



Memo

Date: 3/27/2006
To: Ed Wagner/The Feather River Rail Society
From: Holly Russel
Re: Publicity Ideas

OVERVIEW

For an organization like yours, I recommend focusing communication efforts both on media outreach (publicity) and on community relations (PR). **Media outreach** includes the distribution of information to the media regarding any news or events happening in your group. For example, an exciting or unusual new acquisition is a good time to send out a press release. An event like Railfan Photographer Day is another. It is best to begin with your local media and grow from there – once you have a few good features in the local news, it will be much easier to convince national media to cover you as well.

The goal of **community relations** is to increase your visibility within the region and connect directly with potential new members, donors, and visitors to the museum. Any event you host or become involved in is an opportunity to solidify your relationship with the public. A group like yours has a wealth of opportunities to become more involved in the community, and a nice side effect of this is that it will help increase your coverage in the media as well.

I have outlined some ideas below of how I can help you incorporate both publicity and public relations into the functioning of your organization.

PRESS KIT:

In addition to sending out press releases to announce news, you will need to provide journalists with background information about your organization. This can include a brief history of the society, a bio of the group's president or spokesperson, a list of some of the most interesting locomotives on display, and photos. All of these materials can be digital – printing the documents and photos and arranging them into folders for mailing is costly and unnecessary. Once we develop these materials, we can make them available for download from both your website and the Pilot Publicity website. This is called an online media room – a place for journalists to go to grab exactly what they need, when they need it. For an example of an online media room, visit <http://www.pilotpublicity.com/crane.shtml>

MEDIA/STRATEGY:

These are the media I recommend we approach for features about your organization:

- **Airline magazines:** In-flight magazines do a lot of general interest stories and region-specific event coverage. This would be particularly effective on airlines whose route map includes your area.
- **Arrive, the AMTRAK magazine**
- **Daily newspapers:** Travel, hobby, and features editors.
- **City guides:** Your organization can be included under the museum listings and event listings. Many city guides also publish feature articles.
- **Local media:** the daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, and TV morning programs in your area are perfect targets.
- **General interest magazines:** Publications like *Smithsonian*, *PARADE* magazine, and *AARP* magazine.
- **Special interest magazines:** Railroad, history, hobby/collecting.
- **Radio:** Both your local radio and nationally syndicated programs. Your local NPR affiliate would be a particularly good target.
- **Websites/Newsletters:** Special interest groups often have articles of interest on their websites and distribute newsletters to their members. They also usually recommend events to their members.

There are many ways to get covered in these types of media, in addition to just announcing your news to them. A few ideas:

- Invite local reporters to tour the museum and talk to the director, or better yet, invite them to take part in your Crew Training program to learn how to operate the locomotives. An article describing the journalist's first-hand experience at the controls of a vintage train car can generate public interest and boost attendance/membership.
- Write an op-ed piece responding to current events that affect the railroad. Is there new legislation proposed that could threaten the mission of your group? Is there an issue or concern that the media is not covering? Having the president or a spokesperson write to a newspaper positions your group as an authority on railroad matters, and makes it more likely that a journalist will turn to you as a source in the future.
- Develop a feature article idea that ties in with current events, and offer to comment on the situation. For example, we could suggest a story that asks whether the key to facing the energy crisis of the future lies in our past – is steam or diesel locomotive travel a viable alternative to flying? You could talk about some of the great steam/diesel trains in your collection and how efficient/powerful/environmentally friendly they were. Or we could propose an article about how the industry can respond to the decline in railroad tourism – how can trains compete with the increasingly customized experience of driving and flying? You could talk about the history and heyday of railroad tourism and what locomotives have to offer that other modes of transport don't. With these types of stories, you will be one of many sources a journalist will interview to round out the story.

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Anything you do to involve your local community in your organization is community relations, and can be used to attract media attention as well. A few ideas:

- Partner with your local paper to sponsor a children's essay or photo contest. The winner could be crowned "Conductor for a Day" and get a private tour of the museum and rail yards, learn how to run a locomotive, and have his photo or essay printed in the paper.
- Throw a cocktail party or silent auction to benefit the society. Solicit donations for items, trips, or "experience" gifts from local businesses and organizations.
- When you acquire a new locomotive, hold a contest for people to guess the weight of the train car. The prize could be a trip (via rail, of course) to a nearby vacation spot. This is more exciting than just sending out a press release about the new acquisition, and it will get people to come to the museum to enter the contest.
- Offer to visit nearby schools to make an educational presentation about railroad history. Or contact schools about taking field trips to the museum.
- Team with a local bookstore to hold an evening event for *Life on the Feather River Route*. In addition to a book signing and Q&A session, you could serve FRRS/WPRM wine and cheese (also a good sales opportunity for the commemorative sets). A local café or coffee shop might be a good place for such an event as well.
- Reach out to businesses in your area to plan corporate events/outings to the museum. I noticed on your website it says locomotives are available for rental. Could something be rented for a corporate party or event?

FEES/EXPENSES

If you decide to work with me, the publicity campaign I execute can be as big or as small as your budget dictates. You can choose to do a lot of the things I have suggested on a limited scale, or only one or two of my suggestions on a larger scale. I have listed my fees below to give you an idea of what a campaign might cost.

Press Kit:	\$300 (Includes one press release and the preparation of background materials.)
Individual Press Release:	\$125
Story Pitching:	\$80 per media outlet (Includes media list research, development of pitch, distribution of materials, follow up, interview coordination, and compilation of tear sheets.)
Hourly Rate:	\$125*

*Since the amount of work involved in implementing the community relations aspects of the campaign will vary from case to case, I would bill you at an hourly rate for those portions of the campaign.

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN

To give you a better idea of how my fee structure works, here is a sample campaign and the fees associated with it:

Creation of press kit	\$300
3 in-flight magazines	\$240
10 daily newspapers	\$800
3 city guides	\$240
15 local media	\$1200
4 general interest magazines	\$320
10 special interest magazines	\$800
15 radio shows	\$1200
10 websites/newsletters	\$800
Essay/photo contest	(estimate) 7 hours x \$125 = \$875
Bookstore event	(estimate) 3 hours x \$125 = \$375

TOTAL: \$7150

Because magazines have a 4-6 month lead time, the project would take place over a six-month period. For the sample campaign above, you would pay \$1191.66 a month for six months.

NEXT STEPS

Once you have had a chance to look this over, we can set up a time to talk in more detail about the size and scope of the campaign, and I can revise the plan according to your needs and your budget. If you have an annual budget earmarked for publicity/marketing/promotion and you would like to talk about hiring me on retainer for the year, that is another possibility.

Thank you for your interest in Pilot Publicity. I look forward to hearing your feedback.

Holly Russel
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