

How To

APPROACH THE PRESS

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BAASDC & SDCCGB

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RPM



■ recruit ■ promote ■ maintain ■

SQUARE DANCING

KEEP IT ALIVE...RPM

In order to keep Square Dancing alive we need a way to bring in a steady flow of younger people.

HOW TO APPROACH THE PRESS

Chris Gill

(To be read in conjunction with RPM booklet HOW TO Market Square & Round Dancing “How to write a Press Release” Pgs 6-7).

How do you get a Journalist interested in your Story? Is it News? Do you want some publicity? How do you get your story/publicity into the Press? IT HAS TO BE NEWS.

So – What makes ‘ your ‘ story News? What is News? - News comes from some of, but not usually all, of the following types of story.

Man bites Dog.

Information relevant to a particular national or local audience.

Something that is topical and/or new.

Human interest.

Controversy.

Statistics.

You must bear in mind that whatever the subject or topic, it has to break through the wall of Apathy. Is the story strong enough to overcome the Question - So What????.....

So - Is your story newsworthy?

What is Newsworthy?

How do you make your news into something that’s newsworthy?

You should consider the following 5 factors when deciding if your story has enough ‘ Oomph ‘ to be newsworthy.

1) Timing - Is your story New, Fresh and Original? That’s what News is - Things that are new.

2) Proximity - Is your story near to us/our Audience? In our location? The nearer an event is to us , the more significant it is.

3) Significance - The greater number of people affected by your story, the more important the news is.

4) Prominence - The more famous you are, the greater your coverage.

5) Human Interest - These stories are the Bread and Butter of news coverage as they evoke a wide range of human emotions such as amusement, sadness, sympathy and horror. They are stories about people you know and the issues that affect their lives.

You should aim to have at least 2 of these factors underpinning your story.

Where should you aim your Story?

There are 2 quite distinct types of news
a) National – Hard News which usually affects a lot of people across the Country. There are lots of stories ‘ lobbying ‘ for space and the atmosphere is very competitive. You will need a strong story of the ‘ Man bites Dog ‘ variety with lots of human interest (Human interest is how the Press sees Dancing) It is unlikely that a Square Dancing story will be strong enough on its own to make the national news. Something that ‘ chimes ‘ with a current but different national story will be of interest, particularly if your story adds to and/or rounds out the national item by allowing it to ‘ run ‘ for a few days more. A lot of Human interest stories in the nationals start locally and are sold on by ‘stringers’. The nationals will want a Spokesperson to interview and will take their choice of photos. So, if your story is picked up nationally be prepared to have someone who is comfortable with the Press to talk with them and make Dancers available for photos (See Spokespeople below).

b) Local – Softer News that affects local people and as such needs a good strong local angle. This is probably the area were you should concentrate your efforts. Local papers and TV/Radio need good local news with interesting photos of local people doing good interesting things. Your news must be relevant to local issues or it will be cursed with the ‘So What ‘ factor and binned. To make your story stand out you have to think about pulling a heartstring or two. Don’t send in 1 page and 1 photo. You have to find the interested Journalists and interest them. How? Phone, email and post your story to as many people as you can think of, you only need 1 journalist to become interested and you are on the way to having your story published Don’t send any photos in, if they want photos they’ll ask, so have something relevant or interesting accessible. Buying advertising is no guarantee of editorial space But inviting a Celebrity and warning the Press in advance may get some coverage. Think about sending a Press Release.

Press Release

If you send in a press release remember it's this week news and if it's not used it may get binned. If it isn't used phone up to find out why.

How do you write a 'Newsworthy' story?

You have to think like an Editor – looking for something that fits with the Paper/TV style and readership/audience.

Write like a Journalist in a style that will interest the Readers/Viewers. Know your story frontwards and backwards. Know your objectives: Are you recruiting? Who are your Beginners? Write for your target readers. Stay within your story, don't introduce 'extra' material that will divert your audience's attention from your message (recruiting). Your opening paragraph should answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? It should immediately create interest by giving the answers to these questions.

If possible use no more than 70 words in your opening paragraph. The body of your article should be simple, use short sentences and give facts. Avoid using poetic flowery language, analogies and clichés. You should finish with some comments and quotes; you can name the person yourself – it doesn't have to be a 'famous' person, just someone who will stand by what they said. These round out the story and add another perspective.

Throughout the piece don't state the obvious or pad the story out with long winded phrases such as – "we are very pleased and delighted to " or "everyone present was excited by the prospect of " etc,...

Proof Reading

Use all the spelling and grammar checks available to you. Read the 'story' out loud to yourself, get someone to listen. Get others to read it. Does everybody understand and get 'the message'? Have you answered all the questions Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Notes to the Editor/Journalist

This is a good idea and can be attached to your story. It should contain the details of who you are and your contact details – Spokesperson, Name, Phone No., Mobile No., email, Website and if photos are available.

Photos

These are very difficult to make interesting to outsiders as they mostly are shots of people you know. If you have a close up of a couple dancing use that rather than those long shots of groups in halls. The Press may want to take their own photos, but you can decide on where the photographs are taken and who will be in them, before you welcome the photographer.

Spokesperson

This is a job that may need nerves of steel. It doesn't have to be you or a Committee member. Get the best person in your Club who is comfortable in uncomfortable situations. They should be available at all times and if not there, be able to call back within the next 15 minutes. They should be a clear concise speaker who can honestly reflect the values of your Club. It is vital that the Spokesperson knows the 'Story' and what you are trying to achieve. They must stay on this message.

Publications you may find useful

How to **MARKET** Square & Round Dancing to **RECRUIT** New Dancers by Linda Gill 2008

How to **RECRUIT** By Eric Curtis 2008

How to **ARRANGE YOUR FIRST NIGHT** of class By Joan Black Lune Valley Ocean Wavers 2005 Re-issued 2008)

How to **RETAIN** Square Dancers By Irene Dimmer 2006 (Re-issued 2008)

How to **RAISE FUNDS FOR RECRUITING** By Zoë Bremer – 2006 (updated 2010)

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