



How To...Organise a Press Conference

What is the event for?

A press (or news) conference is a planned event organised specifically to attract journalists from the mass media, particularly television news, radio news and newspapers in (both print and Internet editions) for something that was not of interest to journalists before.

One of the main reasons for holding a press conference is that the holder of the conference can answer all the questions from reporters and journalists instead of answering many phone calls on the same subject. A press conference also ensures that everyone receives the same information.

Additionally, radio and television news have different needs to print media and need an opportunity to record exclusive interviews and footage before, during or after an event (the newspapers may require a photo opportunity).

Be Aware:

It should form part of your Communication and PR Strategy – so the essential questions should be answered before a press conference (where are we now? where do we want to be?) see: TF-PR *How To...Write a PR Strategy*.

The element of “breaking news”, “exclusive news” or some unexpected information is crucial for the event.

Journalists are more likely to agree to attend your event if they already know you. Therefore you should aim to build relationships with the media over a period of time, not simply when you want them to come to your event. However, holding an event (that attracts journalists) can often help you to meet new journalists.

Journalists tend to have different cultural and professional habits in different countries which you should familiarise yourself with (for example, Monday editorial meetings (Croatia) or Friday afternoon weekly summaries (Poland), formal accreditation for larger events (Germany) etc.)

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Invitations

Your frequently updated data base of the journalists is an essential tool here – you need to collect all the necessary contact details and the interests of a given reporter in order to persuade them to attend your event.

Each event requires the definition of the target audience and media coverage (like television viewer profile etc.) an appropriate data base creation (usually 20-40 invitations per event are sent).

Some kind of media internal ranking is very helpful with some categories like “essential”, “good” and “additional” to focus the attention to the most important people.

The invitation text should include some justification for the event, with general information like a basic news release (see TF-PR *How to...Write a News Release*) but never touching the “breaking news”.

The best way to issue an invitation is to send it both by snail-mail and by e-mail but if there is only e-mail communication you should make sure that it was received by the appropriate medium – you should make a phone call to confirm this a few days before the event takes place.

You do not have to name the event as “press (news) conference” – if the news is less formal you can invite people just for a “press lunch”, for example.

Press Kit

The news release(s) should be simple, short and contain quotes (see: TF-PR *How to...Write a News Release*).

Each journalist should receive all the necessary information both on paper and in e-version so that it is easy to make reference to or include quotes in the article or news.

It is good to have an updated and popularised web press service with all the necessary logotypes, photos, the institutional information and actual news releases.

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It is always nice to prepare some folders, brochures or leaflets on the subject concerning the issues presented during the event in some attractive form.

According to the practical experience it is extremely important to prepare the electronic version of each document presented during the event in a handy way (CD-ROM or cheap flash) - photos, quotes, statements or some film clips.



The Event Scenario

It is always necessary to have at least a general scenario of the event, however, it is very difficult to plan precisely what the questions will be (and therefore plan the answers).

The key-person is the moderator (spokesman/chair). He/she should coordinate the questions and answering process and create the general impression of the event and institution.

Usually there are 2-3 (or more) key-speakers so the main statements and time allocated to each should be agreed and checked ahead of time – too long statements may be seen as boring and not attractive, especially for radio listeners or television viewers.

All the technical issues like visualisation, sound, simultaneous translations systems, light etc. must be checked before the event.

The whole event must be dynamic and may not be longer than 1-1.5 hours.

The Feedback and the Additional Coverage

It is always necessary to compare the invited list with the list of those who attended. Each journalist invited (especially those marked as “essential”) should receive at least the news release with the “breaking news” – it should be arranged the same day.

If possible you should contact the journalists and ask for the information about usage of the information prepared and ask for the recordings or the article reference for our portfolio and make some conclusion to the decision makers.