

Grab Media Exposure with Creative Planning

by Susan Snyder-Davis

Weekly community newspapers, local TV talk shows, morning TV news programs, city papers' feature sections, and daily radio talk shows all add up to opportunities to gain media exposure for your ice arena/entertainment center. Your local media offers numerous occasions to increase attention for your facility because they're constantly seeking to fill space and air time. How do you take advantage of these golden promotional opportunities? You can achieve most of your media promotional goals with some thoughtful and creative planning.

There was a time, not so long ago, when Disney Theme Parks did not use advertising to promote its parks and only used media promotions. Part of Disney's creative publicity genius included such activities as training newborn ducklings to follow a Donald Duck costumed character around the park to promote the famous cartoon duck's birthday celebration. There's no reason why any facility that applies thoughtful, creative planning can't grab the media brass ring in a similar way.

There are several ways your arena can receive media attention, including: a new mascot character, new attraction, special event, fundraising event, camp programs for kids, openings, and anniversaries, to name a few. But don't wait until it's time to promote a new attraction or an anniversary to get to know your local media.

Most facilities afford the perfect location to invite the media in to acquaint them with the facility's business. So, as part of your media strategy, plan to host a media open house. Begin by researching what media and which contacts from the media to include. Once you've identified the media contacts to include, you can put together your program. Try to hold your open house on an evening or at a time when you are not busy and when only your special guests can come. Send your contacts passes to your facility and include their family members. Open your program with a welcoming presentation, but keep it brief. Bring your mascot character in for greetings and photos. Provide refreshments. Give everyone a gift bag with passes and novelty favors. Invite your guests to enjoy your facility and send them home with a complete media packet of information promoting your facility and its programs and activities.

Your media packet should include an overview piece with the background details. You may want to put it in an introductory letter format. Put together a list of story ideas, suggested ways your facility can provide news stories, and topics on which you might be consulted by the media. You may want to insert current press releases.

Try to think of creative ideas for your media suggestions list. These could include unique activities or events. Offer your facility as a location for filming local TV weather for a change of pace. Suggest using your facility as a backdrop for a segment on cooking party snacks or creating party decorations for a local TV news, daytime talk or entertainment program.

There are many creative ways to capture the attention of the media, but when you create a cute media promotion, be sure to have something of substance to say. For example, a slick promotion for a local Girl Scouts' annual cookie sales involved providing a major metropolitan feature magazine with a "top 10" list of famous former Girl Scouts who sold cookies. The feature was interesting and fun, and it also held substance – to promote the sale of Girl Scout cookies.

Another example of how to gain media attention would be to deliver breakfast to a local live radio

talk show. But don't just bring breakfast on behalf of your facility, also bring an announcement for a specialized kids' workshop, a new attraction or a fundraising event.

And finally, when you're trying to find ways to obtain media coverage, be sure to keep up with national media events. When the Winter Olympics are being shown, ice skating centers should promote coverage of their Olympic hopefuls.

So the next time you read about or see something on TV about gourmet dog biscuits or the latest celebrity diet, be sure to kick yourself. Your facility could have filled that space or time slot.

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