

# KEY SOLUTIONS

## KEY CLUB MEMBERSHIP RESOURCES

### Public Relations 101

Public relations (PR) helps highlight something in a new light. When done correctly, it can help define your club in positive terms and position it as an important resource in your community. PR campaigns tell your club's story through the media, using newspapers, magazines, trade journals, Web sites and the electronic media to boost your visibility and credibility.

Widespread public recognition will benefit your club in many ways. With members, it will build pride that leads to better attendance, greater participation in fundraising and service projects, and stronger retention. In school, it will help draw members, and in the community, it will make it easier to solicit public support for Key Club projects and fundraisers.

The person responsible for your club's PR will have responsibilities in two categories: external and internal. External PR involves publicizing your club's activities and building a good reputation for Key Club and its members in your school and community. Internal PR includes helping members feel proud of their club and encouraging involvement in activities.

### External public relations

#### Tips for getting started:

- **Determine target outlets.** Consider what local newspapers, Web sites, newsletters, radio stations, cable outlets and television stations provide news in your community. Make a list of these top outlets and find contact information (usually available on their Web site) for each one.
- **Build relationships.** Once you know who to target with your news item, call them. Be respectful of their time. Ask if they are on deadline and would prefer that you to call back another time. If they are able to talk, introduce yourself and give a brief background on why you are calling. Ask the reporter:
  - What are their beats/what do they cover regularly?
  - How would they like to receive information from you—phone, e-mail, mail or fax?
  - What are they interested in right now and which trends are they following.
  - What information can you provide them from your club that would be of interest?

Keep in mind that this first phone call will not likely result in the reporter covering your Key Club. Instead, it will be the beginning of a relationship between you and the reporter and will help you understand what stories might be of interest to them in the future. This will increase your chances of them covering your Key Club.

**Prepare your PR tools.** Prepare a general fact sheet about your club, its background and its plans for the year. Send this to the people on your media list, and hand it out to those reporters who show up at an event. It will serve as a reminder about Key Club and its upcoming events. The fact sheet should include a brief description of Key Club and Kiwanis, unique facts about your club, as well as your name, address and phone number.

**Enjoy news release success.** A press release is often the preferred method for media outlets to receive news. However, not all press releases are successful. Consider the following tips when customizing your release and distributing it to media.

- **Consider your audience.** When customizing the release with information about news from your Key Club, consider asking yourself, "Why does the reader care?" The media will be more interested in your release if they feel it will have an impact on their readers, so, by asking this question and including the answer in your press release, you increase the likelihood of getting media attention.
- **Get the word out.** When it comes time to distribute your press release, send the release to each media contact through their preferred delivery method. Include a note with the news release letting the reporter know that you have subject matter experts available, and to contact you to schedule an interview.

- **Be persistent.** Within a day or two of distributing your press release, call or e-mail each media contact to ask of their interest in your release and see if they have any additional questions or would like an interview. Often, reporters receive so much information that a quick reminder will be appreciated and bring their attention back to your story.

**Get out a public service announcement (PSAs).** Each year the broadcast industry donates millions of dollars worth of public service announcements. However, they are under no obligation to grant time to any specific group, and they face a tremendous demand for free public service time. Usually, a Public Service or Public Affairs Director is responsible for PSA scheduling. Contact them at least three weeks in advance to see if time is available for your message. Make certain your message is important, interesting and presented in the best possible form.

**Identify a spokesperson in your club.** Identify a group of individuals who can speak for your events and with the media. Speakers should be trusted members of your club, preferably the president and/or public relations liaison, who are well informed about the club, its service projects and who can communicate its messages.

**Train club members about public relations.** Help them become aware that everyone plays a role in public relations. Everywhere they go, they give the public an impression of what Key Clubbers are like, especially when they are wearing their pin or Key Club gear. Regardless of the stories in the media, the public's real opinion of Key Club is formed when they meet a Key Clubber or see Key Clubbers serving the community. So, whenever your club is doing great things, its members need to identify themselves as Key Clubbers by wearing pins, putting up signs and telling bystanders, "This is Key Club!" Give members tips on how to answer questions, particularly interview questions, and keep these things in mind yourself. Remember to insert the words "Key Club" in place of us or me. For example, instead of saying, "I really enjoy visiting the elderly every Tuesday," say, "Key Club really enjoys visiting the elderly every Tuesday." Talking like this will take some practice and might sound awkward at first, but doing it ensures that people will remember Key Club was doing that service project, not just some nice kids.

## Internal public relations

All the publicity, attention to detail, and service projects in the world wouldn't hold Key Club together if Key Clubbers didn't enjoy being in Key Club. However, clubs do stay together and are a constantly growing force for good in the community because Key Clubbers enjoy the fun and fellowship of Key Club. As your club's public relations person, you must help the president and the members keep Key Club enjoyable. Internal public relations may involve seeing that members wear their pins, that new members feel at home, that the Key Clubber who is ill is remembered with a card or a visit, and that Key Club meetings are so well planned, so well run, and so appealing to the members that attendance, membership, and enthusiasm constantly run high!

### Tips on improving internal public relations:

- Share key messages with all your members.
- Start a monthly club bulletin if your club doesn't already have one. Include personal items such as birthdays and awards members may have received.
- Conduct new member training. Have it start or end with an introduction of the old members. Make it more like an informal party or reception than a stuffy training session. Schedule it in a fun place like a park or someone's home.
- Submit story ideas to the Key Club magazine. It would do wonders for your club's morale if its work were featured internationally.
- Help the club realize its importance. Compliment and thank members often. Remind them that they make a difference.
- Have a key volunteer and staff person trained as a media spokesperson.
- Key Club also has a Public Relations Manual available. The manual includes sample press releases, recognition certificates, and many useful tips. If your club does not have one, call Key Club International at 1-800-KIWANIS or 317-875-8755 ext. 390, to request a copy.



**Kiwanis**  
Service Leadership Programs

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