

# From Press Release to Packed House

How to Run PR for Your Event

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# Hello and Welcome!

You've chosen a date, secured a venue, and signed a contract. Now you need to make sure the room is full so your community can experience the amazing event you've planned. This is a step-by-step guide to promotion that can be adapted to speakers, authors, live events, and virtual ones. Follow this plan to get the word out to your members or community, make your organization look great, and end up with a full auditorium (or online audience).

# HOW TO Use This Guide

This guide is a practical, step-by-step roadmap for promoting public speaking events such as author talks, lectures, panel discussions, or community presentations. You do not need to do every step for every event; instead, work through the sections and select the strategies that best fit your audience, timeline, and capacity.

Ideally, begin planning publicity **up to a year to 10 weeks** before the event (BE), starting with groundwork and strategy. This guide will take you through outreach, cosponsorships, reminders, and finally post-event follow-ups that will net you the maximum benefit from your efforts.

Revisit this guide periodically as the event approaches to ensure follow-ups are completed and new promotional opportunities are identified.

This plan can be adapted for **in-person, hybrid, or virtual events**. If you don't have a year? Wing it! There will still be plenty of good advice for you here.

## What This is Not

This is not a guide to planning events, advertising events or getting tickets sold or to promote on social media. If you are lucky, you have some kind of support network to create or place advertisements, information about how to plan the type of event you have in mind, and so forth.

You may even have an organizational PR department or sales department to lean on. The steps in this guide should be used to supplement those efforts.

## Why I Wrote This Guide

A couple of years ago, I sent a speaker halfway across the country to speak to a school district. Her interactions with students and staff were impactful, successful, and heartwarming. That evening, her host had planned an event for the local community. But he had neglected to advertise the event or promote it. For the first time in my career, one of my speakers faced an empty audience hall. That's when I realized how much this guide was needed. An organizer can spend time and money bringing in someone with an important message, but to find their audience, they have to get the word out successfully!

I've been a speaking agent for twenty years. Most agencies focus on negotiating fees and handling contracts and insurance for their speakers; my model is to develop my speakers more actively, seek out bookings for them, and in some cases, act as a de facto manager. This means I was able to see first hand how valuable it was when there was positive press about their events. Getting an interview on a local radio show or a mention in the hyper-local blog often made a big difference for my speakers and for their presenter. My speaker sells more books, increases their name recognition, and then has news coverage showcasing them that they can use for credibility in future endeavors like grant applications or book proposals. For the presenter - the person or organization who booked the speaker and brought them in - the impact was even greater. First, they reached a larger audience for the actual event. Second, increased visibility in the community that reflected well on them and on their organization. Third, increased credibility and support for future events. A solid press response to an event can mean the difference between 'we did this one time and it was nice' and 'this needs to happen again next year'.

YOU, the event organizer, are in the best position to run a PR campaign for your event. YOU know what the local news stations are, and whether there are local blogs or social media accounts for your area. YOU are the local connection who can show those outlets that their readers will be interested in this.

# HOW TO

## WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

Relax! This isn't rocket science.  
It doesn't have to be perfect.

Your press release should  
clearly state who, what,  
when, where, how, and why.

- Who is the speaker and what is their platform/ topic?
- What organization is planning the event?
- When and Where is the event happening?
- How can the public buy tickets?

**MOST IMPORTANTLY...**

# WHY

## DO THEY CARE?

# THE HOOK

The Hook is where you explain why this is relevant to the local community. What groups with local connections are involved or being helped? The local school district or a local private school? A neighborhood association or local church? A local writer's organization? All that outreach you did to secure cosponsorship is now paying off, because you have local organizations you can list to support the connection.

Include at least two quotes, ideally one from a prominent local figure, organization leader, or student expressing enthusiasm about the visit, and one from the speaker or their organization about how excited they are to be coming. A sample press release is at the end of this guide.

## FOUNDATION & STRATEGY

# 1 Year to 10 Weeks B.E.

### 1. Confirm event details

Make sure you've got a signed contract, a specific date and time, a reserved location (or video conferencing platform), and any insurance coverage you might need. Once you have nailed down the Who, What, Where, When, and How you can begin planning in earnest.

### 2. Define target audience(s)

What groups of people are going to be interested in this event? Readers? Students? Employees? Association members? Activists? Hobbyists? You should be able to draw a big Venn diagram with your potential audiences. Once you know who they are, you can figure out how to reach them.

### 3. Identify internal stakeholders and approval processes

Who can you draw on for advice and expertise? What department can help you with coordination or creating marketing assets? Do you need to have any approvals before sending out press releases with the name of your organizations on them? Put these resources in your pocket and keep them secure; you will need them.

## 4. Identify potential co-sponsors and partners

This is one of the best way to reach those audiences that you came up with earlier. Some of these organizations may be willing to co-sponsor your event or work in concert with you for promotion. Others may simply be willing to share information about the event with their members. Either way is valuable. Here are some of the groups you can look for in your area:

- Local library district - for book clubs, community reads, or cosponsorship
- Local bookstore(s) about promotion and possible signings
- Local academic institutions - University, College, Community College
- Local school districts
- Local individual high schools, private or public
- Writing centers or literary organizations
- Ethnic or cultural organizations
- Special-interest or advocacy groups related to the topic
- Business associations or young professionals groups
- Faith-based congregations
- Hobby, writing, or civic groups

## 5. Identify local media

- TV news shows, including public broadcasting
- Radio news
- Newspapers
- Alt-weeklies
- Hyper-local blogs
- Local student papers

10 TO 8 WEEKS B.E.

# Community Partner Outreach

Build a tracking spreadsheet for outreach and follow-ups.

Compile contact information for the media outlets and community groups you've identified. Be sure to include any specific journalists who might be interested, for example if the local paper has someone covering 'education'. There are usually email addresses listed on station websites, and AI can often help finding contact info.

Ask organizations to share the event with their members through newsletters, email lists, or social media.

Contact community organizations for cross-promotion or cosponsorship

Ask the local bookstore to host a book sale at the event or a reading earlier in the day.

Identify potential academic departments that might be relevant (Writing? History? East Asia?)

Gather promotional collateral - headshot, book cover images, bio text, and a couple of quotes about how exciting this event will be from people connected to the organization

Draft the press release (contact [info@samaraspeakers.com](mailto:info@samaraspeakers.com) for a free sample template that can be adapted to your event) and get it approved by your speaker.

Collect any bonus materials that might be helpful, like a book club guide or curriculum.

# 8 TO 6 WEEKS B.E.

## Media Outreach

Send press release to your media contacts and offer to arrange an interview with the speaker

Reach out to identified academic institutions/teachers - If the speaker is available, offer class visits with relevant academic contacts. Encourage instructors to offer extra credit for attendance

Draft the press release and get it approved by your speaker (contact [info@samaraspeakers.com](mailto:info@samaraspeakers.com) for a free sample template that can be adapted to your event), or see the one at the end of this guide.

Contact community organizations for cross-promotion or cosponsorship

Collect any bonus materials that might be helpful, like a book club guide or curriculum.

Ask the local bookstore to host a book sale at the event or a reading earlier in the day.

Gather promotional collateral - headshot, book cover images, bio text, and a couple of quotes about how exciting this event will be from people connected to the organization

Reach out to local teachers with the supplemental materials and invite them to come, with their students

## 6 TO 1 WEEK BE: Amplification & Follow-up

- ✓ Send the press release out a second time. If you have phone numbers, call them. Confirm details for local event calendars are correct.
- ✓ Coordinate any interviews and share promotional images.
- ✓ Confirm cross-promotional arrangements and secondary event details.

## WEEK & DAY OF EVENT: Execution

- ✓ Send the press release out one last time the day before the event, in case a show needs to fill some time on a slow news day.
- ✓ Make sure any press who plans to attend have tickets or reserved seats.
- ✓ Take photos and video of the event.
- ✓ Coordinate any interviews and share promotional images.

## AFTER THE EVENT: Wrap-Up

- ✓ Send out a new, POST-EVENT press release celebrating your successful event. Be sure to include a new quote from an audience member about how meaningful the event was (and why!).
- ✓ Post any choice photographs or video clips to social media.
- ✓ Host any still images from the event on a shared folder and include a link in the press release.



## Sample Press Release

Your Name

Your organization

Your contact information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: DATE

Renowned Author Betty Smith visits VENUE to Discuss Award-winning Memoir, "My Life"

LOCATION - Betty Smith, an award-winning author and Springfield native, will visit LOCATION this TIME to speak about her latest book, "My Life" at VENUE.

The event will take place at TIME in the PLACE. Tickets are available for FEE. A book signing and meet-and-greet with the author will follow the talk.

"My Life" is a powerful memoir about growing up in a normal family and coming to terms with one's identity. The book has received critical acclaim, including winning the Book Award and being named a finalist for the Other Award.

"We're so excited to have Betty Smith come speak to our organization," said Mr. Treasurer. "She will bring a valuable perspective about TOPIC that our community sorely needs." In addition to the MAIN event, Smith will also OTHER EVENT.

About Betty Smith:

Short bio of Betty Smith - to be supplied by performer

For more information, contact:

CONTACT



# Thank you!

I hope this guide helps your planning go smoothly. You are in position to brain-storm and network your way to a successful event that can raise awareness of an important issue, help your career, inspire others, or simply bring people together.

What you do is important. Thank you for making the effort to share something that you care about with your community.



## Beth Quittman

### Do You Need More Help?

[Schedule a Call](#)

If you are looking for an amazing speaker, please reach out:

<https://go.oncehub.com/bethquittman>

[www.samaraspeakers.com](http://www.samaraspeakers.com)

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