the 21st century, Internet advertising maintained a stronghold.

Search advertising remains the strongest area of Internet advertising with nearly half the overall advertising revenue coming from it at the end of this first decade. Search advertising is defined as a method of placing online advertisements on web pages that show results from search engine queries. They are targeted to match key search terms, or keywords entered on search engines.

Banner ads represent a third of the overall revenue so that form of Internet advertising still gleans merit. Banner ads are defined as a form of online advertising entailing embedding an advertisement into a web page. It is intended to attract traffic to a website by linking to the website of the advertiser.

Given search advertising yields the highest revenues, and due to the fact that Google has been the number one search engine for many years, Google AdWords is a good example of an economical and safe opportunity to advertise on the Internet.

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Google AdWords is a user-friendly and very quick and simple to purchase highly targeted Cost-Per-Click (CPC) advertising. AdWords are shown along with search results on Google.

Google AdWords provides:

- Targeted Reach – AdWords allows the targeting of new audiences based on specific keywords.
- Greater Control – The flexibility to revise ad and budget to achieve the desired results. This can be done at any time.
- Measurable Value – There is no contract, which means no certain amount of money is required to be spent. Only charged when someone clicks on our ads.

Keyword Based Advertising

- Advertisers bid on search keywords or phrases relevant to their targeted audience.
- When the user searches for a particular keyword, a list of advertisers' ads appear

Google AdWords cost \$5.00 to open an account and from there it is up to you how much you want to spend. Google provides an in depth guide to use the system here: www.google.com/ads/adwords2/

Ad Terms

The following are terms used in Internet advertising

Impression: This is what one view of one ad is called. Every time you see an ad anywhere, that's one impression. A webpage with multiple banners might serve up one impression each for many different ads.

Publisher: The website displaying ads. The term is a holdover from

the days of print marketing.

CPM: Cost per 1,000 impressions (M being the Roman Numeral for 1,000). This is the amount a publisher gets paid to serve up 1,000 ads. For instance, you might purchase 1,000,000 impressions (1,000 times 1,000) of an ad on Google for 12 cents CPM, so your total bill would be $1,000 * .12$, or \$120.

CPC: Cost per click. Many ads are paid for only when someone actually clicks them, regardless of how many impressions are shown. This is very typical for ads on Google, Facebook, Myspace, and many other platforms. So if you pay Google 30 cents CPC to run an ad, and only one person clicks it, then it doesn't matter whether they showed it once or one million times to get that one click, you still pay exactly 30 cents.

CTR: Click-through rate = The number of impressions of an ad that are clicked on by the viewer divided by the total number of impressions of that ad shown. If the web publisher shows your ad 100 times, and 3 people click on it, that's a CTR of $3/100 = .03$.

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Banner Ads

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) sets standards for the sizes of various Internet ads and other guidelines. For your reference, the most common standards are below measured in pixels:



Banners and buttons

- 468 x 60 (full banner)
- 234 x 60 (half banner)
- 728 x 90 (Leaderboard) ▲
- 120 x 240 (vertical banner)
- 125 x 125 (square button)

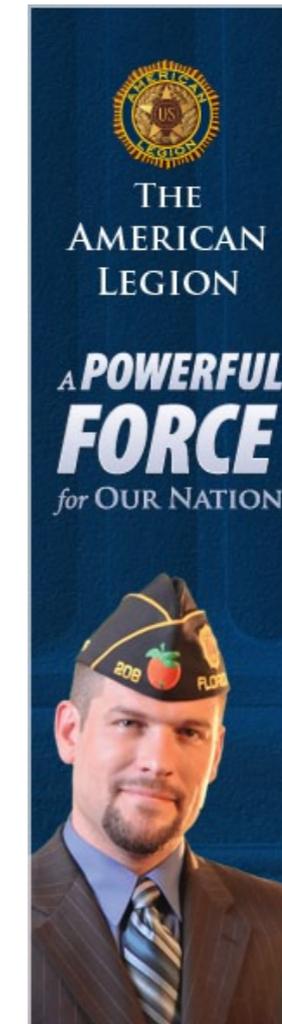
Rectangles and Popups

- 300 x 250 (medium rectangle) ►
- 250 x 250 (square popup)
- 240 x 400 (vertical rectangle)
- 336 x 280 (large rectangle)



Skyscrapers

- 160 x 600 (wide skyscraper) ►
- 120 x 600 (skyscraper)
- 300 x 600 (1/2 page ad)



SECTION **FOUR**

Media Pitching

Who to contact to get coverage



SECTION FOUR | MEDIA PITCHING

The list of job titles in today's media varies from place to place and often changes to reflect the latest trends and technology. How do you know who is the right person to contact when you have a story to tell?

Talk to the receptionist who answers the phone. Remember the old axiom from our military days: you get the best information from the people who answer the phones and do the work. It's still the same today and it works with any company, anywhere.

Just pick up the phone and call the newspaper, radio, television station or cable system main number. Ask the person who answers to whom you should send a news release or who you should speak with to suggest a topic for a talk show. Ask that person to cut through the "red tape" by simply giving you the information. Get the correct contact person's name, phone, fax and e-mail information. Armed with that information, you can begin the communication process.

Every media operation is different. That's why you want to work with the people closest to doing the story, not upper management. Still, understanding where some of the division lies in a media operation can be helpful. So consider the following:

Daily Newspapers

- **City Editor** – Probably as high in the working chain as you want to go. This is generally the individual who makes reporter assignments for local stories. He or she also is the person who edits the stories.
- **Reporter** – A great place to start. Besides being told what stories to write, reporters have a responsibility to suggest stories. If you can convince a reporter your story is important, you are ahead of the game.

- **Editorial Page Editor** – An individual who works separately from the news writing side of the business. This individual helps develop editorial positions of the newspaper, etc. When you want to place a guest editorial written by your commander in a newspaper, this is where you will most likely be directed.
- **Op-Ed Editor** – An individual who selects the commentary and opinion pieces that appear on the page opposite the editorial page in most papers, thus the name "op-ed." Sometimes a column written by your commander or member of your post can be used as an op-ed piece.
- **Letters to the Editor** – Generally one individual in the editorial department handles the selection of letters. Most newspapers also have information on how to submit letters to the editor via mail, fax and e-mail. Never overlook the potential of a short, to-the-point letter reinforcing the positive community perception of our organization.

Weekly Newspapers

- **Editor** – Weekly papers have just a few staff members to handle all the jobs, so don't be surprised if the person who answers the phone also is the person you need to speak with. In the weekly newspaper business, the editor is a Jack or Jill of all trades.

Television Stations

- **Assignment Editor** – The person who is the big traffic cop for stories. This is the person who assigns reporters and videographers to cover a story.

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- **Reporter** – The person who does the work, talks with people, tries to find contacts and gets the job done. Once you have been handed from the assignment editor to a reporter, you can usually make future calls directly to the reporter.
- **Community Affairs Director** – The individual who coordinates all the station’s activities in the community. If you were looking to establish a partnership with a station for a special event, this is probably the person you will be told to contact.
- **Public Affairs Director** – The individual who produces and often hosts station programs that tackle issues of interest to the public. If you have an event you want to promote, this is who you will most likely work with.

Radio Stations

- **News and Public Service Director** – Unless you live in a major city, the individual hired as the news director is generally also doing the job of the public service director, hosting or producing a taped weekend radio talk program of community interest and more.
- **Promotion Director** – The individual who coordinates appearances by on-air personalities at events and develops other relationship projects to increase listener participation and awareness of the station.
- **Continuity Director** – The individual who schedules the time of all commercials. At smaller radio stations this person may also schedule public service announcements.

So remember, talking to the top person in charge is seldom where you want to start. Don’t try to figure out whom to call; let the workers help you navigate the maze of job titles.

It’s All About Relationships

One of the keys to getting mentioned in the media is developing relationships with those key players you come in contact from each of the media. Once you have identified the key decision-makers in your media outlets, establish and maintain relationships with them throughout the year. Contact them regularly to offer assistance with stories and projects they are working on. Invite them to your post for events and give them awards and accolades when they do good work, not only for you but for your community in general. In short, keep yourself on their radar screens so that when they see Issues and stories from or about The American Legion, they will know to contact you.

A word of caution, however. Be reasonable in your expectations about what gets covered. Events such as dinners and post meetings may not be considered “news” in your community, depending on the size and location of the media. A way to enhance your coverage is to make sure there is a news angle for these events. If you are going to honor a local Blue Star family, make sure the media know about the personal angle. Look at each event and see if there is a local story that reaches beyond the event and pitch that to your contact. And use your relationship to ask your media contact what kind of stories they’re interested in and do what you can to help them gather contacts and information.

Media Contact Sheets

Regardless of whom you end up speaking with, you should use a media contact sheet to keep the people and the stories straight. Your media contact sheet can be as simple as a 5”x8” card or as detailed as a computer database. Take a moment to review the sample media contact sheets on the next few pages and decide how you can use either of them or if you want to create your own.

Regardless of your choice of media contact sheet formats, never lose sight of the real key: keep a written copy, not something simply stored on a computer. Think of it as insurance for when the hard drive crashes. Better yet, think of it as preparing the way for the individual who will take over your public relations officer duties someday.

It will take some time and effort to develop media contacts but the work will pay long-term dividends for your post and community. By keeping a written media contact sheet, your efforts will provide continuity. As you learn little gems over time, jot them in the “notes” area. For example, a media outlet tells you what stories it is interested in covering. Make a “note.” Then let them know of those stories and not the other stories. Your time is valuable, so don’t spend it sending news and information a media outlet does not want.

As a public relations officer, your efforts to build relationships with local media will go a long way toward strengthening the image of the organization.

MEDIA CONTACT

Media Name:

Mailing Address:

Street Address:

City, State, ZIP

Contact Name(s):

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Note:

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Sample Form In Use – Electronic Media

Media Contact Information

Company:	WWWW-TV	Media Type:	Television Station
Circulation/Audience:	#3 station in market. Mainly 18-36 year old.		
Remarks:	FOX affiliate. Morning news program from 7am – 9am. No midday. Evening news at 6pm and 10 p.m.		
Deadline Information:	Community calendar items due by noon the day before airing.		
Special Requirements:	Video = BetacamSP or DVCam formats. Graphics can be PhotoShop or EPS.		

Contacts

CONTACT 1			
Name:	Joe Headline	Title:	News Director
Address:	123 Anyplace Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	206-555-4321
		Cell Phone:	206-555-5678
		Pager:	866-555-8765
		E-mail:	jheadline@www.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128
Remarks:	Is very interested in promoting veteran's issues. Contact him between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. He's too busy with newscasts at other times.		

CONTACT 2			
Name:	Jane Smith	Title:	Public Affairs Director
Address:	123 Anyplace Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	206-555-1234
		Cell Phone:	206-555-1234
		Pager:	206-555-1234
		E-mail:	jsmith@www.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128w
Remarks:	Handles all of the PSAs for the station and is a good contact for discussing special promotions and sponsorships.		

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Sample Form In Use – Media Contact History

Company:	WWWW-TV	Media Type:	Television
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Contacts

Date	Legion Representative	Details of contact, outcome
12/06	D. Mercier	Called Jane Smith about becoming a media sponsor for next year's Memorial Day event. Set up a meeting for 12/17 to discuss.
12/10	Joe March	Notified Mr. Newsman via fax and e-mail regarding the Santa visit to the children's ward at the hospital. Invited him to send a photographer and reporter. Will follow up tomorrow by phone.
12/11	Joe March	Called Mr. Newsman regarding the visit. He will send a photographer but no reporter. I am to meet the photographer at 9 a.m. tomorrow at the station.
12/12	Joe March	Event went very well. Used 20 seconds of video on the 6pm news. Showed Legion members in background.
12/17	D. Mercier	Meeting with J. Smith at station. She will present our proposal to station owners in January.

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Sample Form In Use – Print Media

Media Contact Information

Company:	The Daily Voice	Media Type:	Daily newspaper
Circulation/Audience:	13,000 general circulation		
Remarks:	The only newspaper in the area. Morning delivery.		
Deadline Information:	Ads must be in 3 days prior to issue date. News deadline is generally 3 p.m. prior to pub date unless it's BIG news.		
Special Requirements:	Ads must be camera-ready. No electronic files accepted. Standard column width.		

Contacts

CONTACT 1			
Name:	Joe Headline	Title:	News Editor
Address:	123 News Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	Not available
		Cell Phone:	206-555-5678
		Pager:	None
		E-mail:	jheadline@dca.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128
Remarks:	Likes to have advance copies as soon as possible. Do not send him editorial copy. He'll throw it away.		

CONTACT 2			
Name:	Jane Smith	Title:	Publisher
Address:	123 News Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	206-555-1234
		Cell Phone:	206-555-1234
		Pager:	206-555-1234
		E-mail:	jsmith@dcf.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128
Remarks:	Contact for all editorials, releases, etc. Husband belongs to another vets group and she will favor their events, but works with us.		

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Sample Form In Use – Media Contact History

Company:	Daily Circular File	Media Type:	Newspaper
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CONTACTS

Date	Legion Representative	Details of contact, outcome
12/06	L. Eberharter	Called Jane Smith about becoming a media sponsor for next year's Memorial Day event. Set up a meeting for 12/17 to discuss.
12/10	J. Raughter	Notified Mr. Newsman via fax and e-mail regarding the Santa visit to the children's ward at the hospital. Invited him to send a photographer and reporter. Will follow up tomorrow by phone.
12/11	J. Raughter	Called Mr. S regarding the visit. He will send a photographer but no reporter. I am to meet the photographer at 9 a.m. tomorrow at the station.
12/12	J. Raughter	Event went very well. Page 1 of Local section with photo and short article. Showed Legion members in background.
12/17	L. Eberharter	Meeting with J. Smith at station. She will present our proposal to station owners in January.

SECTION FIVE

What is news?

How your post can be a news maker



Definition of News

Random House Dictionary

- A report of a current event
- A report on current events in a newspaper or on radio or television
- Such reports taken collectively

American Heritage Dictionary

- Recent events and happenings
- A report about recent events
- New information

Oxford Shorter Dictionary

- New things, novelties (1565)
- Tidings, new information of recent events; new occurrences as a subject of report or talk
- A newspaper

“It is better to be making the news than taking it; to be an actor than a critic.” — Winston Churchill, 1898

A key element in conducting an effective American Legion post public relations program is establishing your post as an authoritative news resource for media. Sure, there will always be an ongoing need to publicize programs and events conducted by the post, but much more can be done to enhance the image of The American Legion in your town.

First of all, understand the definition of “news” from a media perspective. It must be breaking; of interest to a large number of people; be a significant event, disaster or controversy; affect a lot of people’s wallets; or be emotional and heart-rending. Post fish-frys, bingo

nights and dances, while important to members, are not news to reporters. The Secretary of Defense or Secretary of Veterans Affairs announcing deployments or cutbacks in health care is national news, yet both stories will likely have a direct impact in your town. That’s where your post enters the picture.

Become a real source for breaking news in your area.

How do you do that? It’s easier than you might think.

As an organization, The American Legion passes resolutions every year that guide the legislative lobbying efforts in Washington. Issues range from veterans affairs and a strong national defense to Second Amendment rights, flag protection, secure borders and safety programs for children. Several hundred standing resolutions at any given time represent the official positions of The American Legion.

As the chief spokesperson for The American Legion, the national commander promotes Legion activism by using the resolutions to testify before Congress and discuss the Legion’s advocacy in these areas with national media.

When a national news story breaks on an issue covered by an American Legion resolution, the National Public Relations Commission distributes a news release providing the national commander’s reaction and call for action, if appropriate. News releases are posted immediately on the national website at www.legion.org/pressrelease.

Here is where your post can become a news resource in your community.

When a national story breaks in Washington, the mainstream media rush to cover it. The major networks, wire services and cable news channels all converge on the “newsmakers.” Interviews and sound bites

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are included in both print and electronic stories.

For every breaking national news story, reporters in newsrooms in your hometown are scrambling to find a “local angle” to the national story. A post commander or post public relations officer can satisfy that requirement and become a local newsmaker, thrusting the post into the community eye as an authoritative voice on major issues affecting the lives of folks in the neighborhood. Taking action to get out The American Legion position not only demonstrates the pro-active advocacy of the organization, but it lets local elected leaders, veterans and their families know that your post is making a difference for the better in your community, state and nation. Positive visibility will enhance membership, organizational influence and community support.

How to Piggy-Back on Breaking National News

Promptness is crucial to success in being a community newsmaker. It is important to contact local media newsrooms as quickly as possible following the national event. Here are the steps to follow:

When you see or hear of a breaking story, check out the national website. Download and save The American Legion news release from www.legion.org/pressrelease.

Write a paragraph or two using quotes from your post commander supporting the Legion position. Cite any specific actions your post may be taking in support of the story – calling local congressional representatives, starting a petition drive, etc.

Insert the information into the national release and print it on post letterhead.

Fax or e-mail the post release to your contacts in area newspapers, radio and television stations. Be sure to include a post contact name and telephone number for reporters to call if they want to set up an interview.

If conducting an interview after sending the release, advocate The American Legion position on the issue and inject personal experiences. If the story is about VA health care, discuss your personal observations about a local VA health-care facility that supports the Legion advocacy position on the issue.

You have just provided your area media with a reason to do a story of local impact on a breaking national story and established your post as a credible newsmaker in the community.

Now, with three localized paragraphs in the story you are ready to print the news release on post letterhead and get it to your media outlets. If it takes two pages for the story, use the word “--MORE--” at the bottom of the first page and a portion of the headline with the page number - in this case “2-2-2-2-2” at the top of the second page - so newspaper staff can be certain they see all information, especially if pages get separated.

EXAMPLE OF A NATIONAL STORY LOCALIZED

Morrisville Legionnaires outraged over White House proposal to charge veterans' insurance for VA health care

MORRISVILLE, Ill. (March 16, 2009) – The commander of the Morrisville American Legion post said today that he is “outraged” over the president’s intentions to charge the private insurance companies of military veterans for their medical care at VA medical facilities.

“I am absolutely outraged that our government would even consider making a military veteran pay for treatment of a disability he or she incurred as the result of serving their country,” said Robert W. Staple, commander of American Legion Post 123. “Our post will mobilize tonight and begin calling, writing and sending emails to the White House demanding that this ill begotten revenue scheme never sees the light of day.”

The national commander of The American Legion, David K. Rehbein, emerged from a meeting with the president earlier today in Washington “deeply disappointed and concerned” after learning of the White House intention to generate \$540-million by this method.

“It became apparent during our discussion that the president intends to move forward with this unreasonable plan,” Rehbein said. “Apparently the president is more interested in raising money than in the welfare of our veterans and their families.”

The proposed requirement for these companies to reimburse the VA would not only be unfair, says the Legion, but would have an adverse impact on service-connected disabled veterans and their families. The Legion argues that, depending on the severity of the medical conditions involved, medical insurance policies with calendar year or life-time benefit maximums, those maximums could be met by coverage of the veteran’s condition alone, thus leaving the rest of the family without health care benefits.

“Not only that, but some employers, especially small businesses, would be reluctant to hire veterans with service-connected disabilities due to the negative impact their employment might have on obtaining and financing company health care benefits,” Staple said. “I call on all veterans, indeed, all citizens, in Morrisville to join us at Post 123 and raise our collective voices to stave off this affront on America’s veterans.”

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Media contact: Wilbur Wright, Post 123 public relations chairman – (618) 430-XXXX. A photo of Post Cmdr. Staple is available on request.

Post News Conference

If your post plans to conduct a specific event or action in your community based on a national news item, you should consider conducting a news conference. For example, an announcement that your post is launching a local campaign to join a national effort provides an excellent platform for a news conference. The “Legiontown” campaign is an ongoing effort to educate the public about what The American Legion is doing in their communities. Visitors to the Legiontown website (legiontown.org) are able to blog about their local activities. During Legiontown campaigns and American Legion Day observances, posts can conduct news conferences and thereby increase their visibility and membership.

News conferences should have a definite message. They should be visual for the television media (use props), and include major participants (mayor, youth champion, etc., as applicable.) Issue a media advisory (*Example found in Annex B*) announcing the news conference. Be prepared to answer questions after reading a prepared statement. Dress in a business suit, wear your Legion cap and have The American Legion emblem positioned behind you.

Conduct the conference mid-morning. The best time is around 10:30 a.m. This gives assignment editors and crews plenty of time to get to the post and ample time to return and edit the story for the evening news. If your stations have noon newscasts, you may want to conduct the conference at 9 a.m. or 9:30 a.m.

Do not conduct a news conference unless you have a major event, action or campaign to announce that will impact the community.

Pitching News Stories

Now that you have written and assembled a news release you are only halfway done. Do not fall into the “Fax/E-mail into Oblivion” syndrome. Sending the release blindly to a listed fax number or e-mail of the TV station and sitting back waiting for a phone call will most likely not yield calls. Successful public relations practitioners know exactly who to call to “pitch” a story, confirm receipt of the faxed or e-mailed news release and verbally add additional information. *Section 4* on Media Pitching has a detailed discussion. Radio news stations might very well record an interview when you call and use the sound-bites over a series of newscasts throughout the day. So be prepared with message points before you place the call.

The importance of personal contact with media reporters, editors and assignment editors cannot be over-emphasized. Unless you talk with a known contact in the newsroom, chances are high that your fax may be ignored or placed in “File 13” by a passing station intern. Call, identify, confirm and follow up on news releases and advisories. Eventually, media will have you in their contacts file and will be calling the post when stories break in areas of Legion expertise. Remember, every time the post appears in the paper, a Legionnaire is interviewed on television or the name is heard on the radio, people learn more about The American Legion and your post.

How to Avoid Negative Coverage

- Ensure that the local media have one point of contact for your post — preferably the public relations officer, post commander or

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post adjutant as appropriate.

- Take whatever steps are necessary to avoid unannounced media interviews in the bar area of your post facility. Don't perpetuate the stereotype of veterans sitting around telling war stories while drinking alcoholic beverages. Have reporters set up appointments in advance with a post spokesperson.
- Always conduct interviews in the post meeting room with The American Legion emblem in the background. If the reporter wants to talk with a number of veterans, have them in the room. Brief them on the Legion's message points on the story the reporter is working. During good weather, an interview outside the post with the Legion emblem in the background is appropriate.

Winston Churchill was right. Become a newsmaker in your community and your post will reap dividends in service, community support, membership and public recognition.

Making It Local

An old axiom says, "All politics is local." It's true. Apply that thinking to your public relations efforts at the post, district and department. Local news attracts local media attention. As a key member of The American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans organization, the post public relations officer must use the local angle to gain maximum coverage.

In each case, local refers to your community and neighborhoods. What The American Legion family does in Washington may or may not be of interest in your community. You can make it more interesting to local media by taking a news release issued by national headquarters and localizing it for your media.

Localization of a news release is easy to do. The greatest advantage to localizing the story is creating in your hometown media employees' minds the understanding that when it comes to key issues to veterans and their families, they can always turn to The American Legion for the local angle.

Creating a local story from a story on The American Legion website is easy and a great tool.

Yet, at times you will need to inform the news media of a unique event or program your post is conducting. In such cases you can write a complete news release or issue a media advisory.

A media advisory is used to advise the media of an upcoming news story or event that they are invited to send a reporter and camera crew to cover.

A news release is a self-standing story which could be printed as written that tells the complete story. While many smaller media will print it as written, most media choose to use it only as reference material to assist their reporter in covering the story. Either way, it is a valuable public information tool.

In the research stage of developing either a news release or a media advisory you still need to answer the basic journalistic "five Ws and the H": who, what, where, when, why and how.

When writing a news release, you must determine which of the five questions is the most important to answer and use that as the lead. All six of the questions should be answered in the first two paragraphs of a news release. The remainder of the release will provide details.

As the post public relations officer, one of your biggest writing chal-

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Challenges will be to look at the news release through the eyes of a non-member. Approaching the story from that perspective will help you determine what is most important. It will seldom be your post or commander. It most often will be students, community, etc., as your focal point.

Here's one way to look at it: when you have a contestant in the state finals of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, the high school student is the most important part of the story – not the post commander or The American Legion. The media cannot tell the full story without mentioning The American Legion and your commander, but they should not be the lead of your story. The focus would naturally be the student.

Having that mental picture also will help you if you choose to use a media advisory as your means of communicating with the local people on your media contact sheet. The simplicity of a media advisory makes it a favorite of many volunteers and even those in the media. It answers the five Ws and the H. It provides a bit of background material. Then they write their own story. When you are dealing with larger media outlets, this should be a successful way to work with them. After all, their reporters are trained to write stories; you might as well let them put their training to use.

The American Legion in your community must be perceived as contributing, active and involved. Keeping your community good deeds in front of them – and the advocacy of The American Legion—is a big step in making all citizens aware of what you do and why you do it.

The decision to use a **news release** or a **media advisory** is entirely up to you. Whatever your decision, keep trying. No one in public rela-

tions at any firm or organization bats 1,000. The key is to be persistent. Develop your **media contact list**. Keep it current. Send information that is newsworthy to your contacts. Over time, your efforts will be rewarded.

In the news release and media advisory appendices, you will find a variety of suggested news releases ready for you to fill-in-the-blank all editable fields with your local information, print on post, unit or squadron letterhead and distribute them as appropriate. It will give you another opportunity to create a local angle to a national story.

The suggested news releases that follow are just that – suggestions. They are designed to help you succeed as a public relations officer. Use them as a guide. Put the five Ws and the H information in the story and you will soon find yourself exceeding all your expectations.

EXAMPLE OF A MEDIA ADVISORY THAT LOCALIZED A NATIONAL ISSUE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, May 13, 20XX

MEDIA ADVISORY

***Legion Post Commander Available for Interviews on
Detainee Photo Release Reversal***

Who:	Post XXX Commander of The American Legion (NAME)
What:	Available to discuss the strategic need NOT to release detainee abuse photos and the impact of today's decision by the White House.
When:	As available. Book interviews now by calling (NAME) (Tel. No.).
Where:	By phone or in studio.
Background	A strongly worded op-ed by the national commander of The American Legion was published in the May 8 Wall Street Journal. In it, he asked, "A picture may be worth a thousand words, but is it worth the death of a single American soldier? Is any photograph worth the life of your Marine Corps daughter? Or your neighbor's deployed husband?"

Letters to the Editor

Serving as a public relations officer for The American Legion is a challenging undertaking. Often you become frustrated because your news releases are not used and you feel your message is important.

That's a good time to consider writing a letter to the editor or a guest editorial for the local paper.

Your local newspaper's editorial page is another opportunity to excel in telling The American Legion story. A newspaper's editorial gives the position of the publication's editorial board, a panel comprised of those responsible for the content of the various sections. Similarly, an op-ed or letter to the editor from a Legion official states the position of The American Legion on an issue.

Every newspaper has its own guidelines for submission of letters to the editor and op-eds. Heed those guidelines which specify the ideal word count, manner of submission and author background. Ensure also that a letter or op-ed is consistent with American Legion policy if someone expressly representing The American Legion, such as someone who uses his or her American Legion title after the name, submits the piece. (Example: Jane Doe, Commander, American Legion Post 00, Someplace, USA.)

It is advantageous to use the editorial page. First, it is a relatively unfiltered means of telling The American Legion story, less of a risk of having your most eloquent statements left out of a regular news story. Second, it is proactive, a way for you to take The American Legion message to the newspaper instead of depending on someone to assign a reporter to cover the organization. Third, the letter or guest editorial

identifies The American Legion in terms of the organization's legislative agenda, one of the most important considerations that prospective members might have.

Most newspapers require letters to the editor and op-eds to be exclusive submissions. They don't want to publish something another paper prints the day before they do. Keep these efforts exclusive to the newspaper you want to work with.

Letter to the Editor

Generally, a letter to the editor is approximately 200 to 250 words and responds to an item published in a previous edition of the newspaper. It's short and sweet.

The letters most likely to be published follow a simple structure. The first paragraph states the position of the organization vis-à-vis a perspective revealed in a previous article. The middle section explains the key message points that reinforce the lead paragraph. The final paragraph either reiterates the lead paragraph or gives an "action statement" that explains how The American Legion will address a situation. Use American Legion resolutions, news releases and the message points found on The American Legion website, www.legion.org, to verify your facts.

An easy way to send your letter to media in your congressional district, a tremendous asset when the letter's topic is pending legislation is to simply visit The American Legion's Internet home page for the Legislative Action Center, capwiz.com/legion/dbq/officials/.

Once you open the Legislative Action Center, click on Media Guide. Plug in your ZIP code or any other pertinent information. You will get

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e-mail links to media in your area, perhaps even an avenue through which you can send your letter to the local newspaper. It's just a matter of cutting and pasting to share that same letter with other media and with your member of Congress.

If you take this route, include something on all versions you send to electronic media that explains you submitted the following letter to the editor as a representative of The American Legion and would welcome the opportunity to assist a reporter in developing a piece on the issue. Who knows? Other media might take you up on the offer.

Op-Ed

Op-ed is short for “opposite editorial,” a piece that makes a point, regardless of whether the topic has been covered in a previous issue. It is rarely more than 700 words. An op-ed follows the same structure as a letter but uses more facts and figures to make its point, much the way a regular newspaper column does.

Avoid clichés. However, a memorable quote from a historical figure is a good thing. Stay on your message. Do not fill your precious space with arguments tangential to your main point.

To ensure you have your facts correct, rely on the same resources as you would to write a letter to the editor: resolutions, news releases and message points.

Linking the point of your op-ed to a patriotic day, while using your American Legion title in your byline, might enhance the likelihood of being published. For instance, an editor might be more receptive to an op-ed on the flag-protection constitutional amendment just prior to

Flag Day. Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Independence Day and American Legion Birthday are opportunities both to satisfy an editor's need and to explain to the general public -- including members and potential members -- The American Legion's advocacy.

For a column on The American Legion Birthday, pull out a copy of your annual post report and glean whatever statistics you deem impressive. On or about March 15 to 17, you have a tremendous opportunity to market an op-ed dealing with The American Legion community service about which most people may know little.

Before you sit down to write, contact the newspaper's opinion or editorial page editor to determine whether he or she would consider your op-ed. Meet the deadline.

If you simply want a bit of inspiration for your own op-ed, visit www.legion.org/pressrelease. You'll find what is “hot” and how the issue is being made. Simply take that information and put it into a straightforward bit of writing from your heart.

SECTION SIX

Public Service Opportunities in Media

... and how to place public service advertising in your community



SECTION SIX | PUBLIC SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN MEDIA

Definition

Public Service Advertising - also known as Public Service Announcements (broadcast) and Public Service Ads (print) - are used by hundreds of organizations at the national, regional and local level. They generate support for all different kinds of social issues, ranging from AIDS to zoo appreciation, and everything in between. The single factor that all these issues have in common is they must be advanced by an IRS 501(c)(3) or (19) non-profit organization, or a government agency in order to qualify for PSA airtime and space. PSAs cannot promote profit-seeking organizations in any way, nor can commercial logos or products be shown or mentioned in PSAs as a general rule.

For more details on what is and what is not acceptable to media gatekeepers, read the article at www.psaresearch.com/networkclearance.html entitled: "Network Clearance - A Producer's Checklist."

This guide is designed to help the local public relations representative in getting increased PSA exposure.

One of the most important things to recognize about PSAs is that the media are not obligated by law or any other requirement to provide you with free air time and space. The only exception is that stations are mandated by the FCC to air a prescribed amount of responsible children's programming under the Children's TV Act of 1990. For more information on the requirements of this legislation, go to:

www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/childtv.html

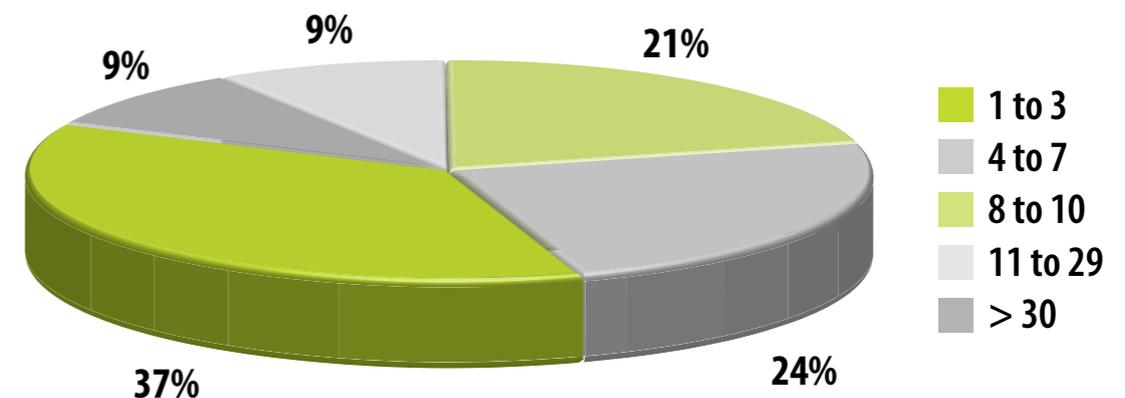
While it is true that broadcasters must prove they are broadcasting in the public interest, there are many ways to achieve that goal. Accordingly, you must find ways to elicit voluntary media support and make

a strong connection between your cause and the local media that are supporting it.

In simple terms, PSAs are messages produced for public benefit, on behalf of a non-profit organization about an important social issue. Nearly all forms of media - national and local - use PSAs to fill unsold airtime and print space.

That's the good news. The bad news is that there is a tremendous amount of competition for PSA airtime and space, and the demand far exceeds the supply. It is not unusual for local TV stations to air several hundred PSAs in a given month, and many more never get on the air or in print. As shown here, two thirds of all TV stations receive from four to more than 30 PSAs per week.

Survey of Broadcasters
On average, how many PSAs do you receive per week?



Localism Trumps Nationalism

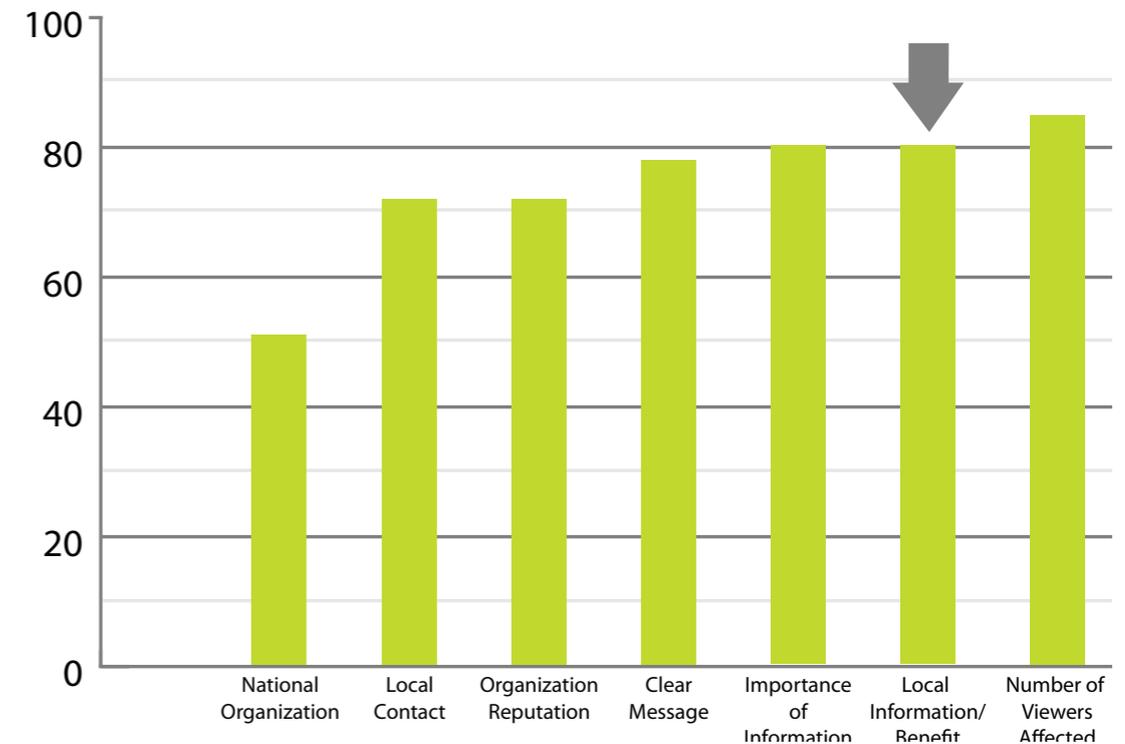
There is an old saying among politicians that “all politics are local.” The same could be said for PSA campaigns. While the national office or its ad agency may create your campaign, they obviously don’t know the local community like those who live and work there.

Due to tremendous competition for PSA time and space, your success in PSA placement depends on how well you market your issue locally. All things being equal - creative quality of your materials, relevance of your issue and having appropriate materials - the organizations which do the best local marketing job will be most successful in getting exposure.

One of the most successful organizations in the country when it comes to localizing PSA issues is the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. They have local coordinators in almost every one of the 212 U.S. Designated Market Areas (DMAs) whose jobs are to contact local media and place their PSAs.

How important is localism? In a survey of 1,200 broadcast TV stations, nearly 80 percent of the respondents indicated that “local information/benefit” was the second most important factor to local TV stations.

Survey of Broadcasters
What is Important to you?



Look for ways to tie your issue to a local activity or special event, such as a walk-a-thon, fund-raising drive, bike race, etc. where you can partner with the media. They will be especially interested if you can help them garner corporate support for promoting your issue.

Engaging Your Network

If you have a network of local community partners, there are lots of ways to bridge the gap between national and local interests when placing your national PSAs locally. For more details on this subject, go to: <http://www.psaresearch.com/gap.html>

SECTION SIX | PUBLIC SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN MEDIA

Some of these include:

- Sharing creative materials and distribution lists with your community partners via the Internet, or DVDs that can contain the creative samples as well as background and collateral.
- Train local outreach staff on how to make local PSA contacts via workshops, a session at a future conference, or in local meetings.
- Create a local contact form they can use to record their outreach calls and then analyze where outreach calls were made and the resulting PSA activity.

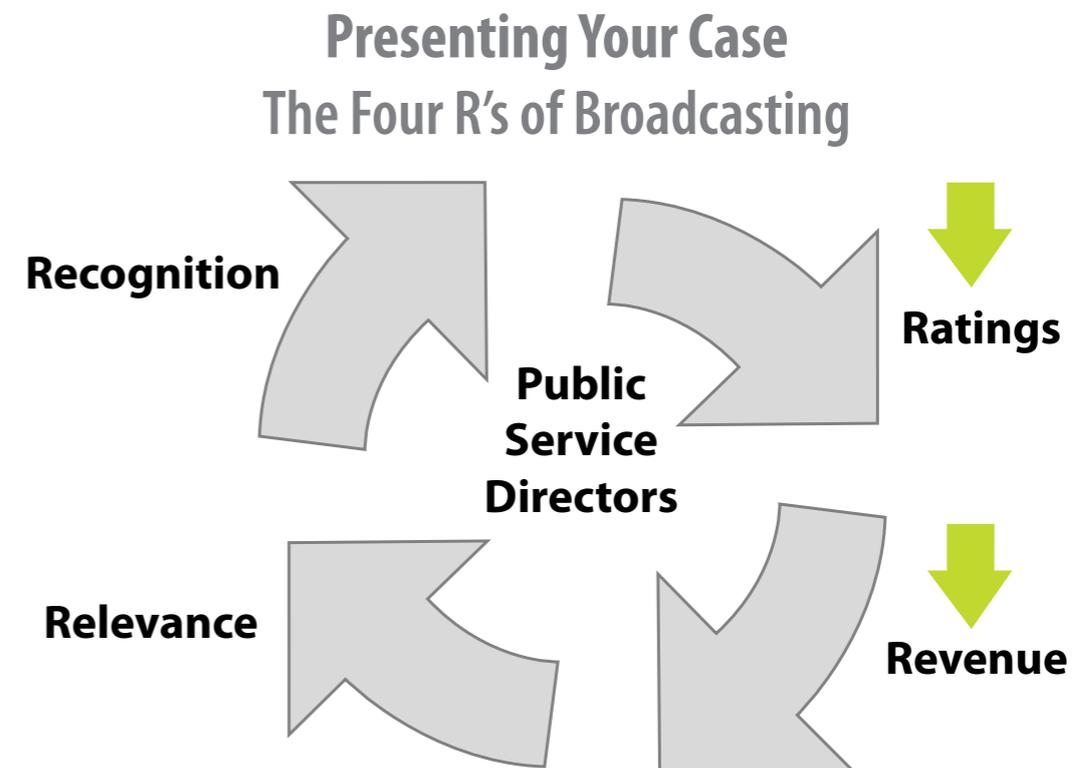
Making the Contact

There is no single individual or department that controls PSA access for different types of media. The decision-making process differs by media type, from one market to another, and by the size of the media outlet.

Generally, however, the media contact you want to reach at larger broadcast (TV and radio) stations, is the community affairs, public affairs or public service director. At smaller broadcast outlets, the title will most likely be program director, news director or perhaps even general manager. At print outlets you would normally try to contact the advertising director, production manager or perhaps editor and/or general manager at a smaller newspaper. If your campaign includes outdoor advertising, the general manager or posting supervisor is the person to contact.

Once you have compiled your list of local media, the next step is to contact them, and you can use email, fax, letter or phone, but be very brief. We recommend sending a brief note to local media contacts before any phone calls, because it paves the way for your call and helps the

media representative understand your issue and why you want to meet with them. An important note to consider ... a local call to the media trumps a national call every time.



When making media contacts, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Understand the media mindset.** For the most part the media are not interested in your issue; they are interested in how it relates to their audience. This graphic shows that they use PSAs and other forms of community outreach to increase ratings, which in turn increases their revenue, the lifeblood of any media property.
- **Know your issue cold** - There's no substitute for having all the facts and information you can compile on your issue, including research data, news articles, opinion surveys or anything else to

SECTION SIX | PUBLIC SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN MEDIA

help you sell the media on the importance of your issue. Prepare a brief fact sheet on your issue that you can use as “talking points” in your discussions.

- **Be compelling** - Facts alone can be impersonal. Compelling stories about how your issue affects people in the local community can be a powerful argument and demonstrate local relevance. If you’ve had PSAs on the air before and they were successful, let the media representative know how important media involvement is by pointing to your successes.
- **Offer other assistance** - Space doesn’t allow a complete refresher on media relations, but there are other ways to get the media involved through news stories, on-air promos or editorials, remote broadcasts, etc. Encourage the media to cover your issue in different ways because it all adds up to valuable exposure.
- **Build a partnership** - Don’t forget successful PSA placement is a partnership. The media can offer more than simply using your PSAs. They can help you frame strategies for getting your message out to the community if you ask for their help. Sometimes they may be able to offer production assistance or introduce you to other station personnel who can help. Perhaps they would be willing to serve on your board, judge a creative contest or volunteer in some capacity.

Making media contacts is definitely an art. Compiling the list of appropriate contacts is only the first step. Now you’ve got to make a strong case for why the media gatekeeper should let you through the gate to state your case. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

DO:

- Make an appointment and promise to keep your meeting with the media representative brief - 15 to 20 minutes maximum. They are very busy people and don’t have time to waste.
- Be prepared - learn as much as you can about the media organization such as program format of radio, coverage area, the kinds of stories they air or print, personalities, etc. and how your issue and their station can mutually benefit from a partnership.
- For TV, bring a sample of a tape in both a preview format (VHS) and the on-air dub format the station requires (typically a BETA SP tape), a storyboard and brief fact sheet for your issue to be used as a “leave behind.” If you have a laptop that plays DVDs or DVD player then show the PSAs to the public service director.
- Engage the media outlet. If you have materials that will be mailed to people calling in as a result of the campaign, share them with your media contacts. If your materials can be co-branded by the media, then that provides an extra incentive for them to help because it promotes them too.
- Share success stories. Media people love to know they are making a difference in their communities. Accordingly, share any success stories from your PSA campaigns – past or present — in terms of the impact they have made on your issue or cause. Your distributor can give you localized usage data for your pitch.
- Make sure the mechanics work. Test the 1-800 number if one is used at different times of day and the fulfillment operation used to send materials out in response to media exposure. You can bet the media

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will test it. If a website is used in the PSA, make sure it is functional.

- Build credibility. If you are a non-profit and not very well known, build credibility for your organization by being listed in the Better Business Bureau's National Charities Information Bureau at <http://www.bbb.org/us/charity/>. Most media people – particularly TV gatekeepers – will take this step.
- Provide flexibility. For radio, bring a portable CD player so the public service director can listen to your PSAs and also have live announcer scripts for use in live voice over broadcasts. If the station serves minority populations, ensure that there are radio versions which reflect the cultural nuances of the audience.
- Make it easy. Work both sides of the house. For print media, put “hi res” (high resolution) .pdf files with both national and local versions (leave a space for local tagging by the newspaper or magazine) on a CD. Also, have editorial information that can be used on the news side of the print outlet, and ask your contact to forward this information to the appropriate editor or reporter.



- Remember to say “thank you” - Write thank you letters to all media outlets that use your PSAs and if they have given you a lot of support, think about a special plaque or certificate of appreciation. Have your post commander present the plaque to the station's general manager and have a photographer present for use in local publicity. The Make-A-Wish Foundation converted their print ad into a plaque and gave that to media supporters. Talk about recycling!
- When sending letters of appreciation, have your commander write to the general manager of the media outlet which provided support to your post or program. Thank them for the support, citing the person who assisted you at the lower level. Make sure to send your contact a copy of the letter, so he or she will know what you've done.

DON'T:

- Be a nuisance. Don't keep calling the media to ask when your PSA will appear on air or in print. Since PSAs are placed on a “time/space available” basis, the media person can't give you any guarantees about usage. Many media people regard these calls as a nuisance, so find a more engaging way to make contact.
- Try to force meetings with media people. They are very busy and if they can't see you personally, handle your contact in writing, with a follow-up phone call.
- Expect the media to do your work for you. Prepare your materials ready to use. Do the work for media and you increase your chances of getting your materials on the air or in print.

Evaluation/Follow-up

If you have not seen or heard your PSAs, contact the media, and see if there is something more that you can do. We often send a two part, postage-paid reminder postcard such as the one shown, to media which have not used a PSA.

Just remember that the media have dozens and perhaps hundreds of issues presented to them, all of which are important to the organizations vying for time and space.

LOCAL PSA/MEDIA RESOURCES

Planning

If you are planning a campaign at the national level and looking for ways to engage your local network, be sure to read the article titled: “Involving Your Community Partners in PSA Program Development” which can be found on at: www.psaresearch.com/gap.html.

Formulating Contact Lists

If you need to formulate your local media lists, go to the local library and ask for Broadcasting & Cable Yearbook, which has a comprehensive list of all U.S. TV and radio stations by state. If they don't have it, you can purchase it for \$395, at: www.bowker.com/catalog/000061.htm

Perhaps the most comprehensive media resource service on all the nation's media, is Cision, which provides data that is updated daily in electronic format us.cision.com/media-database/media-database-overview.asp. They also provide a national clipping service in

case you need them to monitor your local PSA usage. Finally, remember to do Google and Wikipedia searches on specific audiences you are trying to reach and you will be surprised what turns up.

PSA Resources

Every state has a state broadcast association that may help you in developing creative ways to engage their local media members. For a list of state broadcaster associations, click on www.psaresearch.com/images/STATE_BRDCST_ASSNS_UPDATED_11.09.xls You will find a list of all the associations, a phone number and contact name.

To learn as much as possible about the media mindset, selection criteria and to access lists of national media organizations, most of which have local chapters or affiliates, go to www.psaresearch.com/biborgan.asp.

In conclusion, be professional and thorough in your approach. Respect the media representative's time. Make them a part of your issue, and above all, thank them for their support. If you do these things, you will get your day in the sun.

About the author: Bill Goodwill is a Legionnaire and CEO of Goodwill Communications, a firm specializing in PSA distribution and evaluation. He has nearly 40 years of field experience with the U.S. Navy, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Peace Corps, Marine Corps, Air Force, the Social Security Administration, Volunteers of America, the Internal Revenue Service and Canon, USA.

Radio Copy

Follow these steps to place public service announcements on stations in your area:

1. Retype the copy, putting the appropriate local information where indicated. Be flexible and open to changing the copy to make it fit station needs, etc.
2. Consider who you want to hear your announcement and which station's listeners would likely be your target. Perhaps you will work to place different announcements on different stations to properly target your message. The same message can be carried on more than one station. Do whatever it takes to make your American Legion post visible in your community.
3. Rehearse your sales pitch. Before you call the station, rehearse what you will say to the public service director to convince her or him that you need their help in promoting your service or community contributions. You may have only 60 seconds to tell your story — be prepared to do it.
4. Call the station and ask for the name of the public service director. Be certain you get correct spelling of the name. Then ask if you can speak with that individual. Set up a personal appointment if possible.
5. Make your sales pitch.
6. Be prepared to provide someone from the post to visit the station to deliver the scripts and perhaps record the announcement. Stations often seek the voice of a local citizen to deliver the message because it enhances the station's local service image.

7. If you are turned down this time, don't think you can never approach the station. Ask if another time of year is better to have the station use your message.
8. Regardless of your success, ask if you can provide a guest for a public affairs program to discuss one or more issues. For example, if you are trying to place the public service announcement about your service officer, offer to have the service officer be a guest on a program to discuss VA benefits, etc.

As a general rule, radio copy is printed double-space in all caps:

EXAMPLE OF RADIO COPY

Service Officers

60 Seconds

(168 words)

TWENTY-FOUR MILLION AMERICANS ARE MILITARY VETERANS. THEY'RE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE EARNED BENEFITS BECAUSE OF THEIR SERVICE AND SACRIFICE.

YET, TOO MANY AMERICAN VETERANS DON'T KNOW WHAT THEIR BENEFITS ARE — OR HOW TO CLAIM THEM.

ARE YOU A VETERAN WHO NEEDS TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR BENEFITS? ARE YOU GETTING WHAT YOU EARNED BY YOUR SERVICE? DO YOU NEED HELP WITH A VA CLAIM? IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS, YOU NEED TO TALK WITH AMERICAN LEGION POST _____ SERVICE OFFICER _____. HE/SHE IS READY TO HELP YOU — AT NO COST.

CONTACT _____ BY CALLING _____. THAT'S _____.

IF YOU'RE A VETERAN — IF YOU NEED ANSWERS ABOUT YOUR EARNED BENEFITS — YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO PICK UP THE PHONE AND MAKE THE CALL. AMERICAN LEGION POST _____ SERVICE OFFICER _____ IS READY TO HELP YOU. CALL HIM/HER AT _____.

HELPING VETERANS IS WHAT THE AMERICAN LEGION IS ALL ABOUT. WE'VE BEEN DOING IT SINCE 1919. CALL US TODAY.

###

See [Annex F](#) for more suggested radio spot copy.

SECTION SEVEN

Advertising

Sometimes it's the way to go



SECTION SEVEN | ADVERTISING

As a nonprofit veterans service organization, The American Legion conducts veterans and community-service programs that can be publicized for free with public service announcements in both print and electronic media. Newspapers and broadcast stations frequently donate space and time to free activities that benefit their audience. This service is offered voluntarily on a case-by-case basis as a public service as space and time allow. Clearly their priority is to “sell” the space or time commercially to bring in revenue – the reason they are in business.

There are a number of reasons to consider purchasing media advertising, even if you are successful in placing post program information as public service material.

Membership in Corporate Community

By doing business with local media, you establish a relationship as a respected corporate entity. It is easier to open doors within the newspaper or broadcast station when your post is on the list of advertisers. Promoting a Legion news story or publicizing a veterans event may be easier when there is an established positive business interface.

Visibility When Needed

Purchasing advertising puts you in control. Your American Legion message will run exactly when you want it for as long as you want it. For example, a post could advertise for new members in time to process them well in advance of deadlines to qualify for appropriate awards. Promotion of the Oratorical Contest could solicit young students to apply in time to enter post competition. “Need-A-Lift?” booklets could be promoted in consonance with the time of year students and par-

ents are seriously looking at colleges for graduating seniors. Whatever American Legion program or service a post may want to promote, running an ad in a newspaper or a spot on radio and television lets you select your audience when and in what media you choose.

Maximum Outreach

When you buy broadcast time, you can select the exact programs, radio station format and time of day to send your message. While a free public service announcement may not cost your post a penny, it may air at 3 a.m. when most folks you need to reach are sound asleep. If you buy time, you can select the exact personality and program you want the spot to run on and the specific time window to run it. Clearly, a radio spot about the benefits of joining The American Legion will reach a maximum audience during the morning or afternoon drive time when most people are going to or returning home from work in their vehicles.

Target the Audience

Buying advertising enables narrow selection of the intended audience based on intent and budget. A post reaching out to young, active-duty military personnel can use rock or hip-hop format radio stations during the times when most are commuting to and from the nearby base or post. Looking for mid-grade NCOs and petty officers? Consider country and adult-contemporary radio stations. If older veterans are the targets of a current campaign, examine the possibility of advertising on talk, oldies or country format radio stations and the local newspaper.

Campaign vs. Targeted Advertising

When Procter & Gamble sells soap, it launches a media campaign to reach the maximum number of consumers to sell the highest number of bars of soap to make the maximum number of dollars. It does this by determining the best period of time to “saturate” consumers with its message. Then, it buys a blitz of advertising on television, radio, cable systems and newspapers that make it impossible to not see or hear the message within a two- or three-week period. For manufacturers, advertising campaigns pay off because consumers respond by buying products that more than pay for the cost of advertising.

Unless your post is unusually large or is enjoying the proceeds from a rich benefactor’s multi million-dollar estate, the full-blown campaign approach is probably not a viable option to reach out to your community.

Targeted Advertising

Selecting one or two media outlets at a time to carry your post’s message is a more practical and economic approach to advertising. It enables a message to be tailored specifically to the intended demographic at an affordable price for a measured period of time that can be analyzed for effectiveness and future use.

The key to effective advertising is maximum repetition of the message. The more often readers, viewers or listeners receive your message, the more prone they are to take the action step in your message.

What is the best medium in which to advertise?

Each medium has advantages and disadvantages based on the type of message and audience you want to reach.

Television

Allows highly defined selection of audience. Station sales representatives can tailor advertising based on your post’s objective. For example, if recruiting young, active-duty military women is your objective, you would not choose advertising during children’s cartoons. Looking for younger male veterans? You would do well to consider televised sports coverage or spots during the sports section of the local newscast. Television buys you a large number of viewers for your message. The potential downside is relatively high cost per spot.

Cable

As with local television stations, you have the high degree of selectivity of programs. The advantage of advertising with a cable system is a much broader range of programs and a significantly lower cost. Cable advertising executives can tailor a schedule to get your message to the widest number of the folks that you need to reach and usually are willing to assemble custom packages to suit your requirements.

Radio

Radio stations can provide some of the best advertising bargains for reaching out to specific audiences. As a rule, AM radio stations tend to feature news, sports, religious and talk formats with loyal audiences. Many cover veterans affairs, national security and social issues on a regular basis. FM stations tend to be formatted according to types of music and entertainment.

Radio advertising can be affordable, depending on the size of the

SECTION SEVEN | ADVERTISING

station's audience, power of its transmitter and signal reach. Obviously the smaller the station, the lower the cost of advertising. Spending post dollars with the local "mom and pop" station in town will be affordable but must be weighed against the message and who you are trying to reach. If promoting American Legion "Need-A-Lift?" booklets is the goal, this would be a good selection. If recruiting young veterans is the objective, a station that plays current popular music or sports might be more appropriate.

When considering radio advertising, become familiar with all the radio stations covering your area. Select those you think might be best for your message, and then meet with station sales executives. Be prepared to ask plenty of questions about their track record, personal recommendations and expected results.

Radio executives can offer a variety of specials, including two free spots for every one purchased and discounts for length of time spots are run, as well as different time periods during the day. Cost can range from \$2 a spot with small stations up to several hundred dollars for spots on clear channel, 50,000-watt stations that transmit over several states.

Metro Traffic

Found in most mid- to large-size markets, metro traffic provides rush-hour traffic reports to a good number of radio stations serving the city or metro area. Sponsors "buy" individual traffic reports by the week. A common purchase would be 180 reports over a two-week period on a number of different stations. The advantage is being able to reach out to virtually all target audiences during peak hours with the

undivided attention of commuters. The reports can include all format stations. Each report includes a "brought to you by The American Legion." The report ends with a 10-second trailer such as the following:

OPEN: This report brought to you by The American Legion . . .
(Report on traffic)

Closing messages:

- #1 If you're a military veteran, you know there's strength in numbers. Join The American Legion of the 21st century. Become a Legionnaire. Call Post # at (number).
- #2 Serving men and women in uniform – today and tomorrow. There's a place for you in The American Legion. Join today's American Legion. Call (number).
- #3 Today's military is the best ever – and you need the best pay and technology. We believe you should have it. Join the nation's strongest voice for a strong military—The American Legion at (post website address).
- #4 Active-duty or retired – you need to be a member of The American Legion of the 21st century. Continue the legacy of the American veteran. Become a Legionnaire. Call (number).
- #5 Military service builds a common bond – The American Legion continues that bond for the future. Find your role in The American Legion of the 21st century. Join at (post website address).
- #6 Duty. Honor. Country. Legionnaires share that commitment with you today. Won't you share that commitment with us? Become a Legionnaire. Call (number). Start making a difference for tomorrow – today.

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#7 The world is a dangerous place. The service and sacrifice of active-duty and retired military members deserve the best benefits. Become a Legionnaire and help fight for your rights. Call (number).

#8 Want to get involved in American Legion Baseball, Boys State, High School Oratorical, youth programs and health care for veterans? Join today's American Legion. Call (number).

In keeping with the old adage “you get what you pay for,” metro traffic is highly effective but relatively expensive. As an economic alternative, consider approaching one radio station of your format choice that does traffic reports and request a traffic sponsorship with their station alone.

Newspapers

Placing an ad in newspapers can also reach specific audiences, depending on which section the ad is placed, the size (full page to small column) or insert (a postcard or membership application). Weekly newspapers are more cost effective. Daily newspapers are usually more expensive depending on area served and size of circulation.

Consider neighborhood sections in major metropolitan dailies.

Advertise in the section that best reaches your target audience – sports, gardening, cooking, national news, neighborhood news or even the obituary section. Cost will vary according to placement, size and frequency.

Specialty Advertising

Billboards offer long term, high visibility for The American Legion message. They offer the advantage of frequent repetition of the message for commuters who see it several times a day. Cost will vary depending on loca-

tion (more for placement on high volume arteries), size, lighted or electronic board, and length of showing. One month is an industry standard, but all lengths are negotiable. [See Section 10 on Outdoor Advertising.](#)

Regional publications such as pennysavers, city magazines and local corporate in-house newsletters offer additional exposure at widely varying ad rates.

School newspapers and broadcast stations sometimes offer opportunities to advertise. Check locally for advertising opportunities to reach young people with ads on Legion youth programs.

Bottom Line: Cost vs. Expectations

American Legion posts don't sell widgets or framistans, so the direct result of advertising frequently goes unmeasured. Depending on the number of phone calls, membership applications or website hits immediately following ads or spots promoting them, success can sometimes be immediately determined. At other times, results will be purely subjective, merely enhancing the image of your post in the community.

A post advertising campaign can run anywhere from several hundred dollars to tens of thousands, depending on the media selected and length of run. Regardless of your budget, advertising will enhance your post image, improve relations with local media, and expose The American Legion to both veterans and the general public.

As with all American Legion public relations techniques, advertising is not a requirement. It is but yet another tool in the box of telling The American Legion story and reaching out to your community. If your post can afford it, try it — but ease into it. Like investing in the stock market, immerse your post slowly into advertising. You might just find

it more successful than expected. One way to maximize your investment is to join with other posts in your area to combine resources, especially in urban areas.

National American Legion Advertising

The question frequently is asked: Why doesn't National Headquarters conduct a national campaign to advertise for members?

The answer: MONEY. As a nonprofit, member-based organization, money from dues is primarily directed to fund the programs of The American Legion. A three-week national advertising campaign to saturate newspapers, radio and television networks would cost literally millions of dollars. While a small amount of funds is reserved for advertising with targeted media, the focus of the National Public Relations Commission is the production of camera-ready and broadcast-ready media products for use by posts in their local media relations program. As a grassroots organization, each post is the heart of The American Legion. Each post with its unique personality and programs needs plenty of members to best serve its community.

While the objective is to obtain news coverage and place American Legion media materials as a public service, the cost of advertising locally, if necessary, is within reach of most posts.

The National Public Relations Commission stands ready to assist American Legion posts with recommendations, suggestions and pre-produced media products that can be used in both public service campaigns and local advertising efforts. Suggestions on the development of new and unique media tools promoting The American Legion are always welcome.

SECTION **EIGHT**

Media Interview Techniques

Just who's in charge, anyway?



SECTION EIGHT | MEDIA INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

The fear of public speaking ranks near the top of human fears. It's natural to be cautious when a news reporter wants to interview you or a member of your post's leadership. Overcoming the cautious feelings, however, provides you a prime opportunity to tell The American Legion story at home. Understanding a few key principles and putting "message points" to work for you will take the process from one of uncertainty to one of meaningful direction.

The Interview

Before you do an interview, make certain you have a story to tell. If you do not have a message to tell readers, viewers or listeners, forego the interview. Why? Because simply answering the questions without having a story to tell, means The American Legion's message is relegated to whether the reporter asks the "right question."

Subordinating the message of The American Legion to the assumption that the reporter knows the history of the organization fails to serve the best interest of the reporter, who wants all the facts. Moreover, simply answering questions with one's own opinion fails to serve the best interest of the organization.

Take into account that nearly every conceivable interview topic gives a representative of The American Legion an occasion to point out the organization's position. The message of the organization is information that, frankly, a reporter might find integral to telling a story.

The American Legion's positions on issues are taken from resolutions passed by delegates to the annual National Convention or by action of the National Executive Committee. The American Legion has many positions on many topics that determine the legislative priorities

of the organization. Getting them understood and reported is a challenge that local post officers can help meet. Once reported, the story also clarifies the organization's credibility on a given issue and answers the central question of a potential member of The American Legion: "What does The American Legion stand for?"

If a reporter asks about the viability of the new GI Bill benefits, it is important to point out that The American Legion wrote the original GI Bill.

If a reporter asks about the qualities of American Legion Boys State delegates, it is not out of line to explain that the advancement of Americanism is the reason The American Legion conducts a Boys State program.

What if the interview topic is the war on terrorism? As one explains The American Legion's support for eradicating terrorism, it is remiss to dodge the organization's position on the use of U.S. forces. You do not have to wait to be asked directly about an American Legion position; this is relevant and important information.

How do you ensure that the important facts are included in the interview? Study message points prior to the interview. And, during the interview, "stay on message."

The National Public Relations Division maintains a package of message points on all major issues of The American Legion. They are updated annually to accommodate resolutions passed by delegates to the national convention. Visit www.legion.org/publications.

Use these message points to prepare for interviews or reactions to related news stories.

Properly used, message points make it possible to handle interviews by reporters for newspapers, radio and television stations. They also

SECTION EIGHT | MEDIA INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

save the day when it comes to appearing as a guest on local talk-radio programs or television public affairs programs.

Most of us learned at a young age that when asked a question, answer it and don't wait for another to be asked. Just sit down. If we were asked another question we followed the same process: answer and sit down. A diagram of such a conversation would look like this:

Q, A. Q, A. Q, A. Q, A.

We call this a “Question-Answer – Question-Answer – Question-Answer” dialogue. In this situation the individual asking the question has complete control.

But when an individual is being interviewed, you must go beyond simply answering the question. The individual being interviewed seeks to take control of the interview with the use of information from message points. To take control you simply answer the question and then add the relevant position of the organization. This is not being deceptive. This is “staying on message,” making certain that facts we deem fundamentally important to the interview are not overlooked.

This technique serves the best interest of the media and The American Legion. A diagram of this type of interview would look like this:

Q, A.A.A. – Q, A.A.A. – Q, A.A.A.

We call this a “Question-Answer-Answer-Answer” dialogue. You take control. You answer the question and then bridge to your message points.

Here's a transcript of a portion of an interview on CNN's “Show-down: Iraq” program that aired 12:30 p.m., EST, Oct. 31, 2002. The American Legion assisted CNN in finding two Gulf War veterans, one

opposed to a then-potential war in Iraq and the other in favor of it.

American Legion former Legislative Director Steve Robertson was in CNN's Washington studio. Eric Gustafson of Veterans for Common Sense was in a studio in Madison, Wis. The moderator was Wolf Blitzer.

Robertson took control of the interview by explaining the organization's position on the use of U.S. troops, even though he was asked merely to react to Gustafson's remarks. Robertson knew his message prior to the interview. He had stated The American Legion's support for the war on terrorism prior to the excerpt. He answers Blitzer's question. But Robertson does not stop there; he adds an essential American Legion message, which is highlighted in boldface. His message is not an opinion. His message comes directly from a National Security Commission resolution approved by delegates to The American Legion national convention.

BLITZER: You were there, Eric, during the Gulf War. What did you see and what did you do that convinces you now is not the time to, quote, finish the job, supposedly?

GUSTAFSON: Well, I mean, it's a very different situation. In 1991, I was involved in an operation with the U.S. military as part of an international coalition to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. I mean, this was a case when you had one U.N. member state invade another U.N. member state. The very U.N. charter had been violated, and it was the right thing to do.

In this case, we are the ones that could be violating the U.N. charter by deciding that we will overthrow a sovereign government.

BLITZER: Steve, what do you say about that?

ROBERTSON: First of all, when we got on the plane to leave [in

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1991], I didn't think there was a troop that got on the plane that didn't think we'd be back. It was just a matter of time. But I think there are three very important things that have to be done. **Number one, we have to have clear objectives of what we're trying to achieve; number two, we need the support of Congress and the American people; and number three, which is probably the most important, we have to have a withdrawal strategy: how are we going to back out?**

BLITZER: All right. We will have to, unfortunately, leave it there. Steve Robertson and Eric Gustafson, thanks to both of you for joining us.

ROBERTSON: Thanks.

GUSTAFSON: Thanks.

This Q-A-A-A approach will work for every media encounter post public relations officers and others are called upon to handle.

Remember: the only reason you or your representatives are consenting to the interview is because you have a message to tell. Before the interview begins, know your message points. Then work to get your message points in the interview by taking control.

Bridging

What would happen if you were involved in an interview about a major event at your post? You were prepared with message points in mind but were never asked the question to give you the opportunity to “get on message?” Taking control becomes natural when you understand a few tricks of the trade.

Seldom will a reporter ask you the “right” question. That is where the simple process of “bridging” comes into the picture.

Bridging is used to move from your quick answer to the question into the first of your message points. Bridging is as simple as moving from the answer to the question with a phrase. Some examples:

“The real issue here ...”

“Yet, it's really a case of ...”

“What is important ...”

“That is just the first step ...”

With practice you will soon learn how to take control without regard to the question asked.

A common misconception is that you only need to make your point once. In fact, the more you make the same point the better chance your message point will be aired on radio or television or printed in the newspaper. Interviews that last 15 minutes or more demand that you make your point over and over again because only a brief part of what you say will make it to the story.

Flagging

The technique to make it easy for a reporter to remember your key point is known as “flagging”. Think of flagging as a way of telling your best friend the most important point of an issue. When you've covered a lot of information over 15 or 20 minutes of interview, flagging will help the reporter sort out the key point – quickly.

Many times an interview will end with the reporter asking if you'd like to say something that hasn't been covered. That's the perfect time to “flag” by reemphasizing the most important point. The simple phrase: “Yes, if you only remember one thing in looking at this issue ... remember ...”

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An opportunity to “flag” will often arise earlier in the interview, and you can do it by using strong phrases such as:

“There are many facets to the problem – but what you must remember is ...”

“The most important fact to remember is ...”

“It all boils down to ...”

Flagging always leads to your most important message point. By returning to that point several times in the interview you help the reporter understand what is important.

In every interview situation you will find *you* know the central issue better than the reporter. That is why the media has come to you or a post member. You are the experts. You understand the “human” impact of the issue. Take advantage of this position by helping the reporter grasp the complexity of the issue – make it obvious to them what is most important. They get an understanding of the issues and then report the “message points” that you make certain they absorb.

Message points, as explained earlier in this handbook, may be obtained from the National Public Relations Commission or from The American Legion website.

Taking advantage of a media interview is perhaps the best way to tell The American Legion family story. It’s important to recognize that interviews come in different varieties to meet the needs of various media. The one common denominator of all the interviews is the use of message points.

When you look at specific interview opportunities they can include:

- Newspaper
- Talk radio
- Radio news
- Radio public affairs
- Television news
- Television public/community affairs

Newspaper

Newspaper reporters present the largest interview spectrum of all media. They can call you for a quick comment on a breaking news story. They can call and visit you for a feature story on a program or activity. They can even rewrite your news release or media advisory. No matter the angle, your objective remains unchanged: tell your story by using message points.

When a newspaper reporter calls for the reaction of local members of The American Legion to something current and relevant you must learn the facts and check to see if National Headquarters has issued a statement and posted it on the web. If so, this information becomes the basis of your message points. If not, use your best judgment. If you don’t feel comfortable answering questions, politely decline the interview.

On the other hand, if the issue is about veterans health care or illness among groups of veterans, The American Legion has a history of pressing the government to do the right thing. As a strong veterans advocate in your community, you enhance the organization image by helping the reporters with the local aspect. Here your message points become the history of the organization and your post and, if applicable, how your post service officer can help others.

Talk Radio

Talk radio is a news resource that shouldn't be overlooked. Talk radio is a powerful advertising medium that attracts listeners who pay attention. It serves the basic need for connection with the community and develops tremendous awareness. Talk radio is a great opportunity to get ideas across with a minimum of effort.

Talk radio has many advantages. You are not misquoted. You can do radio interviews from any phone, anytime, anywhere. You'll have captive audiences of thousands – even millions of listeners depending on the show.

The growth of talk radio over the past several decades years has been phenomenal. In 1980, the United States had 75 talk radio stations. Today, more than 1,400 are broadcasting. Talk radio is still booming. Local talk radio will always be open to program ideas about veterans issues. The American Legion cannot overlook local talk radio as a way to reach the general public with its message. When the opportunity arises, talk radio also welcomes callers to express diverse views. Again, just calling the show in progress to comment on a guest or an issue puts you in position to communicate an important 'message point.

Often talk radio can be contentious. That is the way talk hosts like to work because it brings out both sides of issues. Mix in telephone callers and you can end up with people who disagree with you and challenge you. There is a way to deal with this aspect and it makes it less stressful for you. Do not get drawn into an argument with another guest or callers. Talk with the show host only, address your answers to that person and

never refer to the other guest or caller by name. This simple technique keeps your appearance on a professional level and you stay on point.

- If the caller or other guest says something you know is wrong, say so in a straight forward manner and then bridge to your message point: "That is simply an incorrect statement. The most important fact to remember is ..."
- Remember the bridging technique when someone gets off in left field, simply return to your message point: "The real issue here ..."

You won't often encounter these controversial talk show events. The bottom line in doing talk radio shows: if you don't think you'll be able to get your message points across in a professional manner, decline the offer.

Radio News

Radio news interviews are generally the easiest to handle. They are most often done via telephone. They take only a few minutes. Because of the repetitive nature of radio news, this interview may be included in newscasts for more than 24 hours. If your interview sticks to the key message points, the story will be told. Preparation for a radio news interview is easy: spread your message point notes on the table for quick and easy reference and take control from the beginning.

Radio Public Affairs Program

Besides talk radio nearly every station airs one or more public affairs programs. These are generally recorded in advance and deal with an upcoming community event or ongoing issue. When you look to communicate your message, these programs are an open door to the community.

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Contacting the station's public affairs director to learn how you can suggest a topic and a guest is the first step. Once the recording session is set you just take your message points with you. When you sit around the table for the interview, spread your message point pages out so you can quickly find the right notes.

Television News

When television crews are involved there is a tendency to forget that the post public relations officer and others still retain control. They come to your post home as your guests. Take them to your finest room for the interview. The social center of your post is no place for these crews. Again, rely on your message points to provide the foundation for telling your story.

With television news you will know the topic of the interview before the crew shows up. This provides time to study your message points, clean up a location for the interview and put your best organizational foot forward. If the interview is conducted with the subject seated at a table, spread those message points out in plain view. Don't be shy about referring to them before you start to answer the question. The interview tape will be edited – pauses will not hurt.

Television Public Affairs

Again, this is a program recorded in advance. As a guest, The American Legion representative will be seated in a chair or on a couch on the set designed to look comfortable and welcoming. Doing one of these programs is an excellent opportunity to add credibility and community acceptance to your efforts. If the set will handle the discreet placement

of your 'message point' notes where you can see them easily, have them available. However, for this type of program you are there to talk about your message and you should not require access to them to answer every question and bridge to your message points.

Let Media Know of The Local American Legion Source

You and other key members of your post are ready to be interviewed. You have a story to tell. The next step is to let those in the media know about you. Let's consider an effort to become a guest on a local talk show for a specific example. Just keep in mind the idea will work for every other interview opportunity as well.

Fax a media advisory (sample at end of section) to the producer of the show. Make a follow-up call to the radio station. Ask to speak with the producer of the show. Express your interest in being a guest, either in the studio or over the phone. It may be live or pre-recorded. Emphasize the useful and interesting information that you can provide their listeners. Set a date and time and be certain to be early and fully prepared.

Appearance

Regardless of the interview situation, always wear The American Legion cap for a photograph or television interview. If the interview takes place at your American Legion post, an ideal location would have The American Legion Emblem or the U.S. Flag as a backdrop, most likely in the meeting room of the post home.

When appearing on a television public affairs program you should dress professionally. With modern high-definition digital equipment, few colors cause problems. The two major colors to avoid: red and

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white. Without getting into technical jargon, red will change the color temperature of your skin as it appears to a television camera. White will tend to make your face look darker. A light blue shirt or blouse will look better, and the technical crew at a television station will appreciate your thoughtfulness.

As for patterns or texture in clothing, problems can develop with herringbone or similar weaves with older cameras. The television camera may create a distortion: tightly placed pattern lines may appear on the screen as a wavy effect. Solid colors work best.

The best way to summarize the idea of your appearance for television: think of it as presenting the image of yourself and our organization in a way that others will sense your professionalism. Someone who sees the story or show might make a decision to join based on what the organization stands for and the professional appearance of those who represent your local post.

The Interview Advisory

What follows is a sample media advisory seeking to put someone from your post on radio, television or even in a newspaper feature story. These can never be a fill-in-the-blank effort because each media “pitch” is different. Look it over. Adapt it to your needs. Send it to the appropriate media contact and stay at it until you ‘tell your story.’

More media advisories can be found in Annex B

The success of any public relations project requires an effort to increase the awareness of The American Legion family in the local com-

munity. Throughout this PR System Toolkit, information and products to handle the challenge have been provided in step-by-step fashion. Now it is time to take the individual pieces and blend them together to create a public relations plan of which you can be proud.

SECTION NINE

Event Planning

Getting the Community Involved



SECTION NINE | EVENT PLANNING

In recent years, posts, units and squadrons have joined together to create special local events supported by a cohesive public relations effort. Using planning materials provided by the National Public Relations Commission staff, volunteers lead communities in “A Day to Remember” on Sept. 11, coordinate community Blue Star Service Salutes, Community Covenant and Legion Day celebrations.

Annex L provides materials for conducting the above events.

Using the basics drawn from these specific efforts, other successful local events can be conducted using available volunteer resources. Let’s look at the various elements of organizing a special community event.

Step 1: Recognize the potential for an event and gather key planners for a meeting.

Step 2: Write a mission statement. This will keep everyone focused on the mission throughout.

Step 3: Develop an outline for the actual event. Answer 5 W’s and the H. Put it in writing.

Step 4: Contact other organizations, civic leaders, etc., to invite their participation and support.

Step 5: Seek sponsorship.

Step 6: Seek student participation (if appropriate).

Step 7: Plan and initiate public relations efforts:

- a) Write a proclamation (if appropriate) for mayor or other civic leader.
- b) Contact television public affairs director seeking promotional support (**Section 4**).

- c) Contact radio public affairs director seeking promotional support (**Section 4**).
- d) Advertise (**Section 7**).
- e) Develop event script. (Step by step, by time, approach to the event.) Provide words for the master of ceremonies and timing estimations to keep event flowing. This event script is prepared by the public relations volunteer working with the entire organizing committee.
- f) Issue news release(s) (**Section 5**).
- g) Issue potential guest editorial by your commander/president (**Section 5**).
- h) Issue media advisory (**Section 5**).
- i) Make final phone calls to media news desks (**Section 5**).

Step 8: Conduct event.

Step 9: Conduct post-event meeting of key planners. Discuss good and bad aspects. Prepare for future.

Certainly this is a simplification of the process. Yet, following these nine steps over a period of several months, you will be successful. Never forget this is a post-coordinated event for your community. The entire event management is not the responsibility of the post public relations volunteer. Other members of the post and your community *must* be involved. In modern management terms it is called getting “buy-in.” You want to have others “own” this event. With a team that “owns” the event, your potential for success is greatly multiplied.

How far in advance should you begin the event planning process?

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That depends on your individual situation. It is generally best to allow some five months of preparation for an event. Sometimes permits are needed from the community. These take time. The sooner you begin the overall planning, the more success the public relations effort will have and the more members of the community you will attract.

Remember: the success of any public relations officer requires an effort to increase the awareness of The American Legion family in the local community. A major community event, influenced heavily by The American Legion family, is an important part of creating an image that, in turn, makes membership recruitment easier.

Sponsorships

Challenge: Your post does not have unlimited funds to conduct special events.

Solution: Strike a partnership or sponsorship arrangement.

Concept: Share the overall event program with your partner or sponsor. They help with big-ticket items and members of The American Legion family provide volunteers to make it work.

You cannot watch or listen to a major sporting event today without hearing the name of the “sponsored stadium.” We have Citi Field, Lucas Oil Stadium and the Edward Jones Dome. Then you have the NASCAR Nationwide Series and the FedEx Orange Bowl, just to name a couple of the many corporate-sponsored events. Don’t forget the Bank of the West Tennis Tournament and the Buick Open Golf Tournament.

Clearly, building partnerships and sponsorships is what it takes for a successful event in this day and age. True, you are not working on the scale of these events. But the idea is the same. You look to create a mutually beneficial arrangement with a local company.

For an event that will not take large cash outlays, seek a partnership with a local newspaper, radio station or television station. Letting them have their name associated with the event gives you a partner in promotion. It’s a trade-off that benefits both the media outlet and The American Legion family.

If the event will need several thousand dollars in underwriting support, seek a sponsorship with a local business. The possibilities are endless. Use your imagination and then go after the sponsor just as you would a new member: ask. One post in Indiana asked, and not only received a large cash contribution from the Indianapolis Colts, but also had the Colts Cheerleaders out to their Blue Star Salute.

In making a sponsorship work, you need to consider the budget needed for the event and the amount of exposure you and the sponsor will obtain. Then together work out the details. How you name the event will take discussion. Consider all possibilities.

With a partnership or sponsorship you might end up with an event that has a title with the name of the sponsor. Or you might have an event brought to you by a partner and The American Legion family. Just be sure to keep your partner or sponsor family-friendly.

If you want to pursue funding support from national companies with local outlets (Wal-Mart, Pep Boys, Best Buy, Lowe’s, The Home Depot), you will most likely need to obtain a form from the local store

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manager. Then submit the form with all the details of the event, etc., and then see if you get a piece of the pie. These are not impossible sponsors, but you will probably have a higher success rate if you focus on local and regional businesses.

If the first, second, third and fourth potential sponsor or partner declines, simply keep on looking. With persistence and perhaps an inside contact through members of the post, unit or squadron, you will make a connection.

In all your years of volunteer work, you realize that you feel good when someone offers a word of thanks for your effort. The same holds true for your sponsors and partners. You could not organize an event that impacts hundreds or thousands of your fellow citizens and veterans without the support of your sponsors and partners. Publicly make that support known before, during and after the event.

Finally, never lose sight of the mission statement. That is the purpose of the event: fulfillment of a mission for The American Legion family. The sponsor or partner will “buy in” to the event much quicker and help meet the needs if they feel connected to the mission.

If much of this discussion on partnerships and sponsorships seems vague, that’s for a good reason. There is no right way to find a partner or a sponsor. There is no right company for a given event. The right solution can only be found through local contacts and hard work.

The result will be a well-organized event with a suitable budget and a media partner to help bring out the citizens. It’s a winning combination.

See Annex L for conducting specific American Legion events.

SECTION **TEN**

Outdoor Advertising

Get the picture?



The BIG Picture

While there are many ways to advertise, few offer a 24/7 presence, targeted coverage and hard-hitting big, bold and colorful images to thousands of people every day... and at a lower cost-per-thousand exposures that is lower than other advertising media than outdoor signage.

In fact, in some cases, it can be absolutely free.

Outdoor signage comes in a variety of sizes and shapes, lighted and unlighted, digital or LED, on the sides of busses and trucks and other non-traditional mobile platforms.

Outdoor signage catches viewers when they are away from their homes during the course of their daily activities. There is no filter, no time when the sign is not available. Your post's message could reach commuters to and from work every day for as long as your message is posted. It can target veterans and their families in your immediate area for weeks and months at a time. A good surface street should reach about 10,000 to 20,000 viewers per day and a highway location should reach from 60,000 to 200,000 viewers per day.

Naturally, outdoor advertising companies seek to keep all of their billboards running with commercial, paid messages. That's how they make their money. The reality, and history, is that there usually will be boards available where advertisers have dropped their contracts for a variety of reasons, leaving outdoor signs empty. These are opportunities for you to use your negotiating skills to ask the advertising company to post your billboard message as a public service until they can obtain the next corporate advertiser.

Many billboard companies will gladly comply to keep new messages posted and will usually assist you in transferring your artwork into full size sheets for posting for a few hundred dollars per sign.

Types of Billboards

Outdoor signs generally come in three sizes:

- The Freeway Bulletin is 14' X 48', visible from 500 feet
- The Highway Bulletin is 12' X 24' visible from 300 feet
- The Street Sign is 6' X 12' visible from 150 feet.

Electronic digital and LED signs continuously rotate messages and the artwork is loaded by computer. These boards are becoming more popular at large shopping malls and in downtown shopping areas. They offer an advantage in that the physical sheets do not have to be printed and posted. Additionally, the message can be easily changed at anytime. The downside is that your message is just one of many in rotation; there is no exclusivity with this form of signage.

Design for Success

The KISS principle is an art form with outdoor advertising. Your theme has just one sentence to tell the whole story, along with your photo or artwork. Consider such successful campaign's as McDonald's, "i'm lovin it." One message that would resonate with veterans might be "Thanks for serving." Still others might be, "Military veteran? Join us," with The American Legion Emblem. If you're promoting a youth program, a good action photo of a young person engaged in the activity with one sentence and your post's phone number could draw attention by both young people and their parents. Creativity, a good

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feel for design and brevity of message are keys to success.

The lettering on the sign should be big. Very BIG. The letters should be at least 3 feet tall for the main copy and never smaller than 18 inches for other copy. To test your sign, print it off in 8 ½” X 11” formats and tape it to a wall. See how far you have to move to the paper to read the ad. The closer you have to come, the less successful the sign will be.

Additionally, contrast on the billboard is the second key. Many of the poorly designed signs suffer from lack of contrast on the lettering.

How to Find a Billboard

Most likely there are billboards located throughout your area but finding one that is available might be tricky. Consider:

- Browse the website outdoorbillboard.com under the heading “billboards for rent.”
- Check your yellow pages under “outdoor advertising” and contact a local representative.
- Drive around the area and write down the billboards in your market that offer potential for your messages and visit those companies to discuss vacancies and the possibility of public service assistance to The American Legion.

The Public Service Pitch

As a non-profit veterans organization with a mission of supporting veterans and their families and the youth of America, The American Legion certainly qualifies as a 501 c (19) charitable entity. Many outdoor advertising companies have gladly assisted Legion posts, and sev-

eral departments, with running signage as a free public service on their unsold signs for a month or more. However, others may have rigid policies that preclude public service advertising. Every opportunity is different.

Ideally, you will be able to develop an ongoing relationship with a local outdoor advertising company that will be amicable and productive over a long term. By posting PSA signage to keep their unsold boards current while enabling the nation’s largest veterans service organization to reach out to the community, they enhance their reputation as being a committed corporate entity in the area. Establishing good relations should begin with a personal visit and a discussion of your post’s need to reach out to people in your area in order to provide the free services of your post. Remember, the company does not have to offer you free space – they would do so because they also believe in what The American Legion is and does for the community. Your mission is to request their aid in getting out the word.

Other Signage

Passenger bus “wraps” are now quite common in metro areas. Commercial truck advertising enables advertising on the sides and back of tractor-trailers engaged in interstate commerce. In some areas, mobile billboards are driven to a location and left for contractual periods, reaching commuters in non-traditional locations. As with other forms of advertising, the cost decreases with length of service. However, it can be substantial. For example the cost of advertising on a box truck runs about \$600 a month with another \$600 onetime setup charge.

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The Total Picture

As with any community outreach effort, the success of outdoor advertising (whether free as a public service, or paid for by your post) should be considered one element of a total package, including reaching out to the community on cable, by holding public events, sending letters to the editor and calling local talk radio programs. The more transmissions from The American Legion that intended receivers hear, the more likely your message will reach the action step in your target audience's mind.

Action Step

If your billboard message has an action step requesting veterans to call your post, remember that the outdoor billboard is working for you 24/7. Be sure that the phone number posted will ALWAYS have a cheerful but professional responder no matter what time the phone rings armed with all the information needed to provide service to the client (caller). If you post a website, be sure to use a short URL ... folks driving can't remember or jot down long email addresses. Legion.org is easy. So is post123.com. The galvintbriscoBLEgionpost123@aol.com will not generate a lot of response, if any.

Feedback

If your American Legion post has, or is running a successful outdoor advertising effort in your area, we would like to hear from you. Please email a color photo of your billboard(s) along with information about your outdoor campaign to pr@legion.org. you can also post the information yourself at www.legiontown.org/

SECTION **ELEVEN**

Art that gets published

Good images can make the difference



Not long ago, sending along several photos with a post news release to the local paper was more of a goal that was seldom achieved. Because timeliness is paramount in providing local news to publications, that translated into same day, or day after, for daily newspapers to consider using your release and photos; weekly newspapers were a bit more generous, usually calling for inputs up to a week after the event. Writing the release, shooting the photos, getting them processed and then captioned and delivered to media all in one day was more than a challenge.

Today, however, technology has overcome most of those obstacles. You will still need to write the release, but electronic digital cameras enable public relations practitioners to shoot, select the best shots, add a short caption and email them direct to the newspaper or website almost immediately.

By using a computer, photos can be embedded directly within the release, providing an information product that becomes highly attractive to editors – especially if the photos are good.

Which brings up the most important element in boosting the chances of your photos actually being used.

Take Action Shots. Avoid “Grip And Grinners.”

Certain photographs demand shooting them as what are called not-so-affectionately “grip and grinners” by photo editors. They are unavoidable when handing over 3 foot checks to show donations or a trophy being given to a young person. But if you must have one shot of that, also include an action photo of Legionnaires collecting the cell phones that got the cash to donate the money; and shots of the young person doing what got him or her the tro-

phy, i.e., giving an oration on the Constitution or training for a first aid badge in your Boy Scout pack.

Simply put: the better the action shot(s), the better the odds of the whole release/photo package will be published. If there is a member of the post who enjoys photography, invite them to get involved. Be sure to write short captions for each photo and identify those in the shot(s).

Photo Caption Story: If a story does not warrant an extensive news release or the deadline is too short to write a full story to go with your photos, consider sending a photo caption story. It is simply a good action photo with a caption that tells the abbreviated story. These are excellent to use as fillers for newspapers when they have white space to fill after coming out short of editorial copy. Editors are always looking for good photo stories local in nature and your submission’s chance of being printed goes up exponentially with good action-oriented photography.

Video: Also embedded in many news releases today are links to short videos of the event posted on YouTube. A news release that has both quality still digital photos and a short video are considered full packages and make them very attractive to editors as well as television assignment editors.

Although the temptation to use a lesser resolution in order to get more pictures on your camera’s disk is powerful, it is important to keep your publicity photos for print publication at least 10 megapixels to maintain high resolution. Better resolution gives editors the flexibility to enlarge or reduce your photo story with relative ease in meeting their placement requirements. A separate memory disk for public relations

photos should be standard practice; the post historian will appreciate having access to the photos later in the year.

Photos for use exclusively on the Internet can be of lower resolution due to the smaller images on the electronic screen.

As noted earlier, with the reduction of the size of newsrooms and fewer news personnel, those public relations savvy Legionnaires who are able to provide “full packages” of copy, photos and video will outshine the competition and enjoy a high rate of placement in media.

Making and Marketing Videos to Tell Your Story

Introduction

One of the biggest benefits of the digital age has been the ability to produce and share video online and via the inexpensive DVD media. Just about anyone has the capability to produce video these days with very little investment in equipment and software. In fact NOT having video on your website or as part of a PR campaign is rapidly becoming the exception these days.

Video can be a very powerful tool in telling The American Legion story and in convincing your members, potential members and supporters to take action. If you haven't already, you should consider using video as one more tool in your arsenal of public relations options.

Possible Uses

It has become very easy with the advent of video servers such as YouTube, Flickr, Yahoo and Google and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, to share video content with anyone around the globe. The sites provide the platform and band-

width at little or no cost. And if you're a bit more experienced in website coding, you can create or download a video player for your own website, providing you have the capacity to play video from your server. If not, there are many ways to link to videos that make the process very easy and inexpensive these days. And with inexpensive authoring programs and cheap media, you can create DVDs for distribution to the media, to use during presentations and pitches and for post and department meetings.

Here are some ways you can incorporate video into your PR Plan:

Video News Releases (VNR's)

Often, when you send a press release to the media, you can send a short video which will capture the interest and emotions that cannot always be portrayed in a short written release. Brief interviews with key persons involved in the event or story or raw video showing what is happening or what you have accomplished can go a long way in telling your story. The VNR may not always be used on the air, but it can help tell your story to the editors and news directors, which will help them decide whether to cover your story in local media. You should consider sending VNR's to print media and radio stations for that very reason.

Live Streaming

Live web streaming of video has also become relatively inexpensive, providing the audience is relatively small. One of the biggest expenses can be the purchase or rental of bandwidth to allow many people to view a webcast simultaneously. But there are also streaming sites that will provide cheap or free alternatives such as Ustream, YouCastr, etc.

Tributes

One of the most popular types of internet video is the tribute video where still images and music are mixed to create tributes to our military, to veterans and their causes and to show support for Legion supported charities such as the Legacy Scholarship, etc. These can be short emotional stories that both promote what you're doing at your post, but also show how we support our troops, their families and veterans from all wars and eras.

Documentaries of post events

One of the biggest problems we have in The American Legion PR community is a lack of documentation of events as they happen. Granted, we seldom, if ever, take on a project, event or cause for the purpose of gaining publicity or receiving accolades, but when we fail to document our efforts as they happen, we miss a great opportunity to promote our capabilities and show our true commitment to the four pillars. It is important that when we do great things to support our fellow veterans and their families that their comrades know what we have done. It is through this knowledge that potential members realize the value of membership and make a commitment to join.

Fundraising and sponsorship solicitation

The power of a good testimonial video from a Legacy Scholarship recipient cannot be understated. As we will soon discuss, the ability to put a face and a place to your efforts through the use of video is powerful. Seeing the end result in an emotional interview or documentary will often go a long way toward you closing the deal when asking for support or contributions.

Why videos are powerful

As the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Quite often a moving picture or emotional soundbite delivered in a well produced video can be worth an entire bookshelf of words. Videos are powerful because you can see and hear the true inflections and emotions and see the events without having to mentally interpret the printed word.

As discussed earlier, the power is then magnified when you are able to share and distribute the message so easily using the viral nature of the Internet and the video sharing sites.

Pro vs. Amateur

On the downside of the proliferation of videos and the inexpensive cameras and software, is the lack of "professional" quality in the vast majority of videos. Just because anybody can create a video nowadays does not mean that everyone SHOULD create videos. Those who have made a career in video production have learned techniques and principles that take years of practice and refinement to be able to shoot, produce, design and score high quality movies and video productions. In fact, in most cases, these people specialize in only one aspect of video production.

Few of us in The American Legion public relations arena are trained in any of the specialized skills required in video production, let alone specialize in any of them. And subconsciously we don't think about what it is that makes one video look more "professional" than another, yet we know and are affected consciously or subconsciously by the

qualities of the video production. There are many aspects of a video production that will impact our perception of quality, including:

Video quality

In addition to the overall quality or resolution of the image, quality includes the frame size (aspect ratio and pixel dimensions). When video is delivered to the web, there is a balance of encoding the video to achieve either lower compression or smaller file sizes. Too much compression will cause any video to degrade in quality.

Framing and composition

How you place the subject in your frame will have a major impact on how your viewer perceives your video. Over the years, we have established basic rules of composition for video just like those established by artists and still photographers. When we violate those rules, we either create an unintended emotional reaction or our viewer perceives a lack of quality or professionalism.

Lighting

Lighting can be evaluated by quality and quantity. Obviously if you don't have enough light the image will be dark. Lighting can also draw a viewer's attention to places within a frame that you don't want. In addition, camera systems require special attention to compensate for differences in the color of various light sources. When we aren't careful, our subjects look yellow or blue. It is primarily the lighting that differentiates a professionally produced motion picture and a basic video production.

Sound and music

A common test of how important the sound is in your video production is to turn off the sound and just watch the program and then close

your eyes and just "watch" the soundtrack. Which will provide you with the most worthwhile information? Normally it will be listening to the audio. We often overlook the importance of recording good clean audio when producing videos. Study good recording techniques and record the best audio possible. Adding music to the background will also have a huge impact on the emotional reception for the viewer. Two identical videos with different music cuts will convey an entirely different message. The next time you watch a movie, pay close attention to just the music track and imagine the scene without it.

Editing

There are many aspects to editing that will have an impact on your video. Professional video editors pay close attention to every scene and every transition. The length of a scene, the rhythm and pace of the dialogue and pictures are all carefully controlled to achieve the mood and emotion they want the viewers to experience.

This discussion is in no way intended to be a primer on video production. Just be aware that as you incorporate video into your PR plan, be aware of the impact that video will have on your viewer's perception of The American Legion, your department or your post.

As important as quality is to your video efforts, compelling content can make up for a lot of imperfections. Emotional interviews such as happy reunions and a heartfelt thank you from the recipient of a scholarship or family member of a military member who has received assistance from your post are priceless. These can say more about what you do in your community than a well produced video that doesn't get a viewer's attention. Don't do video just because you feel you have to.

Remember that the strength of video is in conveying the emotion and substance of a story. Look for the elements of a story that are best told using video and make the most of it.

Quick Tips

KISS (Short AND Simple) – One of the keys to effective video is to keep it short. Consider your video an attention getter. One of the most difficult things to do in editing a video is to extract only the important information necessary to get your point across. There is a time and place for longer videos, but consider your audience and their attention span when you produce your video.

Audio is important – Many studies have been done to determine which is more important – sound or pictures. Most of the time, you'll get much more information from the audio than you do the images, although they need to work together. When you shoot or edit your videos, pay close attention to the quality of your sound. Poorly produced audio is a major reason people will tune out from your videos. Take time to properly place microphones and select appropriate music for backgrounds to enhance your productions.

Forget the Effects – See KISS above. One of the temptations of new video editors is to try to use every effect in their software palette. Most seasoned editors stick to the takes and simple dissolves to transition from scene to scene. The cheesy wipes and effects tend to make your production look amateurish.

Beware copyright infringement – Before using a commercial music cut from your favorite CD or a scene from your favorite movies in your production, read the copyright notice on the package. Every video producer should become familiar with copyright law

Potential Sources of Expertise and Finished Materials

If you just don't have anyone in your post with the talent and resources to produce your own videos, here are a few ideas on where to find some expertise and possibly already completed videos to help you out.

Schools (Student projects)

Look for a high school or college in your area with a media department or video production course. They may be looking for projects to give their students some real world experience. Contact the instructors or professors and offer to coordinate with them in exchange for the right to keep the finished video. They may be able to produce public service announcements or documentaries on your youth programs, for instance.

Production Companies

Approach local video production companies to see if they offer pro-bono work or if they have a veteran interested in volunteering time to assist. Just like membership, it's often just a matter of asking.

Television Stations

If you have established a relationship with your local television station, you may be able to convince them to do a special program about your Legion Baseball team or a short feature about your Memorial Day activities and then allow you to post the video to your website. Although the station may not be interested in your weekly bingo game, they may well want to know about how you are rebuilding a wounded warrior's home to make it handicapped accessible. Make sure to approach the station early in the process so they can document your efforts rather than report after-the-fact.

Veterans, VA, other Organizations

There are many videos already done by VA, other veterans organizations, DoD and many other sources that can be educational and supportive of your programs and initiatives. If you find something of use, contact them to see if you can get a DVD or file to post on your website.

Linking to YouTube and other Video sites

Many of the video hosting web site will allow you to either link to a video or provide an embed code which will allow you to have the video play right from your website. These may be videos as mentioned earlier from VA and other organizations or just tributes from ordinary citizens.

National HQ

Your national headquarters has many different videos available to you for free. Visit legion.org/legiontv to view most of the videos available. You can either link to these videos for your use or request a DVD of the video through the National Public Relations Division (pr@legion.org or 317-630-1253)

Members

Quite often we search for resources and talent and fail to fully take advantage of one of our greatest resources – our members. We may have a video producer in our post who has been inactive but would jump at a chance to support our PR efforts. Or perhaps one of your members is on a board or has a close association with someone who can help. Make sure you poll your membership and ask for assistance right from the beginning. You may be surprised at what you find right under your nose.

Using Video as One Element of your PR campaign

Any public relations effort or campaign must be comprised of many different elements to achieve the highest level of success. Consider video as one element in your arsenal and use it when appropriate. You can often send a press release or advisory along with a video supporting the story to help clarify points or to illustrate important aspects of your story. A short interview with one of the persons referred to in your story can help convince a decision maker to cover your story further.

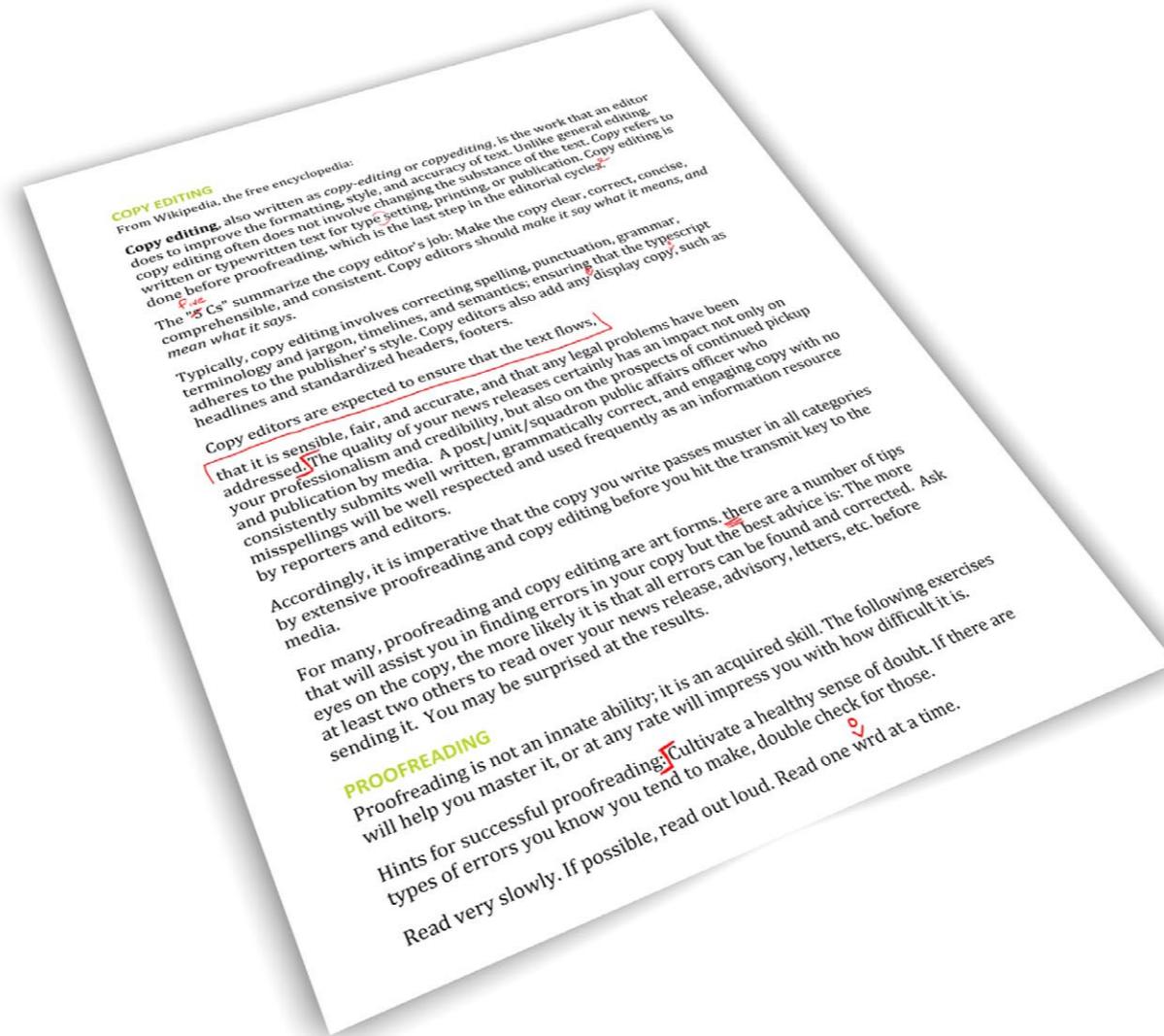
Using video on your website or including links to videos in a newsletter story will help keep your audience involved and more likely to gain a positive response.

See Annex I for a list of available videos from the PR Commission.

SECTION TWELVE

Copy Editing

Make the text sing



From Wikipedia, the Free encyclopedia

Copy editing, also written as copy-editing or copyediting, is the work that an editor does to improve the formatting, style, and accuracy of text. Unlike general editing, copy editing often does not involve changing the substance of the text. Copy refers to written or typewritten text for typesetting, printing, or publication. Copy editing is done before proofreading, which is the last step in the editorial cycle.

The “five Cs” summarize the copy editor’s job: Make the copy clear, correct, concise, comprehensible, and consistent. Copy editors should make it say what it means, and mean what it says.

Typically, copy editing involves correcting spelling, punctuation, grammar, terminology and jargon, timelines, and semantics; ensuring that the typescript adheres to the publisher’s style. Copy editors also add any “display copy”, such as headlines and standardized headers, footers.

Copy editors are expected to ensure that the text flows, that it is sensible, fair, and accurate, and that any legal problems have been addressed.

The quality of your news releases certainly has an impact not only on your professionalism and credibility, but also on the prospects of continued pickup and publication by media. A post/unit/squadron public affairs officer who consistently submits well written, grammatically correct, and engaging copy with no misspellings will be well respected and used frequently as an information resource by reporters and editors.

Accordingly, it is imperative that the copy you write passes muster in all categories by extensive proofreading and copy editing before you hit the transmit key to the media.

For many, proofreading and copy editing are art forms. There are a number of tips that will assist you in finding errors in your copy but the best advice is: The more eyes on the copy, the more likely it is that all errors can be found and corrected. Ask at least two others to read over

your news release, advisory, letters, etc. before sending it. You may be surprised at the results.

Proofreading

Proofreading is not an innate ability; it is an acquired skill. The following exercises will help you master it, or at any rate will impress you with how difficult it is.

Hints for successful proofreading:

- Cultivate a healthy sense of doubt. If there are types of errors you know you tend to make, double check for those.
- Read very slowly. If possible, read out loud. Read one word at a time.
- Read what is actually on the page, not what you think is there. (This is the most difficult sub-skill to acquire, particularly if you wrote what you are reading).
- Proofread more than once. If possible, work with someone else.

Most errors in written work are made subconsciously. There are two sources of subconscious error:

1. Faulty information from the kinesthetic memory. If you have always misspelled a word like “accommodate”, you will unthinkingly misspell it again.
2. A split second of inattention. The mind works far faster than the pen or typewriter.

It is the subconscious nature of the word that makes proofreading so difficult. The student who turned in a paper saying, “I like girdle cakes for breakfast” did not have a perverted digestion. He thought he had

SECTION TWELVE | COPY EDITING

written “griddle cakes” and because that’s what he was sure he had written, that’s what he “saw” when he proofread. If he had slowed down and read word by word, out loud, he might have caught the error. You have to doubt every word in order to catch every mistake.

Another reason for deliberately slowing down is that when you read normally, you often see only the shells of words -- the first and last few letters, perhaps. You “fix your eyes” on the print only three or four times per line, or less. You take in the words between your fixation points with your peripheral vision, which gets less accurate the farther it is from the point. The average reader can only take in six letters accurately with one fixation. This means you have to fix your eyes on almost every word you have written and do it twice in longer words, in order to proofread accurately. You have to look at the word, not slide over it.

In proofreading, you can take nothing for granted, because subconscious mistakes are so easy to make. It helps to read out loud, because 1) you are forced to slow down and 2) you hear what you are reading as well as seeing it, so you are using two senses. It is often possible to hear a mistake, such as an omitted or repeated word that you have not seen.

Professional editors proofread as many as ten times. Publishing houses hire teams of readers to work in pairs, out loud. And still errors occur.

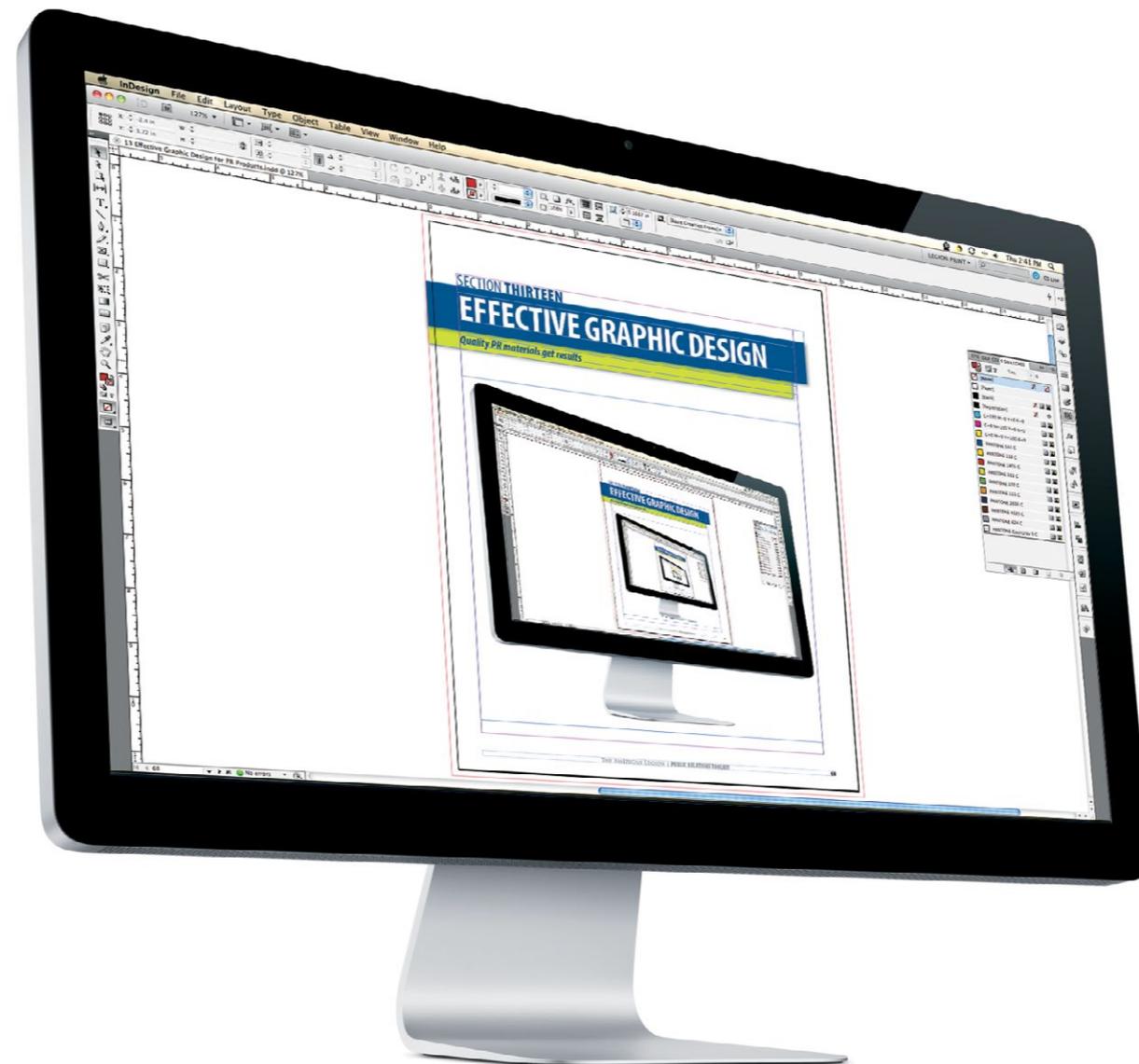
Remember that it is twice as hard to detect mistakes in your own work as in someone else’s!

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SECTION THIRTEEN

Effective Graphic Design

Quality PR materials get results



When people discuss good vs. bad design there are multiple notions that they consider. Some of these notions are aesthetic; others are functional. An example of an aesthetic would be the balance of asymmetry or the use of very select typefaces. An example of functional would be the use of a san-serif for small type to maintain the integrity of the letterform. Both of these notions are important to achieving good design.

When we look at the aesthetic side there are certain rules that we need to follow or at the very least acknowledge. There is good reason for these rules. They help provide focus and clarity to our designs as well as focusing on consistency.

The rules can be broken down as follows:

Have a clear goal

Communicate: Don't simply make something pretty

Be consistent

Limit yourself to two typefaces, three at most

Hierarchy rules

Color has meaning

Less is more

White space is golden

Symmetry is boring, be dynamic

Type is just as important as imagery, sometimes more

Design for your target audience

Be creative with your use of imagery, don't use clip art

Don't be trendy

Look at others for inspiration

Have a Clear Goal

This is pretty straightforward. When you start the design process really think about what you want to get out of your final product. What is your message? No matter how nice something looks, if there is no clear message it is useless.

Communicate, Don't Simply Make Something Pretty

Your design needs to support your concept. Form has meaning. No matter how realistic or abstract, images carry meaning and if that meaning doesn't support your concept it will confuse your design. It can lead your audience to believe that you don't know what you are trying to communicate and therefore compromise your integrity.

Be Consistent

It is extremely important for your design to remain consistent. For this reason we have chosen a limited number of typefaces and colors that we use in our national publications. It is important that you look at every part of your design and make sure that they work together. If there is any weakness in your design it can weaken your entire message.

Limit Yourself to Two Typefaces, Three at Most

Typefaces should be chosen intentionally. Don't simply use Times New Roman because it is the default font in the program you are using. Chose something because it has values that relate to your message. When you are working on a design different typefac-

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es are typically used for different functions. Headlines, body type, info graphics, etc. A single typeface with a variety of weights and italics can often be enough for a design, although the addition of a second typeface often helps add some drama to your design. Too many typefaces can be distracting and even confusing to the viewer so don't over do it.

Hierarchy Rules

When you are working on a design it is important to list the level of importance of the information you are trying to present. It is a good idea to attract the attention of your audience with a large shape, a strong image, a bright color or a dynamic headline. You can then decrease the level of activity of each level below it. Establishing this hierarchy is essential to the ease of use of your design. You are trying to get your audience's attention, give them information and help them to remember it.

Color Has Meaning

When you are choosing the colors of your design do so on purpose. Colors have meaning from passion (red) to loyalty (blue). At the same time we need to understand the value of variety. It seems that as a veterans service organization there is a temptation to always default to red, white and blue. While we should be patriotic we need variety to keep things interesting. One good way of choosing colors for a design is basing them off of an image you are using in the piece. This adds consistency to the design and brings everything together.

Less is More

One common problem is to over-design something. The more that is going on on a given page, the harder it is for the viewer to see what is important. The best designs are often the simplest. Take the ABC TV logo for example. It is a simple circle with very basic letterforms. Nothing too complicated but very strong and memorable.

White Space is Golden

The previous rule logically leads to this one. There is always the temptation to cram as much information as possible on to a single page. People feel the need to explain every nuance of a program in a single flyer. This often provides a design that the viewer finds too daunting to even approach. Reserving open space in a design reinforces the importance of the information that is there. When using white space it is important to make it dynamic. Don't simply have a block of open space in your design but make the shape interesting.

Symmetry is Boring, Be Dynamic

It is true that symmetry can be found throughout nature and can be beautiful but in the case of design, it often makes a piece seem safe, even boring. We want to add interest to our designs and asymmetry is a great way of achieving that.

Type is Just as Important as Imagery, Sometimes More

Often designs are so image focused that the type is ignored. Some of the nicest designs that can be found are completely type based with no

SECTION THIRTEEN | EFFECTIVE GRAPHIC DESIGN

photography or illustration. Type is made up of lines, dots and shapes and can and should be used to create some very interesting designs.

Design for Your Target Audience

Your design needs to speak to your target audience. The use of the color red may have great meaning to a longtime Legionnaire when referencing National Headquarters' programs. On the other hand a member of the general public will likely not understand the significance. Make sure the imagery and symbolism you use will make sense to your target audience.

Be Creative with Your Use of Imagery, Don't Use Clip Art

There is nothing like obvious clip art to turn a person away from your design. There are many resources on the Internet for great photographs. Any Department of Defense or government photos are public domain and can be used in your designs. There are certain restrictions that you must respect. Such as the images can't be used to promote a product. But there are many instances where use of these images are completely legitimate.

Don't Be Trendy

It is normal to get caught up in a current trend and attempt to capitalize on its popularity in your designs. The problem is that your work will be competing with everyone else that is trying to do the same thing and you risk getting lost in the noise. Another issue is the longevity of such trends is often quite short so your designs are soon outdated. Stick with something classic and timeless and it will last you much longer.

Look at Others for Inspiration

There are many resources available online and in bookstores that can provide great inspiration. Do not copy but use these resources to help you develop your own style.

ANNEX INDEX

ANNEX A The Press Kit

The post press kit should contain a number of basic items that can be updated with additional information to customize for specific events or issues. Depending on the number of media in the area, at least ten kits should be on-the-shelf ready to go, in a nice folder with The American Legion Emblem and post information. It should include:

- A basic fact sheet about The American Legion.
- A fact sheet about the programs and accomplishments of the post.
- A biography of the post commander.
- A photo of the post commander and an exterior shot of the post.

Additional items to add to the basic press kit may include:

- A news release about a specific event or issue.
- Photos and captions of the event.
- A specific fact sheet on the event or topic.
- Contact information for interviews on the subject.
- Action photos of the event with captions.

The following general fact sheets may be used for general information about The American Legion:

The American Legion

Background Notes

Since its founding in Paris in 1919, The American Legion has been a steadfast advocate for America's veterans, a friend of the U.S. military, a sponsor of community-based programs for young people and a

spokesman for patriotic values.

With millions of members, it is the nation's largest veterans group, with more than 14,000 local "posts" in communities throughout the nation and six foreign countries. It's also the largest organization of Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Membership is open to all men and women who served honorably in the U.S. military during an official wartime period.

Service to Veterans

- Legion officials wrote the original GI Bill in 1944.
- Provides free, professional assistance -- for any veteran -- in filing and pursuing claims before any administrative or judicial body of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Inspections of VA medical facilities conducted by trained American Legion staff members as part of the System Worth Saving initiative.

Service to the Military

- The first veterans group to identify "Gulf War Syndrome," it earlier led the way in helping service members suffering from Agent Orange and radiation exposure through joint research ventures with Columbia University.
- Assists families of deployed active-duty troops through the Family Support Network, (800) 504-4098.
- Established American Legion office in Pentagon to assist severely injured servicemembers transition home in Heroes to Home-

towns program.

- Spearheaded passage of the GI Bill of the 21st century.

Service to Community

- Sponsors American Legion Boys State, American Legion Boys Nation, High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – “A Constitutional Speech Contest,” Junior Shooting Sports and American Legion Baseball.
- Largest collective donor of blood to the Red Cross (about 100,000 pints yearly).
- National Emergency Fund awarded grants totaling more than \$7 million to help victims of natural disasters since 1989.

Service to Country

- Authored original “flag code” under federal law.
- Founded Citizens Flag Alliance to advocate passage of a flag-protection constitutional amendment.
- Provides honor guards at civic events and for the funerals of countless veterans.

Significant Dates in the History of The American Legion

March 15-17, 1919

The American Legion is founded in Paris by members of the American Expeditionary Force.

Sept. 16, 1919

The U.S. Congress charters The American Legion.

Nov. 10-12, 1919

First national convention of The American Legion convenes in Minneapolis, Minn.

Organization’s Constitution and Preamble are adopted. Resolution adopted supporting the Boy Scouts of America as first youth program.

August 9, 1921

U.S. Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the Veterans Administration, is created as a result of efforts by The American Legion.

June 15, 1923

First “Flag Code” is drafted during conference called by The American Legion. Congress adopted the code in 1942.

July 17, 1925

American Legion Baseball program is created.

June 23, 1935

First American Legion Boys State convenes in Springfield, Ill.

June 1, 1938

First American Legion National High School Oratorical Championship held in Norman, Okla.

Sept. 19-21, 1942

Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion is changed for the first and only time since it was written in 1919. The word

“War” is changed to “Wars.”

Dec. 15, 1943

Harry W. Colmery, past national commander of The American Legion, writes in longhand on hotel stationery the first draft of what will become the “GI Bill of Rights.”

June 22, 1944

President Franklin Roosevelt signs The GI BILL into law.

May 29, 1946

A \$50,000 grant from The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary is presented to a small, struggling organization – the American Heart Association – to inaugurate a nationwide program for the study, prevention and treatment of rheumatic heart disease.

May 4, 1950

The American Legion votes to contribute funds to the field of mental health with the provision that the three major mental health organizations then in existence be amalgamated into one. They accepted this provision and the National Association for Mental Health was born.

July 9, 1954

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation is formed.

Sept. 1, 1966

The American Legion voices great concern over the fate of POWs in Vietnam.

Aug. 26, 1982

The American Legion presents a \$1 million check to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund toward the construction of “The Wall” in Washington, D.C.

July 21, 1983

The American Legion announces its sponsorship of an independent study of the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans. (The results of “The American Legion Columbia University Study of Vietnam-era Veterans” were presented to Congress in 1989.)

Jan. 1, 1989

The Department of Veterans Affairs begins operations. The American Legion fought for the VA to become a cabinet-level department.

Oct. 16, 1989

Longstanding objective of The American Legion is achieved as the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals begins operations.

Oct. 11, 1990

The Family Support Network of The American Legion is formed to assist the families of military personnel deployed during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

June 15, 1991

The American Legion’s first Junior Shooting Sports National Air Rifle Championships are held at the Olympic Training Center at Colorado Springs, Colo.

Aug. 24, 1994

The American Legion announces creation of the Citizens Flag Alliance to work for a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration.

Sept. 24, 1994

The American Legion announces partnership with the Smithsonian Institute's Air and Space Museum to develop an exhibit for the bomber Enola Gay, which dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Previous museum plans had drawn intense criticism from veterans, scholars and the public.

Jan. 30, 1995

The American Legion announces acceptance of scaled-down exhibit "without political commentary" for the Enola Gay, ending the greatest controversy in the Smithsonian Institute's 149-year history.

Oct. 1, 1995

The American Legion forms a Persian Gulf Task Force to enhance the organization's service to these veterans.

Sept 16, 1996

The first \$20,000 postsecondary scholarship in the Samsung-American Legion High School Scholars program are granted to 10 students.

June 11, 1997

The American Legion National Emergency Fund exceeds the \$1 million mark in grants to flood victims in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Minnesota, and North Dakota.

Sept. 3, 1997

The first National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award is presented during the 79th National Convention in Orlando, Fla.

March 28, 2000

The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion donate \$2.7 million to the World War II Memorial Fund. Donations exceed 3.4 million by year end.

Sept. 5, 2000

The American Legion presents the first "Spirit of Service" Awards to active duty service members for their off-duty volunteer activities.

Aug. 28-30, 2001

The American Legion passes resolution to rekindle Blue Star Service Banner program.

Sept. 12, 2001

The American Legion reactivates the Family Support Network following terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.

Oct. 10-11, 2001

The American Legion creates the American Legacy Scholarship Fund for children of military members killed on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

Sept. 11, 2002

The American Legion takes lead in conducting "A Day To Remember" events to mark the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the nation.

Nov. 8, 2002

The American Legion launches national “I Am Not A Number” campaign to identify and document the delays veterans face in obtaining earned medical care benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Oct. 17, 2003

American Legion efforts on Capitol Hill break the deadlock on the Disabled Veterans Tax when Congress creates a 10-year phase-in for service-connected disabled retirees to receive military retired pay and VA disability compensation without subtraction from either. Legion efforts also result in the passage of the Military Family Tax Relief Act.

Sept. 3, 2004

American Legion lobbying leads to more progress in elimination of the Disabled Veterans Tax with passage of PL 108-375 that eliminates the 10-year phase-in for 100 percent service-connected retirees, allowing them to immediately begin receiving both retired pay and VA disability payments.

Sept. 19, 2004

The American Legion launches a national program, the Blue Star Salute, where posts across the country hold public events to recognize troops, their families and local businesses on Armed Forces Day.

May 7, 2005

The American Legion lobbied successfully to remove from VA funding legislation administration-proposed increases in VA prescription

co-payments and institution of user fee for Priority Group 8 veterans using VA health facilities. Efforts focus on legislation to provide mandatory, vice discretionary, funding of VA health care.

June 30, 2008

President George W. Bush signs the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act, a modern GI Bill strongly supported by The American Legion, which lobbied on its behalf.

Oct. 22, 2009

President Obama signs the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act of 2009, guaranteeing “advance funding” for VA appropriations, a formula that The American Legion has strongly supported for many years. The new law sets funding for VA one year in advance.

Feb. 1-28, 2010

The American Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors finishes in first place in Pepsi’s Refresh Everything Project, a national Internet voting competition. As the top vote recipient, Operation Comfort Warriors won a \$250,000 grant to purchase gifts and recreational items for U.S. military members recovering in hospitals and warrior transition units around the globe.

The American Legion - Still Serving America

The American Legion is the nation’s largest wartime veterans’ service organization with a membership of 2.4 million men and women.

All veterans of honorable service during a wartime period, and those

currently serving on active duty, are eligible to belong to The American Legion. Congress chartered The American Legion in 1919 as a veterans service organization. Since its founding, The American Legion has remained focused on activities that honor God and country.

The American Legion is also the most active veterans organization in striving to protect benefits earned by all veterans through honorable military service. The American Legion continues to fight for the full repeal of the Disabled Veterans Tax (sometimes called “Concurrent Receipt”), a strong veterans health care system and a strong quality of life for U.S. military members and their families.

As the war on terrorism continues, U.S. forces remain deployed in countries around the world. Today’s servicemembers are some of the finest men and women ever to put on uniforms, yet they are over-deployed and under-paid. Working with the Commander-in-chief, Congress and the Department of Defense, The American Legion seeks to ensure that the military’s pay, benefits and force readiness needs are met.

Although The American Legion has an international presence, it is more than simply a veterans organization – it is very much a community-based service organization. Among the programs conducted regularly are community Veterans Day and Memorial Day observations, Blue Star Salutes honoring local military families and supportive businesses, American Legion Baseball, Junior Shooting Sports, a High School Oratorical Contest and American Legion Boys State and Nation. The American Legion is one of the nation’s largest supporters

of Scouting and the largest single donor organization of blood to the American Red Cross. Members of local American Legion posts provide volunteer funeral details to render military honors for fallen comrades. The American Legion’s Child Welfare Foundation donates over a quarter of a million dollars each year to worthy children and youth programs. The American Legion’s National Emergency Fund provides immediate financial assistance to fellow Legionnaires and their families displaced by natural disasters. Legionnaires record over a million volunteer-hours annually in VA medical facilities throughout the nation and they reinvest millions of dollars back into local communities through cash donations.

The American Legion continues to provide gifts and recreational items to servicemembers recovering in U.S. military hospitals and warrior transition units around the globe through Operation Comfort Warriors. Through “Heroes to Hometowns,” the Legion coordinates the transition of severely wounded soldiers back into civilian life in communities across the country. The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund enables the children of military members who died on active-duty after Sept. 11, 2001 to receive a college education while its Family Support Network helps families of deployed service members.

The American Legion truly is a large organization of men and women who have stood to defend our nation in times of war and who continue to stand for a strong national defense in a changing world. These members steadfastly work to preserve the fabric of the United States of America.

SECTION **FOURTEEN** | ANNEX A

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

PRESS KIT |

ANNEX B News Releases and Media Advisories

The news releases and advisories provided here are representative of activities, campaigns, and public outreach venues typically conducted by American Legion posts. Each media product is designed for use as a template to be used with local information and printed on post letterhead after proofreading or sending by group email to your area media.

While not all situations or activities may be specifically provided, the basic format of the release or advisory remains relatively constant; each release can be lengthened or adapted with more information, quotes from others involved or additional details.

Always remember the 5 W's and the H – Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Use an inverted pyramid style, putting the most important information up front with the minor details at the end of the release.

The lead paragraph should be the most powerful and capture the attention of readers. Instead of starting the release with “Henry Higgins of Southport who serves as commander of the local Legion post is planning on asking members to write letters to Congressman P----- about illegal immigration.”

Consider: “Local Legionnaires are outraged over the cost that illegal immigration is having on Southport residents and the commander of American Legion Post ### is launching a campaign to inundate federal lawmakers with strong words calling for immediate action.”

The second lead is strong and relates urgency, commitment and states exactly what the post intends to do about the problem. Details

would follow in subsequent paragraphs.

So be creative, correct and concerned. Remember, your local media should be looking to you as their expert resource in veterans affairs and national defense issues. These materials will assist you in both getting out the word and developing the kind of lasting relationships with reporters, producers and assignment editors that will ensure a successful and rewarding public relations program. Remember, these examples are just some of the topics you could issue releases about. The possibilities are limitless.

What is the -30- at the bottom of news releases?

Some say the mark began during a time when stories were submitted via telegraph, with “-30-” denoting “the end” in Morse code. Another theory suggests that the first telegraphed news story had 30 words. Others claim the “-30-” comes from a time when stories were written in longhand — X marked the end of a sentence, XX the end of a paragraph and XXX meant the end of a story. The Roman numerals XXX translate to 30.

<http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4408>

SECTION **FOURTEEN** | ANNEX B

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

AWARDS |

POST EVENTS |

HOLIDAYS |

YOUTH PROGRAMS |

ISSUES |

MEDIA ADVISORIES |

ANNEX C Proclamations

The following sample proclamations may be used as samples in developing local proclamations for issuance by the town or city mayor, county executive or municipal authority. Feel free to adapt to local requirements. Many municipalities have a standard proclamation parchment that is used for recognition of events and accomplishments. Most will be happy to use recommended wording with only minor edits to fit their particular format. Requesting a proclamation should begin several months prior to the event to allow ample processing time.

Children & Youth Month (April)

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its founding in 1919, has devoted much of its talent, effort and resources to improving conditions for our nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, The Americanism, Children & Youth programs of The American Legion provide settings that permit children to realize and to achieve their full potential; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires have labored unselfishly to achieve this goal through their untiring effort, dedicated leadership and devotion to the overriding principles of these benevolent programs; now, therefore

I (full name and title) of (city or county), (state) do hereby proclaim the period of April 1 through April 30 as The American Legion Children & Youth Month, and call to the attention of all citizens the good works of the men and women of The American Legion.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused

to be affixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number) day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

Flag Day

WHEREAS, the first official flag of the United States was adopted by an act of Congress dated June 14, 1777; and

WHEREAS, June 14 was designated National Flag Day by an act of Congress dated August 3, 1949; and

WHEREAS, Congress has requested an annual presidential proclamation designating the week in which June 14 occurs as National Flag Week; and

WHEREAS, on December 8, 1982, the National Flag Day Foundation was chartered to conduct educational programs and to encourage all Americans to pause for the Pledge of Allegiance as part of National Flag Day ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, Flag Day celebrates America's symbol of unity, a democracy in a republic, and stands for our country's devotion to freedom, to the rule of all, and to the equal rights for all; now, therefore

I (full name) (title) of (city or county) in the state of (state) do hereby proclaim June 14, (year) as Flag Day in (city or county) and do urge all citizens to pause for the Pledge at 7 p.m. (EDT), to recite along with all Americans the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag and nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number) day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

Veterans Day

WHEREAS, Veterans Day has its origins in the armistice which brought World War I to a conclusion at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918; and

WHEREAS, the Allied victory in World War I affirmed the strength of great nations acting together for high purposes; and

WHEREAS, the people of the United States caused through their elected representatives the designation of November 11 as a federal legal holiday, which in 1954 became officially known thereafter as Veterans Day; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Day continues to be celebrated and commemorated with solemn observances in honor of all Americans who have served their country in times of war and conflict; and

WHEREAS, the courage, honor, sacrifice, and dedication which veterans of the United States armed forces have displayed in the cause of justice, freedom, and democracy are most worthy of recognition; now, therefore

I (full name), (title) of (city or country) of the state of (state) do hereby call upon all citizens to commend America's veterans and observe with solemn pride November 11, (year) as Veterans Day and to take part in as many ceremonies and events as possible to honor these men and women.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number) day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

PROCLAMATIONS |

ANNEX D Message Points

As discussed in **Section 8**, message points are perfect for use in media interviews. Also called “talking points,” the links below contain a complete set of them on all current and universal issues of The American Legion. Revamped annually by the public relations commission staff after the national convention, they are updated to include message points on new resolutions passed and additional policy positions of the organization. The latest version can be accessed on the national website. www.legion.org

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

MESSAGE POINTS |

ANNEX E Information Campaigns

American Legion information campaign guides is linked below and available on Legion.org. It contain step-by-step directions in planning, publicizing, executing, and analyzing public information campaigns a post may conduct.

Click the link below to access the materials available on Legion.org

INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS |

ANNEX F Radio PSA Copy

Public service spot radio copy covers a variety of topics that would benefit a post by enabling local radio and television announcers to read as part of their programs or community billboards. Some radio stations may even ask the post commander or public relations chairman to do a recording as a local resident. Personal contact with the program director, public service director or even the station's general manager will bring the use of these radio spots to fruition. Using all capital letters, the same format may be followed for any topic the post needs to publicize. Remember, approximately 170 words for a one minute spot, 85 words for a thirty-second spot, etc.

Following are generic PSAs you can edit and customize for your post or Department

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

RADIO PSA COPY |

SECTION **FOURTEEN** | ANNEX F

Radio PSA Copy continued

ANNEX G Produced Radio Spots

The national public relations commission staff has produced many professionally-recorded radio public service spots of varying lengths that can be offered to local stations to use in their programming where commercial spots have not been purchased. Many of these are designed to be localized at the end by an announcer with post contact information. Broadcast quality versions are linked below. They can also be downloaded by the radio stations at www.legion.org/prtoolkit.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

RADIO SPOTS |

LOCAL SPOTS |

ANNEX H Produced Television Spots

As with the radio spots, these video Public Service Announcements (PSA's) of various lengths are linked below. They can also be viewed at www.legion.org/prtoolkit. Because of the large file sizes inherent in video files, the PSA's should be considered for preview only or for inclusion in web sites. Broadcast-quality high resolution files can be obtained by requesting them from the National Headquarters Public Relations Division at email pr@legion.org or by calling 317-630-1253.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

TELEVISION SPOTS |

ANNEX I Available Videos

A number of video productions on various American Legion topics can be found at www.legion.org/prtoolkit. They vary in length and can be shown on television, cable systems, movie theaters, county fairs, on personal computers and anywhere where there is an audience. Because of the large file sizes inherent in video files only low resolution files are found on the web site. Broadcast-quality high resolution files can be obtained by requesting them from the National Headquarters Public Relations Division at email pr@legion.org or by calling 317-630-1253.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

AVAILABLE VIDEOS |

ANNEX J Training Materials

The links below contain various training materials including videos, PowerPoint presentations and other resources. In addition, these and other updated materials can be found on the website at www.legion.org/prtoolkit. These training materials can be used individually or presented to various groups within your Departments and Posts.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

MEDIA TRAINING DVD |

POWERPOINTS |

VIDEOS |

ANNEX K Posters & Billboards

Full sized and window sized posters can be reproduced for use in the post or externally in business windows, post office bulletin boards, Guard and Reserve armories or anywhere where the public can view them. Be sure to obtain permission of the business owner, proprietor or commanding officer. These are designed for you to be able to include your local contact information. They are also available for download at www.legion.org/prtoolkit.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

POSTERS |

BILLBOARDS |

ANNEX L Publications/Handouts

There are several booklets and handouts available for you to use internally and externally to inform your members and community partners about issues and programs of The American Legion. These can be printed on demand from the links below or downloaded at www.legion.org/prtoolkit. If you need preprinted materials or larger quantities, they can be ordered free of charge through the National Headquarters Public Relations Division by email at pr@legion.org or by phone at 317-630-1316.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

PUBLICATIONS |

ANNEX M Legion Art Slicks

Professionally designed Legion art slicks linked below can be customized with editable fields for use by internal or external publications on Veterans Day, Memorial Day, holidays, etc. They can also be downloaded at www.legion.org/prtoolkit. The art includes print ads for publications, or they can be used as fliers, bookmarks, web ads, etc.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

EDITABLE PRINT ADS |

FLYERS |

STANDARD PRINT ADS |

WEB ADS |

ANNEX N USAA Media Products

USAA and The American Legion - two of the nation's largest military-focused organizations - joined forces to strengthen support to those who served, giving Legionnaires access to USAA's top-rated insurance and financial services.

The agreement positions USAA as the preferred provider of financial services, including insurance, banking, investments, brokerage services and financial guidance. Legionnaires who establish USAA membership can extend the benefits to their qualified family members, many of whom make up the nearly 1.4 million members of the Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary.

The links below include financial articles, art, audio/visual products, posters, mobile media applications and web resources that can be used in all American Legion media.

Click the links below to access the materials available on Legion.org

JUNE-JJ PIECES |
continued

**MISSION YOUR
MONEY** |

JUNE-JJ PIECES |

MISSION YOUR |
MONEY
continued

NATIONAL ANTHEM DAY MATERIALS