COMMUNICATION HANDBOOK
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The Communication Strategy

⇒ The three ingredients for well-planned communication strategies: objectives, audiences and messages
⇒ How to define your communications objectives
⇒ What types of analysis you can use
⇒ How to involve your teams and stakeholders in the process
MED projects want to improve their communication skills. As effective partnerships, we must have strong internal communications. Most of us also have good experience with external communications: conveying information through the media or directly to the public and other audiences. Communication comes naturally.

We have the opportunity to make the most of our communications skills and knowledge at a time when strong external communications can give practical support to our implementation and outputs. To do this, we need to think strategically: what are the ingredients for good communications?

It may help to look at examples of other European territorial cooperation projects. Many have been extremely successful with external communications in their closing delivery phase, using it to achieve practical goals like influencing policy and changing behaviour. Others have been disappointed. What makes the difference?

A few themes emerge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Successful projects...</th>
<th>Disappointed projects...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Communicate with a clearly stated goal in mind</td>
<td>Communicate for broadly defined or unclear objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences</td>
<td>Communicate to clearly defined groups of people</td>
<td>Communicate without first defining and understanding the people who should listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages</td>
<td>Communicate a small number of clear, concise, consistent and memorable ideas</td>
<td>Communicate a large number of different ideas, without sufficient focus, and inconsistently</td>
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⇒ There are three ingredients for well-planned communications: objectives, audiences and messages

**Objectives**

Communication needs to be goal-driven. We do not communicate for its own sake: we communicate to achieve or change something. PR tactics such as press releases, events and media relations activities can be straightforward to organise; the skill lies in ensuring that something useful happens as a result.

A universal mistake in external communications is neglecting to define communications objectives properly in advance. This happens in almost all kinds of organisations, and MED projects are no exception.
For instance, it is not sufficient for a project to define its objectives as “to raise awareness” or “to communicate our activities and results”. Communications objectives need to be clearly defined, detailed, achievable and measurable.

So that project should take it a step further. Why raise awareness or communicate its outputs? What views or behaviours does it want to influence? Perhaps one of its ultimate goals is to influence or inform public policy on a particular topic in order to improve public services; or advance technical knowledge on a certain issue and so to improve people’s quality of living.

Well-defined objectives give guidance and structure to all dimensions of public relations activities. The starting point is to understand what you want to achieve.

Define your objectives by asking: What do I want to happen as a result?

Communications planning

By this stage MED projects should already have a strong communications strategy: you know your target audiences, you well defined communications objectives and clear messages that will help achieve them.

After reviewing and finalising your project communications strategy, the next stage is to use it as the foundation for a detailed communications plan. You can create a long term communications plan covering all activities until the end of your project, or a short term plan for a specific event or priority. Depending on the scope, a communications plan may be as short as one page, or as long as 20 pages.

A good communications plan defines how the strategy will be expressed through practical public relations activities. It brings together in one document all of the fundamental ideas that should be driving communications, including objectives, audiences, messages, and an overview of how your goals will be achieved. It sets a clear framework for PR activities and allocates roles, tasks and goals to individual members of the team.

Following are the key ingredients for a communication plan:

1. Strategic overview
2. Situation analysis
3. Audiences
4. Objectives
5. Messages
6. Tactics
7. Media
8. Timeline
9. Responsibilities
Section by section: how to develop a communications plan

Strategic overview
For the benefit of everyone who will be part of the plan, explain briefly the importance of taking a structured and strategic approach to communications.

Summarise your project’s overall communications strategy: give an overview of why you are engaging in communications activities, and what you hope to achieve.

Then define the scope and purpose of this specific communications plan.

Situation analysis
Perform a SWOT analysis for your project: list all of its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in terms of the scope of communications activities covered by this plan. Many organisations of all kinds use a SWOT analysis to audit and assess their current situation as a starting point to determine the best course of action. Use a SWOT to look realistically at your project’s communications environment and plan accordingly.

Strengths
What are the strengths of your project and its communications activities?

Weaknesses
What are the potential weaknesses of your project and its communications activities? What could be damaging or negative?

Opportunities
What communications opportunities are there? Is there anything new, different, interesting or unique in your project that you could capitalise upon for publicity?

Threats
Are there any potential threats that your project could face? What might go wrong? How could this affect your communications and PR activities?

Objectives
Refine and restate your project’s overall communications objectives for the purpose of the particular scope of this communications plan. These should be in short bullet point format and clearly indicate what your communications will bring to the project. It is important to define these objectives in order to be able to measure the success of PR activities afterwards. Set goals that are specific enough to be measured, but broad enough to allow flexibility and room to adapt to changing circumstances.

Target audiences
If you know your audiences, you can tailor your news and messages to coincide with what matters and interests them. If you don’t, you might not like the coverage you receive.
**Messages**

State your key messages.

**Tactics**

Define the activities that you will undertake in order to achieve your objectives. How will you go about reaching your audiences? What activities will you undertake to emphasise your messages and meet your objectives? Potential PR tactics include media relations projects such as press events or publicising newsworthy developments, as well as non-media PR activities such as lobbying and seeking speaking opportunities. (See sections below for more details about tactics).

**Media**

Summarise your target media for media relations activities. This should not be a full media list, but an overview of target media categories. Through what media do your target audiences get their information? Which of these media will be most influential for them? Which do they pay most attention to and which do they trust most?

NOTE: If your key audiences are small or select, consider whether it might be more effective to contact them directly rather than through the media. For some audiences such as politicians and opinion-formers, non-media tactics such as lobbying could be considered instead.

**Timeline**

Create a timeline that identifies when each activity will happen, along with advance milestones that you will need to meet during the preparation process. This will help to ensure that deadlines do not slip, opportunities are not missed, and that activities are fully prepared.

**Responsibility**

Allocate responsibility for each activity and milestone to a named team member. If one person is accountable for a measurable result, it is more likely to be achieved.

**Evaluation**

It is important to evaluate the success of PR activities, in order to learn which activities worked well and which should be improved in future. Evaluation also creates useful feedback to share with others in the Programme, so that they can learn from your experience. State in your communications plan the criteria by which you will measure its success.
These are the key ingredients for a communication plan, make sure that you include all of these elements in your strategic communication plan:

- Strategic overview
- Situation analysis
- Audiences
- Objectives
- Messages
- Tactics
- Media
- Timeline
- Responsibilities
Target Audiences

- The importance of analysing your target audience
- How to define the stakeholders for your project and how to engage with them
- The importance of defining the benefits that your projects bring to them
- How to understand what they think now and what you want them to think
Audiences

All MED projects need to communicate with a number of different groups of people each with different characteristics and needs. These groups are called “target audiences”. It is important to define target audiences that are directly relevant to helping you achieve your communications objectives.

Think about the audience every time you communicate.

To communicate effectively and in a results-driven way, MED projects need to understand their target audiences.

Different aspects audiences have different motivations and demographics; they respond to different approaches and means of persuasion. Different audiences are reached by different tactics and different media. Different aspects of a project will be relevant and interesting for different audiences – local communities as opposed to businesses, for instance. Different groups of people will help you to achieve different objectives, if you identify, understand and communicate with them effectively.

Each project needs a clear view of who its target audiences are. This analysis will enable an effective tailoring of messages, materials and public relations tactics for the greatest impact.

Most projects will already have thought about their audiences and how to communicate with them – they may even be defined in the original application form. Still, it is worthwhile at this stage to take a fresh look to see whether these audiences are still appropriate, whether they have changed over time, and whether you have any new insight about how to reach them.

Stakeholder engagement

What is stakeholder engagement?

Stakeholders are groups of people and individual citizens who have an interest in an organisation’s programmes and can have an influence on its ability to achieve its goals rapidly and efficiently.

Stakeholder engagement means communicating with these groups and individuals in a manner which enables them to understand your project work and to support it enthusiastically.

The goal of stakeholder engagement is to make all stakeholders feel that your project is relevant to their personal concerns and cares about them. This only
happens when you deliberately set out to identify your key stakeholders, communicate with them and gives evidence that their opinions matter.

**Positive, neutral and negative stakeholder attitudes**

The result of an effective stakeholder engagement programme is that positive attitudes will be reinforced, neutral attitudes will become positive and negative attitudes will be neutralised.

To plan and monitor these improvements, we need to know who our stakeholders are and how they currently feel about the issues that your project deal with.

**Stakeholder engagement planning**

Our resources are finite, so we need to prioritise stakeholders in terms of the strength of their interest and the degree of their influence. This is called stakeholder mapping.

Some stakeholders are categorised as groups – for example, schoolteachers. Some stakeholders are listed as individuals – for example, the Mayor of a particular town.

**List and review all of the audiences that you want to reach out to through communications activities.**

**Examples of MED projects’ audiences**

**Project-level audiences**

Projects themselves will likely share many of these key audiences, but will no doubt also have different key audiences. For instance, your audiences might include:

- Regional and local authorities
- Managing Authority
- Economic and social partners
- City authorities
- Trade and industry
- Public equivalent bodies
- Regional development agencies, Universities, Research institutes, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, etc.
- General public
- Regional communities
- Schoolchildren
- Families
- EU institutions
- Brussels regional offices
The Influence/Interest grid

A good way to create a stakeholder map is the Influence/Interest Grid (I/I Grid), which shows us at a glance which categories of stakeholder demand priority attention in our programme.

We use this grid by inserting the names of groups and significant individuals in the four quadrants: those who have considerable influence but not much interest in our project go in the top-left quadrant; those with both influence and interest go in the top-right; those with less influence and less interest go in the lower-left, and those with a lot of interest but little influence go in the lower-right. There should be between five and ten names in each quadrant. Clearly, the priorities for our programme are those in the upper-right quadrant.

We use opinion research to create a benchmark for each stakeholder category. This tells us if the general opinion in the group is positive, neutral or negative. Likewise

- European Commission
- European Parliament
- Committee of the Regions
- Member States
- Relevant ministries
- Other relevant national bodies
- Specialised EU networks
- ....
for the individual stakeholders on our list. This knowledge enables us to allocate resources where they will have the greatest beneficial effect.

**Message / Audience Matrix**

The tool we use for stakeholder engagement planning is the Message/Audience Matrix. Here is a template for the M/A Matrix. You can see how the current attitudes of the stakeholder audiences and the attitudes we want them to adopt form the first columns in the matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience 1</th>
<th>Audience 2</th>
<th>Audience 3</th>
<th>Audience 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think Now</td>
<td>Should Think</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>Key Channels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stakeholder outreach**

Each stakeholder group will be amenable to their own, specific types of communication and involvement. For example, older citizens read newspapers while the younger generation typically depend on the internet; some communities have a social hub while others – especially in the cities – are more dispersed.

A stakeholder engagement plan should allocate the most effective communications channels for each audience. These could include, for example: sponsorships, exhibitions, events, newsletters, public meetings, speeches, internet (online) postings, awards and prizes, consultative forums (symposia), clubs, VIP visits and celebrations. There are over 100 different channels available.

The Message/Audience Matrix has a column for the principal channels you have selected for each audience. It also has a column for timeframe, and here you should estimate how long it will take to change the majority of each stakeholder category from ‘Think Now’ to ‘Should Think’. The timeframe may be as short as 3 months or as long as five years.
Always bear in mind that the goal of stakeholder engagement is to make citizens – and in particular their most influential representatives – feel included in your project outcomes. If you communicate regularly and effectively with them, stakeholders can be your most powerful allies in achieving your goals.

⇒ You should promote the benefits of your project and the programme on a targeted local and regional level.

Remember to consider your audiences’ interests and needs:

1. Brainstorm, with your team, a list of your target audiences
2. Prioritise – which stakeholders have the most influence and interest in your project
3. What benefits of your project will have most effect on your stakeholders
4. What do your stakeholders think now
5. What do you want them to think
6. Which media channels are going to most effective
Communication Handbook - Factsheet 2
Version 1 – April 2012

Message Development

- The importance of good messages for your project communications
- The key elements of a good message
- How to construct effective messages
Messages

Messages have a special meaning in public relations. A message is not the same as an advertising slogan or a marketing line; a message is a simple and clear idea that acts as a guiding principle for all kinds of communications, from the content of leaflets, brochures and websites to the agenda for a media interview, to conversations with stakeholders.

Messages are a solution to three basic constraints on the way people take on new information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem:</th>
<th>Solution: Make your message...</th>
<th>Goal: Ensure that people...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Information overload</em> People are frequently faced with more information than we can handle.</td>
<td>Distinctive Few in number</td>
<td>Notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Objective limits</em> People can only take on a limited amount of information at once</td>
<td>Clear Concise Simple Consistent</td>
<td>Understand Remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Subjective limits</em> People only take on new information when they are interested and motivated</td>
<td>Interesting Relevant Personal</td>
<td>Care Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distinctive**

A good message will be immediately appealing to its target audience: it should be strongly worded to stand out from everything else that is competing for their attention.

For instance, a journalist who receives several hundred press releases by email or fax every day is much more likely to write a story based on a press release where the message is powerful and immediately obvious. Otherwise, he or she is likely to discard your project press release and look at the next one instead.

**Few**

MED projects all have a great deal to say, because they are all doing useful things. Having a lot to say can be a problem, though. If you try to communicate dozens of
ideas at the same time, your audience will suffer from “information overload” and end up failing to grasp any of these ideas properly at all. Too many different messages cause confusion, and you risk losing focus.

For instance, if a project website contains dozens of unfocused messages on different topics competing for attention, readers are unlikely to take away a clear view of the project’s benefits. Or if an influential policymaker receives an invitation to a MED Programme end-of-project event, he or she is less likely to accept if the letter contains many different competing messages.

⇒ “Less is more”
Do not use more than three messages at any time.

Concise, clear and simple

Communication will never get results if it is delivered in a form that requires your target audience to sit down with a strong cup of coffee, a dictionary, a table of acronyms and a calculator just to understand it. The simplest messages are the best. They require no effort to understand.

Consistent

You stand the best chance of determining what impression your audiences will take away of your project if they hear the same message from different sources and on different occasions. Without consistent messages, communication lack clarity and

⇒ When different activities say different things about your project, the effect is diluted. When they all say the same thing about your project, the effect is multiplied.

A good public relations programme will approach its key audiences in many separate ways: by generating newspaper coverage for news events like launches, by promoting case studies and features to magazines, by placing a project profile in a trade publication, by lobbying policymakers – and dozens of other potential approaches.

If a policymaker who is among your key audience reads a magazine profile about an aspect of your project, then sees a letter to the editor in a newspaper about the same aspect of that project, and is then called on the telephone to be lobbied about
the same thing, she can’t fail to get the message. That’s the power of consistency: the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

Talk nine things – they remember none
Talk three things – they remember one
Talk three things three times – they remember all three

Simple

There is a strong “bottleneck effect” in most public relations activities: no matter how much you say, only a small amount of information will make it to your audience. You can only write 500 or so words on a press release before people stop reading. You can only talk for 20 minutes in a speech before your audience lose interest. A 30-minute television interview may be edited down to 30 seconds.

Messages help to ensure that the important information makes it through the bottleneck. By making messages simple you remove all secondary, less important information that you can afford to live without. Simplicity is especially important in the world of ETC programmes, where it is a challenge to explain the ideas and structures behind inter-regional cooperation – before we even start talking about projects themselves.

What does a message look like?

- A message is a statement, idea, or assertion. E.g.
  - “(x) is a problem and (y) is the solution.”
  - The work of project (x) is valuable because (y) and (z)
  - “It is essential to share knowledge among regions on the issue of (x) because…”
  - “(x) must take action on the issue of (y) otherwise (z) will happen.”
- Messages are based on facts and information.
- Messages are unlike marketing, advertising, or media “sound bites”.
- Messages must align with the project’s overall goals.
- Few:
  - Maximum three messages in total
- Concise:
  - Ideally one sentence per message; maximum two sentences;
  - Maximum 25 words per sentence.
  - One idea per message
- Simple
  - Easy for anyone to understand
• Free from jargon
• Strong, active, positive language
• Interesting
• Credible

**Making messages**

Begin by generating a large, unorganised mass of information—everything you want to say—then select and refine only the most essential, powerful and effective ideas remain.

**Brainstorm**

Get together a broad range of people who are involved with your project for an open discussion about what you want to communicate and to whom. Together, list your target audiences. For each audience, state your objectives—what you want to achieve by communicating with them—and also what ideas and information you need to convey to achieve those goals. This is the raw material for your messages.

**Look for themes**

Usually similar objectives and ideas will appear across several audiences. Group these together under thematic headings. Each of these may be the basis for a key message.

**Rank and select**

List your draft messages and decide which are the most important. If you could only say one thing, what would it be? If you could say two things, which other message would you choose? And so on.

**Refine the language**

Can you say the same thing in fewer words? Remove all unnecessary words. Can you say the same thing using simpler words? Remove any complicated vocabulary. Look at each word and ask whether it would be understood by someone who is not fluent in your language, or who knows nothing about the EU, or who knows nothing about the subject matter of your project.

**Eliminate overlap**

If you find the same basic ideas repeated in more than one of your messages, shift the ideas around between messages so that nothing is repeated. This will make space to say more. Make every word count.
**Think media**
What media will reach your key audiences? What would be the best possible headline about your project that you could imagine being published in those media? The answer is a good pointer towards a key message.

**Think impressions**
For non-media tactics such as meetings and lobbying, think: what three things would I like the audience to remember and tell someone else about my project later?

**Test them out**
Show your messages to people outside your project. Friends and family will do, but journalists or people close to your target audiences are better. Do they understand? Are they interested? If not, try again.

**Choose the ones**
Select the best three messages. Look at the best of the rest and see if they contain any truly essential ideas. If so, can you incorporate these ideas in your chosen three?

**Put them to work**
Circulate and promote your messages proactively within your project and be sure that everyone is familiar with how to use them. Every piece of external communications should be planned and executed in line with your key messages. Review, revise and rehearse. Monitor output to be sure that this is taking place.

**Audit and feedback**
Periodically, take a look at any press coverage that has been generated and gauge what messages your key audiences are receiving about your project. Are your messages getting across? You will need to be persistent and should generally not change messages very often, but if they are not working that can be a sign that it’s time to think again.
Don’t rush the process. Messages take time and effort to create.

Get them right, and ensure everyone involved agrees and “buys in”.

They need to be universally accepted and used.

Deploy the same messages through all of your communication efforts, from press releases and media relations activities to websites, brochures, event themes, and lobbying.

Adapt them for different target audiences and occasions, but don’t change them fundamentally.

For messages to have impact, they have to be repeated over and over again.

Support and substantiate each message with evidence and examples (“proof points”).
Monitoring and Evaluation

- The need for monitoring your communication
- How to plan and resource your evaluation
- The main evaluation tools
**Why to evaluate communication activities?**

It is important to evaluate the success of PR activities, in order to learn which activities worked well and which should be improved in future. Evaluation also creates useful feedback to share with others in the project, so that they can learn from your experience. State in your communications plan the criteria by which you will measure its success.

It is always important to measure the success if any public relations activities that are undertaken. Evaluation helps to determine whether communications are working. Are you reaching out to the right target audiences? Do they understand clearly what your project is trying to do? If not, you need to find out why at an early stage in order to modify your campaign.

**Are you reaching out to the right target audiences? Do they understand clearly what your project is trying to do?**

Evaluation can also be a crucial tool to communicate and justify the benefits of PR within your organisation, particularly if faced with scepticism or misunderstanding among managers or on the board. If you can prove that PR activities have changed people’s behaviours or attitudes, sold more products or made your target audiences aware of a certain issue, you are more likely to win their support and endorsement.

Evaluation can help you to measure the success of your communications team and external agencies and address any team issues quickly. Evaluation can help you to benchmark your project against other projects to make sure that you are getting the exposure you deserve.

It also enables you to learn best practice from other projects, share ideas and perhaps work on joint communications activities with projects that address similar themes across the programme or with other transnational projects.

**In house or external?**

There are many methods of evaluating the success of public relations and communications activities. Some are very easy to do in-house, while others are more expensive and complex and might require the help of a specialist external organisation.

This factsheet focuses on four key areas of evaluation: media monitoring, media analysis, online analysis and measuring behaviour change. This is not an exhaustive list of measurement tools: beyond these core disciplines it will be important for your project to find methods that are the right fit for your communications goals and objectives. You will have to decide how much staff and financial resource you can allocate to this.
**Evaluation tools**

**Media monitoring**

Regularly following press coverage about your organisation, your industry and your competitors is one of the most important tasks in public relations. This information should be fed back to management on a daily or weekly basis, depending on the nature and communications environment of your organisation. Strong strategy and effective decision making depends on understanding current issues and what your stakeholders are saying and hearing about you.

Many organisations appoint individuals responsible for monitoring the media and providing feedback. This may take the form of scanned press articles that are emailed to key people on a regular basis. If the amount of coverage is so large that it would be unrealistic to expect everyone to read all of it, a synopsis or summary report drawing attention to the most important articles may be more efficient. Always circulate press coverage to colleagues in the PR and marketing teams, to make sure that everyone is up-to-date with current information.

The process of media monitoring and reporting is a useful task in itself for the PR department because it helps staff to understand the media environment and gain hands-on knowledge of what makes news in your target media. This is a useful way to stimulate ideas for new and creative future news angles, as well as keeping an eye on the news angles in which other organisations like yours are featuring.

**Media analysis**

A more in-depth look at press coverage will enable you to look at longer-term developments in opinion about your organisation, industry and your competitors. It is also a good way to give senior executives within your organisation a regular update on your work and the media results that it generates. A media analysis should be a detailed look at the press coverage you have received, in an accessible format incorporating charts or graphs that make the information easy to assimilate and understand.

**Typical areas for attention will include:**

- Volume (number of articles) of press coverage about your organisation
- Tone of press coverage: is coverage positive, negative or neutral?
- Prominence of press coverage: small mention in an article, small article specifically about your organisation, large article, etc.
- Presence of desired messages in press coverage (see message analysis below)
If you have a small budget it is fine to do a media analysis yourself, but it can be time consuming and is unlikely to be as objective as it would be if done by an external organisation.

**Message analysis**

Messages are so crucial that it is worthwhile making an effort to determine the extent to which they are actually being conveyed to target audiences. Depending on the budget available, this process can range from simply evaluating whether messages appear in media coverage right up to conducting detailed and direct surveys of your target audiences to establish whether they know your messages. Such surveys can take place by telephone, email, online or letter.

**Benchmarking behaviour change**

If one of your goals is to change people’s perceptions, attitudes or opinions it will be useful to determine whether your communications activities have actually succeeded in changing behaviour. The typical approach that most organisations use to achieve this is through a benchmarking survey.

In this process target audiences are surveyed at the outset of a communications programme, again halfway through the campaign, and again finally at the end. The results will enable an organisation to track the impact of its activities systematically and if necessary make ongoing adjustments.

Benchmarking surveys should usually be managed by a specialist company. If that is not possible within your budget, you may consider running an informal online or telephone survey to canvass opinions. This will not yield rigorous data to underpin evidence-based decision making, but anecdotal information can give you a useful steer.

**Web evaluation**

As the communications focus for many types of audiences migrates steadily online, so web evaluation tools are becoming increasingly important. Consult with IT experts before establishing online systems to ensure that their structure will provide you with useful information about users. Basic web evaluation might involve measuring site visits alongside the timing of public relations activities to establish whether surges and peaks in traffic to your website correspond with interest that you have generated. In addition you may want to use more sophisticated software to provide more granular detail, such as the length of time visitors spend on a site, their geographical origin, the pages on which they arrive, the path they take through your site, which pages they spend most time on, and perhaps most importantly, how they were referred to your site. Consider incorporating interactive features such as surveys.
Advertising value equivalency (AVE)

AVE was developed as an attempt to compare the value of editorial media coverage with paid advertising. In theory it should enable an organisation to express the value of media exposure in terms of the price they would have had to pay for advertising that would generate an equivalent degree of publicity or exposure. AVE is still in common use in some markets, but it is no longer endorsed by many PR associations who view the concept of putting a financial value on press coverage as inherently unreliable. AVE should generally be treated with caution and is usually less useful than specific and targeted evaluation methods.

In the end it is up to you to decide how much resource you can delegate to this – but we advise that you do include some evaluation and monitoring activities in your communications plan.

IN SHORT

The main evaluation tools are:

- Media monitoring
- Message analysis
- Benchmarking behaviour change
- Web analysis
- Advertising value equivalency
Visibility

- What is branding for?
- Things to consider when designing a logo
- How to use photographs and what are “good” photographs
The aim of your logo, brand, image is to get people to recognise your project. If you can use your logo, signature, website, newsletter, press releases effectively you present a coherent and memorable image of your project.

Branding is one of the most difficult disciplines to get right and it is likely that you will need to outsource some or all of the design work to a design company. Branding is more often associated with the private sector where commercial organisation seek to create trust that will bring their customers back to them. But brand and image is important for projects, too. If you want your target groups to remember your project and to identify with the themes and issues, then a strong image and brand is important.

**What is branding for?**

Many people think that branding is simply a matter of designing a new logo for their project or organisation and possibly a tagline to go underneath it, often barely distinguishing between branding and marketing. A strong brand has to do with every aspect of a project’s relationship with its target groups. The function of branding is to make us feel good by making our decisions easier and safer. It does this by reducing anxiety and doubt and enhancing the trustworthiness of the brand. Branding is perceptual management that works with such virtual aspects like values, associations, percepts, beliefs, metaphors and environments. It is a promise and a difference. If marketing is the body of an organisation, then branding is its mind.

**The process of branding**

The steps that you can follow to establish the brand identity of your project are similar to the process of communication planning.

- What is the aim of your project?
- Who are your target groups?
- What benefits will your target groups get?

Does this all sound familiar? It should do – your brand identity is part of your communication plan.

**Logos**

Designing good, clear and innovative logos is a very difficult task and you will need to use a design company. Your name and your logo are usually the first points of contact with your target groups. Having a strong identity is very important. It is essential that the logo is seen as mark of quality and when a brand is marked with a distinctive logo, a target group can trust it to be good.
Things to consider when designing a logo

Becoming more involved with your brand and understanding how branding works will help your project communication. Whereas branding is a big subject here are some tips and ideas for logo design to start you going.

- Avoid negative images and associations.
- Colour is key. Enhance your logo with colours that are meaningful.
- Check other projects for ideas to make sure that your logo is unique.
- Start paying attention to logos and brands around you and learn what works and what doesn’t work.
- Logos always work in their context. Don’t assess logos from just purely design principles.
- Conduct a focus group within your target groups. What is their first reaction?
- Sometimes the most obvious images can be cliché. Try to incorporate a creative visual into the logo. Remember not all MED projects are about waves of the Mediterranean!
- Experiment with different fonts to see which resonate with your brand.

If you want to add a tagline you need to create a short and memorable phrase that will sum up the tone and premise of your project brand. If you choose to have a tagline, make it to be seen on all your communications tools or don’t use it.

And finally…
check that the logo or a similar design has not already been used by another project or organisation.

You will probably need to trademark a logo that you have designed or commissioned. You need to check the trade mark office in your region.

Use of photographs

They say a picture paints a thousand words. Good use of photography will enhance the visibility of your printed material and web site. Poorly conceived photographs do exactly the opposite.

Things to avoid

- Avoid using the publicity photo clichés
- One person passing a cheque to another
- Someone breaking ground with a shovel
- Two people shaking hands
- Someone cutting a ribbon
- One person passing an award to another
- A group of people (e.g. project partners), unknown to the target group
Remember that you should be trying to communicate results and impact through your publications. People are not interested in process.

**Good photographs**

What sort of photographs will editors use?

- Keep groups small – 3 or 4
- People – faces in particular
- People doing something (concrete actions, no plain group pictures)
- Avoid clutter backgrounds
- Fill whole picture
- Use strong colours – reds or yellows
- Relevant

The aim of your logo, brand, image is to get people to recognise your project.

**Logos:** designing good, clear and innovative logos is a very difficult task and you will need to use a design company.

Colour is key. Enhance your logo with colours that are meaningful.

Check other projects for ideas and to make sure that your logo is unique.

Good photographs depict the results, outcomes or impact of the project, not the process.
Website Communication and Social Networks

- What design to use for your website
- How to structure your website to make people stay longer
- Differences in how people read text on the screen and on paper
- Example of the hierarchical website structure
Website communication

Your website will be the first source of information about you for many people outside your project, so it needs to contain the right information in a clear and accessible design and structure.

**Design**

Many organisations spend a fortune on the aesthetic design of their websites, a luxury that is beyond the reach of most MED projects. If you do have budget to commission a professional web design company, be aware that many will try to sell you a service that is unnecessarily complex and expensive. A simple “brochure” site may be sufficient for many MED projects.

Alternatively, it is relatively cheap and easy to configure and publish a straightforward website using inexpensive off-the-shelf software. Most web publishing programmes include a range of generic website templates that can be personalised easily. Keep the design minimal and professional, avoiding any sound, movement or clashes of colour. Avoid information overload: leave enough empty space. Clarity, accessibility and ease of use are vital.

**Structure**

Good websites have a system of links among the pages that is intuitive, straightforward, and reflected in a clear navigation facility that makes it obvious to users where in the site they are, and how to get to wherever else they want to go.

The easier it is to use, the longer users will stay at the site and the more they will see. Links to all key pages or sections of the site should be displayed on the front page, and every page should contain a standard set of links to other key pages or sections since not all users will arrive at the front page.

Make your structure hierarchical and as shallow as possible: no page should be more than two clicks away from the home page. (See sample website structure below)

**Content**

Research has shown that people read text very differently on websites from the way they read on paper. On paper, people read sentences fairly predictably from left to right, and persist through long sections. On screen, people’s eyes scan around unpredictably and settle on interesting keywords. On paper, people are more likely to read to the bottom of the page. On screen, people lose interest more quickly and many people do not bother to scroll down.

- Break up your text with sections and bullet points
- Highlight key words in bold
- Be concise. Avoid long texts that require users to scroll down
**Hosting**

Your website can often be hosted directly by your web design company or they can suggest another company for you. If your project is part of a large organisation or local authority, there might also be an opportunity to host your website internally. Look around to find the best hosting option for your project.

**Example of a hierarchical website structure**

![Diagram of a hierarchical website structure]
New media

Blogs

Blogs are an easily created and regularly updated website that works a bit like an online diary, discussion board and news forum. A blog can contain personal or project information and facts or opinions on any topic. An author will usually write about something topical and allow other users to post comments or rebuttals to the person’s comments.

Creating a blog is a great way to showcase a project, and can be a way to get people involved dynamically in its development. Your blog can be hosted on your website’s server or you can set one up for free or a very small charge with a blog hosting service. Blogging is becoming very popular: even senior politicians like European Commissioner Margot Wallstrom publish blogs. Hers can be seen at http://weblog.jrc.cec.eu.int/page/wallstrom

If you create a blog for your project, make sure to update it regularly and encourage other people in your project to participate.

Facebook and online networks

There are a countless online chat rooms and networking websites. If you aren’t already participating in one, see if there are any relevant to your organisation and try to maintain a presence on them. You never know who will be part of the chat room and you could be making contact with some of your target audiences. Remember to be professional at all times.

Set up your own “Facebook” profile with a brief description of your upcoming activities. Invite people and get them to write their opinions. You can moderate what is written – so maintain control.

You can also see all the friends of the people you invite and you can invite them too. You can also see what other interest groups they belong to and become their members too.

Facebook allows you to quickly build up a very large list of members. Barak Obama ran an incredible Facebook campaign.
When designing or commissioning design of a website ask yourself these questions:

- What is the aim of having a website for your project?
- Who will use it?
- What does it need to do?
- How interactive does it need to be?
- What features does it need to have to achieve your aims?
- What features are not necessary?
- How important is a website for your project communications?
- What impact will the website have on your project?
- How will evaluate the effectiveness?
- Are you going to outsource or try to design in-house?
- What is your budget?
- What new social media features are going to be useful?

This Factsheet will be updated according to the issues raised during the Communication Training in April 2012!
Publications

- How to design effective leaflets, brochures or other publications keeping in mind graphics, images, text, format, messages
- How to use third party leaflets to reach wider range
Leaflets and brochures

General leaflets and brochures need to convey a rounded impression of your project in a way designed to draw attention and create interest. The first step is to choose or commission a design that will encourage a person from your target audience to take the time to read it.

Effective designs tend to be relatively simple and make good use of graphics and imagery that are both eye-catching and relevant to your subject matter. Use bold and striking pictures, preferably including some action or an interesting view or place, rather than bland portraits, group team pictures or handshakes.

Be realistic about how much information can be conveyed in the space available. There is no point cramming everything you want to say into a design so crowded that it becomes unattractive or effectively unreadable. Accessible designs include a substantial amount of white or empty space to make the content easier on the eye.

Determine how much space you have available before beginning to write.

Imagine how people will read the leaflet and brochure. Not many of them are likely to sit down and give it their full concentration for a long period of time as they might with a book. People flick through brochures until something catches their eye; leaflets get even less attention, so be clear and concise.

Vary the format of your content, avoiding large blocks of text that will put readers to sleep. Use boxes, lists, bullet points, graphics – any way you can imagine to encourage readers’ eyes to linger on your key information.

Build the content around your messages, with a clear view to angles that are likely to be interesting to the target audiences that you have in mind.

If your leaflet or brochure is destined for a use where it will be competing for attention with a large number of similar publications from other organisations, consider using a format that will help it to stand out, such as an unusual size or shape (this can be as simple as using landscape rather than portrait orientation), a novel material such as a textured paper, or a fold-out layout.

Probably the most common error with leaflets and brochures is to invest a great deal of time, effort and budget into an expensive design, layout and print job but direct much too little attention towards the quality of the content. The goal is to engage an audience and influence their views or behavior in line with your communications strategy. In this context a beautiful brochure is no use if it is boring or unclear. Use your best writers and devote enough time to the task to create truly powerful prose; if necessary, commission professional copy-writers or copy-editors.
Third party newsletters

Newsletters compiled by other organisations can often be interested in MED Programme project activities, and this is a great opportunity to reach out to a new segment of your target audience. Below are two examples of such publications (DG Regio’s magazine “Inferegio” and the Interact newsletter).
Promotional products

- Most common promotional products
- How to choose a promotional item which fits with your project goals
- How does your project's brand and image fit with promotional products
- Choosing long-lasting, useful promotional products suitable to deliver your message
- Case study of creative use of promotional products
Promotional products that count

These are the most common promotional products that can be sourced and branded almost anywhere and on-line

- Ball point pens / pencils
- Coffee mugs
- Mousemats
- USB flash drives
- Conference bags
- Umbrellas
- Key rings
- T-shirts
- Conference folders
- Notepads
- Diaries
- Paper weights

This is a rather random selection – which illustrates the random disorganized nature of promotional products. Many of these items have little or no practical value and most of these would not add much value to your project communications.

The other problem is ‘promotional product fatigue’. Most people don’t need or want a new mouse mat.

Are promotional products a useful addition to your project communications? Because they are easy to source does not mean that they are useful.

Questions to consider

Do they fit with your project goals?

- Are they in line with the messages that you want to convey about your projects?
  
  What do they say about your project? Do they fit with the themes, the outputs, the deliverables or are they simply merchandise that are useful for people to have?

- How do they support the promotion of your project?
  
  Is there a creative angle to the product that makes it really memorable? Will people ‘want one’?

- Who are you going to give them to? At what event or occasions?
  
  You don’t want your project to come to an end and then find a cellar full of expired promotional materials.

- What do they say about the features and benefits of your project?
Do they fit with your branding and image?

⇢ Are you able to brand these in line with the image of your project?
   If purchasing products on-line, can you get the exact specifications of your logos and the EC identity standards? Sometimes you have to adjust settings of images to fit the specifications of the products offered. Colors and quality of images differ on various media. Are you able to check that the colors that you specify come out right on different materials such as paper, glass, textiles? Sometimes the result is not as you anticipated.

⇢ Can you fit the logo and message onto the product?
   Some products are too small to be able to represent your logo or message in an appropriate way.

⇢ Will they actually work and continue to work?
   Cheap ball point pens rarely work for a long time if at all.
   Timing – are there any dates contained in your product which will render them redundant after a particular time – e.g. diaries, conference dates on pens, branded stationery?

⇢ Is the source of these in line with the ethical policy of your project?
   People are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of products and so it is vital to check that the product you buy are from appropriate sources. Many companies that provide cheap high volume promotional products will not be as up-to-date with ethical issues as you are expected to be.

How to distribute?

⇢ Who are you going to give these to? On which occasions?
   Do people want to receive promotional products or will they end up in the bin?

⇢ Do these have a limited or long shelf life?
   Some simple canvas or cloth conference bags, that are well branded, are really useful to people after the event now that more and more supermarkets charge for carrier bags.

   Conference folders can be used for years after the event.

   A sturdy good quality umbrella will be used for a long time and will continue to show off the name and brand of the project.
Promotional products - ingenious carriers of message

Ideally you should only purchase promotional products that are able to carry the message of your projects in a way that other media can’t.

- *Florescent bicycle clips are cheap, easy to brand and really relevant to a project that deals with sustainable urban transport. They are useful too.*

- *Reusable water drinking bottles are a striking and imaginative give-away for a project promoting responsible use of water.*

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Here is an example of a campaign where the use of a promotional item was inspiring and creative:

**Thames Water**

Thames Water, a water supply and sewage disposal company, was struggling to present an interesting and appealing image to target audiences. Thames Water wanted to create a more dynamic reputation and enhance its relationships with the key politicians and opinion leaders who shape its regulatory environment.

**What they did**

Thames Waters’ messages were that through the efforts of Thames Water, the River Thames had achieved the status as the cleanest metropolitan river in the world.

To highlight this in a memorable way, they organized a Parliamentary Charity Duck Race as part of a wider political outreach program.

Members of Parliament were invited to throw large plastic yellow ducks from Westminster Bridge into the River Thames.

The ducks floated along side the Palace of Westminster and the first one to pass the finish line (the steps of the House of Lords) won a donation to a local charity for its Member of Parliament. Through mailings, including gifts of bath-sized rubber ducks; event branding; pre-race festivities and a post-race reception, Thames Water had ample opportunity to spread its positive environmental messages, as well as to develop personal relationships with Members of Parliament.
Only spend money on promotional products if they fit with your project goals.

- Are they in line with the messages that you want to convey about your projects?
- How do they support the promotion of your project?
- Who are you going to give them to? At what event or occasions?
- What do they say about the features and benefits of your project?

and finally... make sure you use them before they expire...
Events

- How to organise a successful event
- Events logistics (speakers, audio visual requirements, documentation)
- How to organise events involving media
- How to organise successful press conferences
- Event planning checklist
There are many opportunities to hold or take part in events that bring together your project’s personnel with key target audiences in the right environment to communicate your key messages directly to them and generate awareness for the value of the work that you and your partners do.

This section of the manual, in conjunction with the following Event Management Checklist, focuses on a range of ideas and practical knowledge that will facilitate the organisation and management of effective events.

**Several items on your planning list**

ETC project events can sometimes be weak because they are seen as an objective in themselves rather than as a tool to achieve a bigger objective. An event needs to be conceived and planned with a clear purpose in mind. An event is usually a significant cost investment, so it needs to deliver some value that endures longer than the hot air generated by the speakers on the day.

Planning has been the key for ETC projects that have organised successful events. It depends on a clear understanding of the purpose of the event and the target audience, matched to an appropriate event plan. For instance, if you want to influence policy on a regional level, it will be very important to plan an event that will be appealing to regional policy makers.

One important aspect of planning will be to decide whether to hold an internal or an external event.

**Internal events** - Sometimes due to the nature or stage of development of your project, an event should only be for the lead partner and project partners. For instance, this may be in order to give you an opportunity to share experiences and best practice, and to keep up to date with what is happening within the partnership. This is fine where appropriate to your objectives. However, remember that many MED projects have broader goals beyond their practical internal business. Some goals, such as raising awareness of issues and ensuring that progress continues after the project ends, cannot be served well by a purely internal event.

**External events** - Events for external audiences are a very important way to keep stakeholders up to date with what is happening within the project, what you are doing to tackle a priority area, and why it is important.

**Event outputs**

When planning your event always consider your event outputs. What is it that you can do that will make people remember your project, or perhaps even allow you to engage with important stakeholders such as politicians after your event? For example, some projects have created a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with politicians and policy makers who attend their events, while others have signed one and circulated it to key politicians and policy makers in their regions after the
event. Other ETC projects have found it useful to develop a list of key statements calling for something or agreeing to take a certain action.

There needs to be a clear purpose for your event and finishing with a “call to action” enables you to engage further with your target audiences and shows that your project and the event has achieved something.

**Audiences**

Think laterally when considering target audiences for an event. Which groups of people can you interest in attending? Which groups of people have the potential to help you to achieve your practical and communications objectives if you can reach out to them through an event? Who has a stake or an interest in your subject matter? Who is already involved, but could become more committed or useful to your project if you engaged with them more closely?

It never hurts to be ambitious in planning a list of people you would like to attend. There are no guarantees that they will come, but you can improve your chances a great deal by thinking hard about how to make the event attractive for your target audiences. Think about what they are interested in. Why would they want to come? How can you make your event appealing to them?

**Budget**

Most projects will already have a set budget for their mid-term and end of project events and will normally not be able to exceed this. Your budget will ultimately determine where you hold the event, the number of people you invite, the quality of the support material (such as presentation handouts, press packs, brochures, etc.) and the overall quality of the event.

The budget will determine the overall size and scope of the event, but within the budgeting process there will be decisions to make about the allocation of resources to individual elements. For instance, for some events it may be more important to invest in an interesting venue in order to boost attendance; for others, a high-profile external speaker might be more valuable; in other cases, the priority may be to accommodate as many attendees as possible.

Draft an initial budget using a spreadsheet and allocate one team member to be responsible for it and monitor all costs as they occur. Include a contingency for emergencies. Be aware that some suppliers may need a deposit in advance.

**Theme**

The headline theme of an event defines its identity and is an important factor in helping people decide whether or not they want to attend. The theme must fit your project’s goals and objectives. Keep it short, simple and easy to understand. If your project is about developing parks in urban areas then “Spatial planning and transnational cooperation for the effective use of green spaces in urban centres” would be difficult to understand for many external audiences. A conference theme such as “Improving green spaces in European cities” would be much more effective.
**Programme**

The format of your event should be based on the needs and interests of your target audiences. Before approaching anyone to speak at your event or inviting people to attend you will need to draft a programme. Organise sessions and arrange speakers in a clear and logical order.

For example:
- General introduction to the topic
- Specialist views/case studies/different perspectives on the topic
- Workshops on different aspects of the topic
- Summary and conclusions

**Two-way communication**

As a general principle, do not rely excessively on one-way communication. When you have one speaker or a succession of speakers delivering presentations, audiences tend to lose attention quite quickly. It helps to include regular interactive elements in the programme, such as:

**Panel discussions**

Workshops – some people feel more comfortable in smaller groups which in turn helps to stimulate interaction

**Break-out sessions for discussions**

Be sure to build in regular breaks to encourage networking possibilities and for busy attendees to answer phone calls, send emails, etc.

**Speakers**

Interesting, knowledgeable and skilled speakers are one of the make-or-break factors of any event. High-profile names, or people from well-known organisations, will help to make your event appealing to target audiences. Individuals who are naturally good at presenting to groups can also transform the atmosphere and impact of the event itself. Depending on the nature of your project and event, interesting speakers to invite might include:

- European policy: people from the Commission or Parliament
- National policy: people from Member State governments or organisations
- Regional policy: people from regional assemblies, local authorities, etc.
- Experts: academics, researchers, think-tanks, etc.
- NGOs: with an interest in your project
- Industry: many projects have some link with industry and it is often important to involve them in some way with your project – offering a speaking slot can be useful
- Trade associations: relevant EU or Member State-based bodies
Moderators

A good event can become great with the addition of an excellent moderator. Make sure that you have someone who is able to manage the event, lead discussions and debates and make the event interesting and relevant to participants. If necessary you may consider hiring a professional moderator, which could cost anywhere from €500–€5,000 depending upon who they are. Many journalists also make good moderators; ask some of your media contacts if they know of someone suitable.

Speaker invitations

When inviting speakers you will need to provide them with more information on the event, normally in the form of a draft programme, a briefing on the types of people attending the event and a summary of what they are expected to do. Invitations to speakers can be sent by a formal letter or a less formal email invitation or telephone call. Use your judgment when issuing an invitation depending on the level of the speaker. For example, when inviting a politician or senior official it is always best to send a formal letter together with the programme. Always follow up proactively in person afterwards: do not assume that people received, read, or registered your invitation or that they will respond to you.

Timing

The date chosen should not conflict with any other events that your target audiences might also be interested in attending. This is almost impossible to guarantee but research it and check for major political events, public holidays, conferences etc. Check with your project partners to ensure that there are no events on a local level that could conflict.

Zoom on venues

Determine what facilities you will need and choose a location that offers everything you require. Be imaginative and choose somewhere that reflects the nature of your operation and the theme of the event. Unusual or expensive venues may increase attendance, but make sure it is accessible for the people you want to attract. For instance, if conveying messages to busy officials at Brussels-based institutions is one of your key aims, a local venue in Brussels may be better than even the most interesting site elsewhere.

If the event is to be held outdoors, make a contingency plan in case of bad weather.

For suppliers, check whether you have to use the venue’s own caterers and equipment or if you can provide your own. This can sometimes be cheaper. If the venue cannot provide all the things you need, ask them to recommend suppliers with whom they have worked before.

If you are going to provide food, a buffet is a good idea as it allows people to mix and talk. For a stand-up buffet, choose food that does not need to be cut up with
knife and fork. For the benefit of any journalists attending, remember that it is almost impossible to juggle a plate, glass, fork, pen and notebook. Allow places for people to sit down.

Visit the venue with your team and all suppliers present. Use this visit as an opportunity to walk-through the event from start to finish and envisage all eventualities.

**Venue search**

You have a couple of options when looking for the perfect venue for your event – find it yourself, or commission a company to find it for you.

Most cities and countries have professional companies that specialise in locating venues for events. Usually there is no direct cost to you and this option could save you a lot of time. Search companies tend to know most local venues and can usually negotiate better rates than you could acting alone.

The way they operate is that you approach them with your requirements and then, on your behalf, they research potential venues, provide a list of what is available and arrange for you to view the suitable places on offer.

Check the terms and conditions in advance of employing a venue search company, but you are normally under no obligation to them. They are usually paid a commission by the hotel or venue if and when they make the booking.

Once the search company secures a venue for you, you then will deal directly with the venue. Some search companies can also negotiate discounted rates on accommodation for attendees at your event.

**How to find a venue search company**

The best way to find a venue search company is through a recommendation from someone who has organised events in your designated city or through an internet search, such as Google – use terms such as “venue search” and enter the name of the city, or “conference venue” and the name of the city.

**Negotiating with venues**

Fees are always up for negotiation and it is good practice to shop around to find something that suits your budget. Often venues or hotels will quote a “day delegate rate” rather than charge you for the space and food. This can be useful as it helps you plan your budget and ensures you don’t have any unexpected surprises. Do not be afraid to ask for a discount, especially if you feel that the fees are too high or are over your budget. Avoid revealing your maximum budget if possible.

A day delegate fee will normally include three tea and coffee breaks (welcome, mid-morning and mid-afternoon), water throughout the event (refreshed during breaks) and a two- or three-course buffet lunch.
A venue will normally charge extra for the following:

- Alcohol consumed at lunch or a cocktail reception
- Break-out or workshop rooms
- Technical equipment (data projectors, televisions, DVD or video players, screens, etc.)

Areas that you can negotiate on:

- Free use of conference facilities in the evening, which is useful if organising a dinner
- Hotel rooms for conference staff or speakers
- Room upgrades, e.g. to an executive room or business suite
- Break-out rooms
- Free newspapers for conference delegates
- Free or discounted fees for on-site amenities such as the gym or business centre
- Minibus to take delegates to or from airport or conference events
- Late check-out
- Gifts for delegates in their hotel room such as chocolate, wine, movie, etc.
- Extra equipment like data projectors, televisions, screens, etc.
- Wireless internet access, normally for conference staff
- Reduced day-delegate fee for staff working on the conference, for example you might only have to pay for their lunch

Venues for small events and budgets

If your budget is small and you cannot afford to hire a venue, consider using a meeting room in your office. This might not be suitable for all events but for small seminars, briefings etc. it will be fine. In fact some of your audiences may well like to see where you operate.

Ensure that the event will not be invaded by colleagues who might not have a genuine role in the proceedings and that you will not be interrupted by telephone calls.

Ensuring attendance

Consider carefully the purpose and scope of your event when deciding whether to invite media, NGOs, politicians, dignitaries, officials, etc. If the information you wish to communicate is not of general interest, be selective when sending out invitations. Only invite those who will benefit from your information and whose attendance will benefit you. Always consider that attendees may have their own agendas which may overshadow what your spokespeople have to say.
**Invitations**

Develop the invitation as soon as you have the venue details and timing. It is important to give your guests as much notice as possible. If you have not finalised the details, consider sending out a save-the-date email or letter, so the guests at least have the event in their agendas.

Include a fax back reply form, dedicated email address or online registration to capture responses.

**Event website: Promoting the event**

It is common practice now when organising most significant events to have a dedicated website. This is also valuable for MED Programme project events. A website makes it easier for participants to find out more information about the event, its speakers and the content, and it saves you having to continually update people by email, post or telephone.

Depending on the nature of the event, delegates often like to see who else is attending the event. It might be useful to publish a list of attendees, or at least mention their organisation’s name somewhere on your website.

Standard practice is also to have online registration for the event. This makes life easier both for delegates and for event organisers. People submit their details online into a database that you can normally access through a private site and output into Excel in order to keep track of delegates. A website that has a content management system will allow you to add, delete and update event information yourself without the need of a programmer.

To develop a website with a registration database option you should usually budget between €1,000 and €3,000 depending on your requirements.

To inform people about your event it is best to use a combination of email notification, letters through the post and telephone calls. Emails designed and formatted with HTML coding can look more attractive, professional and interesting.

Remember to keep it simple and easy to understand. Also make sure that it tells your target audiences “why I should attend.”

**Event logistics**

**Speakers**

- Ensure that your speakers arrive on time, in good spirits, refreshed and prepared.
- Brief speakers if possible, and obtain and assess all their materials, such as presentations and hand-outs, well in advance of the event.
- Arrange all necessary logistics such as transfers and accommodation.
- Arrange and check the necessary technical equipment and set-up, e.g. lectern, video projector, laptop, etc.
Arrange for their arrival in sufficient time for a dry-run and any last-minute changes.
Meet speakers on their arrival and introduce them to the technical/AV person
Thank all speakers at the end of their speeches or the end of the conference – both verbally and later in writing
Be sure to have discussed and confirmed fees, travel expenses etc. in advance and for prompt payment

Audio visual requirements
At events where there will be presentations or speeches requiring visual support and/or amplification, the AV set-up is crucial. Ideally, your AV supplier should support you on the day of the event as well as with preparation work.

Brief them well and arrange a site visit in advance. However, as with any suppliers, listen to their suggestions – they are experts in their field and may offer practical and innovative solutions to any challenges faced.

Ensure that the AV supplier:

- Provides expert support, technicians who are knowledgeable with PowerPoint and other presentation software
- Has somebody in the presentation room at all times
- Has arranged set-up times and details with the venue in advance
- If possible, ensure that all presentations are pre-loaded in one large presentation file on the presentation laptop – run one after the other, including links to any external media.

Documentation
Although delegate packs and paper handouts are regularly used and expected by attendees, there is a slow move towards providing such documentation electronically.

Electronic support materials can be:

- Downloaded from the event website – using passwords to protect unauthorised access
- Emailed – in compressed format
- Sent out CD following the conference

Printing
For an event you will need a good printing company who can professionally produce event brochures, leaflets, registration materials and delegate packs. To get the best price and quality, get quotations from two or three printers and select the one that gives you the best price and who you feel will provide you with the best service. If you particularly like one printer but they haven’t given you the best price, ask them to match your lowest price. Remember, you need a good reliable printer to deliver on time.
Try to get all your printing done at once because this can secure big cost savings.

If you are organising an event in another country, it might be more cost effective to produce materials there, or you could produce them in your country and take them with you.

**Printers can produce for you:**
- Letterhead for your event
- Event flyers or brochures
- Delegate packs
- Large signage
- Delegate badges
- Pop-up stands

**Accommodation**
- Insist that delegates book accommodation well in advance, particularly for destinations where hotel rooms are in short supply. Many people tend to leave accommodation to the last minute, which can be too late.
- When expecting a group, try to arrange pre-check-in with the hotel to avoid waiting time in the lobby.
- When confirming breakfast numbers, calculate carefully. Many people don’t have breakfast – preferring coffee and pastries outside the conference room
- Pay particular attention to the reply sheet details – twin rooms, king size beds, non-smoking rooms, disabled requirements, etc. Reconfirm with the venue.
- Ensure that you know the venue – e.g. location of the toilets, cloakrooms, telephones, gym, etc.)

**Food and drink**
- Ensure that you allow for all dietary requirements (vegetarian, religious needs, allergies, etc.)
- Not everybody drinks alcohol. Alcohol at lunch is not conducive to attention and participation in the afternoon. But find out what is most suitable for the participants, as sometimes teetotal lunches can disappoint important invitees, and give a bad impression.
- Keep it light and simple
- Choose something the venue can provide easily
Events involving media

Inviting media
If you are inviting mainly trade press and/or weeklies and monthly publications, then try to alert them to the event about three weeks in advance. If you are trying to attract national news outlets you can invite the media nearer to the event.

Follow up the invitation by telephoning all invited media to ensure attendance. It is frequently possible to persuade reluctant or otherwise busy journalists to commit to an event by speaking to them directly.

(See below for an example of a media invitation)

Media events might include:

- Press conferences to make an important announcement, attended by a number of journalists.
- Media briefings for one or more journalists, either to inform them of secondary news or to provide background information for use at a future date.
- Media visits to facilities or operations to help the media understand your activities.
- Seminars or round-table meetings with a group of opinion leaders discussing an area or explaining a complex development, product or service in more depth to the media.
- Speeches at an industry conference that might be attended by the media.

Media events – timing
For media events it is a good idea to contact one or two journalists whom you intend to invite to see if the event clashes with any other.

If you are inviting journalists, select the time of day carefully. Journalists work to deadlines and these must be taken into account. If you want to attract national news media and want coverage on the day of the event for TV and radio, or the following day for print media, the morning is best – any time from 09:30 is ideal.

If you want to attract weekly or monthly publications, then a lunchtime, afternoon or early evening gathering is good as long as you do not hold the event on any publication’s press day (the day the publication is finished and sent to be printed), when it is hard for editorial staff to leave their desks.

Press conferences
Press conferences are a standard feature of many public relations programmes, but they need to be considered carefully. You must assess the pros and cons and then decide if it is the best method for communicating the news you have. It might be better to hold a media briefing or issue a press release.
A press conference should only be held if there is news of real interest to the target media or when the only way you can respond to a whole range of questions posed by a large group of media is by holding an open conference. They can be a major logistical exercise and can bring significant costs if you need a special venue, such as a hotel, and want to provide refreshments for a large group. So you must be certain that it will be a useful exercise.

**Consider the following:**

- Is the story strong enough to justify holding a press conference?
- Is a press conference the best way to communicate with the chosen media?
- If only a very small, select group is involved, would individual briefings and interviews be more effective?
- Could the story be better covered by distributing a news release or telephoning media contacts?
- Are the MED Programme project representatives who would hold the conference prepared to respond to any sensitive or controversial issues that might be raised in an open press conference?
- Are they sufficiently senior, trained and briefed to front such an event?
- Is a photo-call prior to the conference appropriate and might it increase the chance of media coverage?

**Potential impact**

If you are satisfied with those conditions, a press conference can be effective in a range of ways:

- Communicating a news story to target media simultaneously.
- Communicating the story with authority and excitement.
- Providing a platform to enhance the status of your work.
- Providing a controlled environment for dealing with media questions, which have been anticipated in advance and responses developed.
- Providing an opportunity to meet a variety of media contacts, develop and strengthen relationships, which may have a long term benefit as well as delivering short term coverage.
SPROUT

MEDIA INVITATION

You are invited to attend an organic banquet at Kilkenny Castle for the launch of an EU-funded project that aims to help struggling rural communities to benefit from the recent surge in demand for organic food. The feast is one of nine being held simultaneously across Europe to celebrate a new network to help farming economies develop in a sustainable way for the environment and society.

The event will:
Be attended by a number of high-profile individuals including the Irish Economy Minister and the Mayor of Kilkenny
Offer a delicious array of organic food from across the region as well as the other SPROUT regions for journalists and visitors to sample
Give a taste of how poorer regions can benefit from the knowledge and experience of richer areas through enlightened European cooperation.

Friday, 5 June 2012

TIME: 1.00pm – 2.30pm
LOCATION: Kilkenny Castle

I will attend
I won't be attending
I can’t attend, but __________________________ will come in my place

Please send me a press kit

Name:
Publication:
Telephone:
Email:

Please return this form by email to: s.lynham@iem.gov.ie or by fax: +353 123 123456 no later than Thursday, 11 May 2012.
**Planning**
- Clarify purpose of event
  - Why are you holding the conference/seminar/workshop/meeting?
  - What is it meant to achieve?
  - What messages do you want to communicate?
  - Write down these objectives and ensure all involved are in agreement
- Determine your target audiences
  - Who is the event for?
  - What are those people interested in?
  - Will this conference be interesting for them?
- Put together a detailed plan as soon as you can and circulate it
- Allocate roles to team members
  - Ensure all relevant colleagues and partners are behind the event and know what’s expected of them
- Keep them informed and committed
- Schedule regular meetings or conference calls for all involved in advance, e.g. every Monday at 10:00 hrs
- Issue agenda in advance of each meeting and send out contact report following – even if it’s in bullet point form
- Remember to comply with the information and publicity requirements of your operation and the MED Programme.

**Date**
- Select dates
- Check all relevant employees and spokespeople can attend
- Check for clashes with other more newsworthy events: political events, holidays, regular press briefings, etc. Call journalists, government departments to check for clashes.
- If it’s a media event, don’t hold it on a Monday or Friday unless you’ve got a really hot story

**Theme**
- If appropriate, develop a theme to fit objectives and strategy
- Brainstorm ideas to increase creativity
- Theme whole event to maximise impact – right down to the invitations

**Venue selection**
- Before researching suitable venues have some idea of:
  - How many people you expect to attend
  - How many rooms are needed
  - If you need workshops or breakout rooms
What kind of food you want (Breakfast, lunch, dinner, cocktails, coffee breaks, water, etc.)

Be imaginative to capture interest, but choose a venue that is appropriate and accessible

Create a briefing document to give the venue as much information as possible

Visit several venues before making a decision:

Ask what’s included in the price

Can you see other events being held at the venue?

Are staff friendly and helpful?

Negotiate on the price and contract (avoid paying up front – credit card guarantees sometimes work)

Ask for extras

Do you need an alternative indoor venue if it’s raining/cold?

Once venue is selected

Check whether you have to use venue’s own caterers, equipment suppliers or can provide your own (it’s often cheaper to provide your own)

Check venue has personal liability insurance – if not organise through own insurer (usually will advise as to the amount necessary)

Visit site with all other suppliers present

Use site visit as an opportunity to walk-through event from start to finish so you can prepare for all eventualities

Check WC facilities – do you need more?

How many of your staff do you need – should you hire host/hostesses, cloakroom attendants, etc.?

Do you need on-site accommodation? If not, are there enough hotel rooms close by and do you need to provide a shuttle service?

Invitation

Develop concept as soon as you have venue and timings

Consider a save-the-date-fax if official invitation printing is delayed

Ensure all partners are happy with the final version. Fonts and sizing can change on email

A fax-back reply slip and dedicated email address are the easiest way to ensure replies

Remember map, reply-by-date, contact email/phone number, envelopes

Send out invitations as soon as you can – the longer an event is in someone’s diary the better. If necessary send a reminder closer to the date

With media events, consider that forward planning diaries run months in advance but you’ll also need to send a reminder a week before the event for their Monday morning planning meeting

Have a specific person to be in charge of maintaining invitation list and all replies

Remember to include all the necessary logos (project, programme, EU)

Equipment

Assess what you need in terms of equipment

Liaise with venue as to what they have and what you can use

Hire a technical person or use company IT/tech department

Microphones – lapel, podium, handheld, cordless
Presentations
- Projectors, lap-tops, screens
- Connection cables, power sockets, transformers, adapter plugs
- Get presentations 48 hours in advance and upload onto laptops for checking

Moderator/Presenter
- Who will introduce the event, provide links between speakers, moderate a Q&A session, close the event?
- If needed to moderate a discussion, consider hiring a professional

Branding/Signage
- Check what’s required
- Do you need to get it made or can you use existing materials?
- Ensure that your event complies with the information and publicity requirements of the European Commission. All events, public or private, require an EU flag to be on display.
- Ensure all spokespeople have names and organisation name displayed

Photography
- Consider hiring a professional photographer (only if necessary and can be justified. Please refer to eligibility of expenditure)
- Think diversity when choosing models or a shoot
- Have props available for use in photos – branding etc.
- Make sure all photography is captioned. Include names and titles of people in the shot (indicate left to right), along with the date and location
- Most news organisations, if interested in the story, will want a photo. If you don't send a photo with your press release be ready to send one electronically upon request. Assuming you have access to a scanner, you'll want to send a high-resolution file
- Have EU flag on display for event photos.

Equipment to take with you from the office
- Name badges/place labels
- Signing-in book
- Pens and paper
- Contact list of all suppliers
- Fully charged mobile phones
- Binder with all information including receipts, confirmation of bookings
- EU flag

Budgeting
- Be thorough and stick to budget
- Allocate fees and costs
- Keep some contingency budget for emergencies
- Be aware of public procurement procedures and the time needed to contract services within legal requirements.
- Start a spreadsheet as soon as an event is planned – column for quotes, column for actual prices, etc.
- Make one team member responsible for tracking costs
- Ensure eligibility of expenditure
- Keep track of all paperwork (emails, letters, quotes, contracts etc.)
⇒ Check suppliers’ contracts before signature
⇒ Check how much needs to be paid in advance as deposits etc. – arrange this with your accounts team
⇒ Check invoices correspond with contractual agreement before payment

**Meet and greet**
⇒ Upon arrival attendees should receive detailed instructions. This might include a welcome pack with:
  ⇒ Name badge
  ⇒ Agenda
  ⇒ Accommodation details
  ⇒ Map
  ⇒ Press pack
  ⇒ Tourist information
  ⇒ Contact phone numbers
Media Communications

✧ What makes news
✧ Hard new and soft news
✧ The media landscape
✧ The journalists’ agenda
✧ How to choose appropriate media for your project
✧ Creative ways to get media coverage
Making news

Most of what MED projects do from day to day is not interesting to most people on the outside. Most projects quite rightly devote most of their time and attention the mechanics of getting the job done: organising meetings, reporting, drawing up best practice guidelines, sharing knowledge, and so on.

It will always be difficult to generate interest in this aspect of a project’s work because people outside MED Programme or your project are not interested in the process. They care about results and meaning.

The intersection

A key principle is to look for the intersection between what you want to say and what they want to hear. When this type of projects fail to communicate effectively it is often because they are talking about things – like process – that fall in the circle on the left, but not the circle on the right.

What you want to say

What they want to hear

The very big and the very small

What kinds of ideas and information tend to lie in that intersection?

At one end of the scale, the very big issues are always interesting: the major themes like health, quality of living, jobs, the environment and climate change. These ideas are in the news and in people’s minds and conversations every day. All MED projects address big issues in one way or another. Communicating about how you are part of the solution to big issues will get you into that intersection.

At the other end of the scale, the very small issues are the local results and impact that people feel on their doorsteps and notice in their everyday lives. These are the results, the concrete impacts and changes that MED projects make in the real world – not the theory of territorial cooperation or the process of cooperation, but tangible outputs like better paid jobs through innovation or safer houses through flood protection.
When projects find it hard to generate interest, it is often because they are talking about neither the very big nor the very small, but the process and bureaucracy by which projects turn one into the other. Important, but boring.

**Making news**

By the fax machine in most newspaper and broadcast newsrooms is a small in-tray for promising press releases that might become news – and a large bin overflowing with the rest. Most press releases are bad because they are not news. The same goes for electronic news delivery services and email – most messages that journalists receive are ignored or quickly deleted.

There is one reason for this enormous waste of effort: most of the stories that organisations want journalists to write and broadcast are not news. There is no point writing a press release or calling a journalist with a story idea if it is not news. Messages will not make the news if they just say how worthwhile and important a project is. To get published or broadcast, a project must shape and adapt its messages inventively to be newsworthy.

Newsworthiness is relative, flexible and subjective. A small story can make the headlines on a slow news day; a big story can disappear without trace if somebody else makes bigger news the same day. A great local story might be of no interest to national or international media. A great story for print might be useless for television if it has no visual element. A great story for trade media might be much too technical for mainstream media. A story about industry trends may work for financial newspapers but not general press. Something that happened three days ago is news for a weekly publication, but ancient history for a newswire.

Most importantly, many developments that are fascinating and very important to people within the MED Programme world are not newsworthy outside the MED Programme world – at least on the face of it. This is where news angles become important. Think hard about how to touch your target audience. What do they care about? Why will this matter to them?

To generate interest in your project and its activities you need to develop creative PR angles that will capture the interest of your audiences over the activities of other organisations. This can be hard, especially if there seem to be no obvious creative angles that you can use.
Focus on the audience

- The key to writing a good press release, for example, is to identify and focus on an aspect of what you have to say that will engage your target audience. This is what journalists do when they choose a “news angle”: they are looking for a way of explaining a news event that makes it relevant and interesting to their target audience. To make yourself newsworthy, you should do the same. Look for an angle that will connect your agenda to something that your audience cares about!

The first thing that goes through a journalist’s mind when he or she reads your news release is always: “So what? Why should my readers care?” Think hard about what journalists and their audiences would be interested to read. Why should they care? Take the information you have, and tell it in a way that makes them care.

News values

Perhaps your project needs to promote something that is newsworthy but dull, or you want to promote something that simply is not newsworthy.

The trick is to make your audience care.

The first thing that goes through a journalist’s mind when he or she reads your news release is always: “So what? Why should my readers care?”

- In general, news is about people rather than things, and concrete events rather than abstract ideas.

Beyond that, there are essentially two kinds of news:

- **Hard news** is information that people need to make decisions. People need to make decisions when something has changed. Almost all news is about what is new, what has changed: so concentrate on novelty and change. Tell me what is new that will change my life and inform the decisions I need to make.

- **Soft news** is entertainment. People like news that touches them emotionally, amuses them or stimulates their mind. Soft news is just as important as hard news and to manage it we must think in terms of human interest. Make me feel something about this story and I will remember your project.
### Creative news

Below are some ideas to get you and your team thinking of new creative ideas.

**Hold a brainstorming session.** These are great ways of generating a large number of ideas from a group of people in a short space of time.

**Speak to a journalist.** Ask a friendly journalist what they would consider newsworthy about your activities. You’ll probably have to spend some time explaining what you do, but they may come up with something you hadn’t even thought was worth a news release. They might also be able to help with news angles for the story.

**Use the PR story check list.** This document contains 50 news angles that you can further develop into news stories for your project. Use it as an aid to brainstorm for PR activities.

**Link your activities or project to other news stories.** Use other news stories as a way of generating news for your project. For example, the August vacation period means that journalists are looking for news about tourism and holidays – has your project increased the appeal of your region to tourists?

**Look for other potential news** stories that you can use to interest the media in your activities, for example:

- Significant dates – public holidays, anniversaries, religious holidays
- Sporting events
- World events – World Habitat Day, Children’s Rights Day, etc.
Media opportunities

From time to time, almost every person within your organisation will come across an event or an idea that is newsworthy. Sadly, not everyone will recognise it when they see it! Here are a few guidelines for spotting a PR opportunity:

- Think interest – will this be interesting to other people?
- Think news – how your local paper or radio station report?
- Think local – how does it involve people locally?
- Think people – the media are usually more interested in what people are doing than in what organisations are doing.
- Think communities – what contribution has your project made to a community initiative or activity?
News devices

The opportunities for generating PR stories for the media and other audiences are almost endless.

These are useful ‘devices’ for creating stories:

1. Advice
2. Animals
3. Award
4. Bid for a tender or EU money
5. Briefings
6. Calendar events
7. Case study
8. Celebrities
9. Children
10. Columns
11. Competition
12. Conference
13. Employee activities
14. Event
15. Exhibition
16. Expansion
17. Expert opinion
18. Human interest
19. “Ice to the Eskimos” – a service to an unexpected group of people
20. Improved product
21. Improved service
22. Interview
23. Investment
24. Job advert
25. Letter to the editor
26. Link to current event
27. Link to forthcoming news
28. Man bites dog – something upside down
29. Management appointment
30. New contract
31. New premises
32. New process
33. New product or service
34. Picture story
35. Press briefing
36. Press conference
37. Press visit
38. Personal profile
39. Project profile
40. Quotable quote
41. Report
42. Seminar
43. Slow news days
44. Holidays and Sundays
45. Speech
46. Spokesperson
47. Sponsorship
48. Supplement
49. Special report
50. Survey
The media landscape

Europe is home to an enormous number and range of news media, each with a different target audience and its own news values. It is not possible or desirable to target all of them. Projects should consider two factors when deciding which media to target:

1) Which media do our own target audiences pay most attention to?
2) Which media will consider our messages newsworthy?

The answers to these two questions will usually be similar, because media define news as information that their own target audiences want to know.

Audience selection

Following are some examples of how different sections of the media reach different audiences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local newspapers</th>
<th>Local policymakers, politicians, communities affected by project activities or issues.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National TV and radio</td>
<td>Policymakers at local, regional and national level, opinion formers, businesses, regulators, researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist/trade magazines</td>
<td>Experts, proponents and analysts in a particular industry or area of knowledge, e.g. EU affairs, regional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International newswires</td>
<td>Newswires supply all other substantial media with news, so their final audience is the broadest of all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pan-European PR

The nature of MED Programme operations means that PR activities must take place on many levels: local, regional, national and pan-European. This document focuses on the organisation and management of these activities. The definition of pan-European PR is a programme of public relations activities executed in one or more countries. Usually a co-ordinator is needed to ensure:

- There is a level of consistency in communications across all countries
- The individual public relations programmes are executed well
- Cross-fertilisation takes place and best practice activities are shared
- Reporting is carried out in the required way and in a timely manner
Where just two countries are involved, the handling and co-ordination of PR activities is not usually too complex or difficult, as communications between the two can be straightforward and they can work in close cooperation. When a larger number of countries are involved things start getting more complex as lines of communication get longer.

**Types of pan-European PR activities**

As the cost and management of full-scale, pan-European PR activities is considerable and probably not the best way of communicating MED projects activities, here are various other options that can be used to communicate your work:

**Using the foreign correspondents**

Work through the foreign correspondents based in your country, who represent the media of the countries where you want media coverage.

However as with all media relations, the news must be relevant to that outlet and their respective newspaper or station. For example, for national newspaper correspondents, the news you are communicating must have some relevance to the country where the newspaper is based.

This is especially worthwhile in cities where there is a large foreign press corps. Brussels is the base for more foreign correspondents than any other city in the world. There are 700 foreign correspondents based in the city. (The second largest press corps is Washington DC with 574.)

Additionally, other major cities in Europe also have large international press corps, which are hubs for specific European regions. For example:

Vienna, Budapest and Prague are the hubs for the Central and Eastern European correspondents.

Rome, Budapest and increasingly Belgrade are the hubs for the South East European correspondents.

As most foreign correspondents are accredited by their own governments (press offices, ministry of foreign relations) or other agencies, in order to get a list contact the relevant embassies, government department or EU office or search online.

Also big media outlets (Wall Street Journal Europe, Frankfurter Algemeine Zeitung, Liberation, Financial Times, etc.) will provide you with a list of their correspondents in any region. The only big international media that does not disclose a list of its correspondents is The Economist.

**Using a news distribution service**

Utilise one of the news release distribution services to issue your news releases to the key media outlets in your target countries. These companies may also provide translation services for your news release, as well as help select the appropriate
media for your news story. However they will not develop news angles for your story or write the news release – they are purely a distribution service.

Details of these services can be found on the following websites.

- www.prnewswire.co.uk
- www.romeike.com
- www.businesswire.com; www.businesswire.co.uk

Bear in mind that it is always advisable to contact all the media outlets that receive your news release to further explain and help ‘sell’ your news story.

**Targeting the news agencies and wire services**

If you have a strong news angle, which has relevant cross-border appeal consider pitching the story or issuing a news release to one or more of the news agencies in your country. Remember to include the correspondents of the foreign news agencies in your country. If it appears on their service, it has a chance of being picked up by newspapers and TV stations in countries where the story has relevance.

If you have appropriate material, distributing it to this group could be your means of achieving coverage in many countries.

**Road-shows**

Consider arranging a road-show of similar activities, such as round-table events or news briefings with journalists, which can be taken to a number of key cities in your target countries if this ties in with your planned activities. Clearly this type of activity will need to be adapted slightly to each country and possibly each city, but fundamentally the content can remain the same.

It is important to consider the following points if you intend to carry out activities of this type:

- The languages your spokespeople speak – they will need to be competent in the languages of each city to be visited. If they don’t speak the necessary ones, investigate with local contacts if English can be used. In some areas the business communities, politicians and journalists are happy to work in English.
- Translations of any support materials, such as invitations, media advisories, backgrounders and news releases, into the local language.
- It is also advisable to get some local help at each venue to advise on some of the cultural expectations, help with finding a suitable venue and liaising with suppliers. A local PR agency could help with this if there is no one from a partner organisation who can assist you.
- Take advantage of the local presence and contacts of any partners based in that area.
Larger scale pan-European PR campaigns

Consider how all your project partners can be incorporated into your PR strategy, and use the following guidelines to help you to organise it yourself.

As with any PR programme, for it to be successful there must be all the usual components: research, planning, defining objectives, strategy, tactics and evaluation, plus ensuring that the programme has continuation and consistency.

To ensure the continuation and consistency, a well organised network of people or offices (often an international PR agency with offices in all key countries) needs to be in place in the counties to be included in the programme. This team must work within the overall guidelines set out in the programme proposal, as well as develop their own localised version of the programme with appropriate adaptations and deletions necessary to make it suitable for local markets.

The network of offices should be coordinated by a lead office. The coordinator’s role is usually as follows:

1. **Builds understanding of the overall PR mission**
   - Ensures everyone contributes
   - Helps with cross fertilisation of activities
   - Exchange of ideas and materials
   - Maximises flow of information and potential news

2. **Coordinates reporting**
   - Compiles regular reports of all PR activity in each country
   - Ensures timely distribution

3. **Manages the relationship with pan-European media**
   - Monitors forward feature opportunities
   - Initiates briefings between journalists and spokespeople

4. **Runs a central press office**
   - Keeps and updates media materials – messages, Question-and-answer documents, releases, backgrounders and other materials
   - Collects and organises material for websites

5. **Develops news releases for pan-European distribution**
   - Ensures approval of releases and translations
   - Manages their timely distribution in all countries

6. **Develops specific projects**
   - Media briefings
   - Speaker platforms
   - Speech / presentation production
   - Road shows
The role of each partner involved might be as follows:

- Provide details on their country’s PR strategy, objectives and tactics
- Translate, adapt and distribute centrally produced news releases
- Initiate news releases on local activities
- Develop proactive PR opportunities to leverage key messages and awareness for local activities
- Handle media enquiries from their country
- Arrange and prepare interviews and briefings with key media and spokespeople
- Reporting
- Evaluation and measurement of activity

**PR manual**

It is a good idea to have a PR manual that lays out all the ground-rules for PR activities, but also has background information of all countries involved. Suggested contents might be:

- Contact details of all involved in the work
- Procedures and expectations, including approval process
- Overall strategy
- Key messages
- Summary of suggested tactics
- Target audience and media - including priorities
- Evaluation, reporting required with associated timelines
Pan-European PR programme template

To provide consistency and aid reporting, it is useful to have templates for activities in each country. The one below is a basic example.

---

**Programme title:**

________________________________________

**Objectives:**

To promote maximum awareness of partners’ activities
Use the partners’ programme as a ‘news hook’ to generate general awareness of project activities etc.: ______________________________________

**Target audiences:**

- Main media in each region
- Politicians
- etc.: ______________________________________

**Geographic execution**

- Regions involved:
  - ______________________________________
  - ______________________________________

**Timing:**

__________________________________________________

**Implementation:**

- Series of press releases and other material to be developed and distributed to the media
- Media interviews – spokespeople to be put forward on programme-related topics
- Etc.: ______________________________________

**Measurement/evaluation:**

__________________________________________________

**Analysis of media coverage**

**Budget:**

__________________________________________________

**Region contact:**

__________________________________________________

**Project participants:**

- ______________________________________
- ______________________________________
- ______________________________________
- ______________________________________
Promoting your messages to media in different countries

Key facts you should know about when dealing with the media in other countries:

⇒ Local spokespeople and local angles are essential.
⇒ Be prepared to answer why your news is important to a specific country, however give the activity wider significance, for example in a context of collaboration between the participating countries.
⇒ When pitching to national media, be prepared to speak the language of the country.
⇒ Media materials must be in the format, style and language of the country’s media.
⇒ Media materials need to be adapted from country to country.
⇒ Phone calls and e-mail are the most popular way to pitch.
⇒ Be ready to respond instantly with facts, statistics, visuals, spokesperson, etc. Photos of activities and pre-recorded TV footage can extend coverage.
⇒ News conferences are only for big announcements. One-on-one meetings with journalists work well.
⇒ Use the snowball effect - the most devoted readers of newspapers are journalists themselves. Use coverage in one country as a vehicle for getting it in another one.
⇒ There is no such thing as “Off the Record” in any country.
⇒ Remember to place your project in context by explaining how it fits in with MED Programme and the European Union.
The media cares about results and meaning not process.

Think about the very big issues and the very local small ones.

The media will only give you coverage if you have a story.

Know the difference between hard news and soft news

You need to look for potential news that relates to your project.

This Factsheet will be updated according to the issues raised during the Communication Training in April 2012!
Writing Skills

- Fundamental concepts and skills of good writing
- What you need to think before starting to write (audiences, messages, research)
- How to organise your information systematically
- Language and content you should be using while writing about your project (style & tone, jargon, evidence, numbers, etc.)
- Why and how to use the quotes
This factsheet runs through the fundamental concepts and skills that good journalists use to write powerful and effective prose. Many of these ideas are universal and can be applied to all kinds of writing, from press releases and case studies to project internal correspondence.

**Planning and preparing**

**Audience**

There is no such thing as simply good writing. Writing is only good if it gets the right message across to a specific audience. An article full of scientific detail and jargon might be perfect for an academic journal, but useless for a community magazine. Therefore, a writer’s first step must be to identify the intended readership. Audience analysis determines the tone, style, pitch, angle and content of every article. It determines what knowledge can be assumed and what needs to be explained. It determines what news angles will work. Write what your audience wants to read, in a way that will interest and appeal to them. A good writer always keeps that audience at the front of his or her mind from the very start.

**Messages**

What key information do you want to communicate? Narrow it down to two or three basic messages that will form your theme. Build the article around these messages using evidence, quotes and colour. Messages can be explicit (clearly stated as information) or implicit (intended for subliminal or emotional impact). For instance, an article about MED Programme project may contain explicit messages about the scheme itself, and the implicit message that pan-European cooperation is valuable and positive. Messages sit alongside audiences at the heart of the writing process.

**Research**

Good writing requires thorough research and knowledge of the subject matter, which should be clear to the reader through those same three building blocks: evidence, quotes and colour. Gather and organise these materials before starting to write. Be sure to have evidence to back up all of your main statement, in the form of recent statistics or official information, and cite sources to give credibility to your arguments. Check your facts.

**Organisation**

After determining your audiences, your messages and a strong news angle to tie them all together, it can help to organise your information systematically. Well-written prose alternates between statement and quote, between numbers and colour. It gradually unfolds, with copy flowing logically between elements, so that the end of each sentence announces the beginning of the next.
Consider what facts need to be introduced first to put quotes and other information in context. Generally speaking, rank and order your ideas in descending importance. This approach emulates the classic “inverted pyramid” journalistic story model, so-called because it is top-heavy with all the important information at the start. A good press release reads somewhat like a news story: this helps the journalist to see it as news.

Writing

The headline

The headline is right at the top of the inverted pyramid, so in many ways it is the most important part. The headline is your chance to sell your story. It is the first thing your reader sees. If it’s bad, it’s also the last thing they see. A perfect headline will encapsulate all of the messages and key facts and also capture readers’ attention. In the real world, we sometimes have to compromise, but always should aim to achieve as much of that as possible.

The headline should be no more than 10 words and should contain an active verb.

Write the headline first: the process of getting it right is an exercise in organising ideas and distilling the essence of the story, which often makes the rest of the piece much easier to write. Don’t write it last as an afterthought. Stick to one main point – don’t try to fit too much in. Keep it short and snappy. Use strong vocabulary to make every word count. Play with words, substitute and replace until you get it just right.

The lead paragraph

The lead paragraph is particularly important for “newsy” writing such as statements and press releases. For longer articles like features and extended case studies, the same principles apply but can be spread over two or three paragraphs.

The lead paragraph must tell the reader what is essential about the story: what is new and why it matters. Don’t encumber the reader with unnecessary detail to start with – give the broad picture first and bring in supporting information later. Agonise over the lead paragraph: if you get it perfect, the rest of the piece can seem almost to write itself because everything important flows from the lead.

Clearly we can’t fit everything into the first paragraph, so how do we choose what information is really important? Following are a few useful tricks.

The 6 Ws

Have you answered all of the question words? Usually most of them are important. Check if your first paragraph tells the reader:

☞ What has happened
☞ Who is involved
☞ Where it happened
When it happened
Why it happened
How it happened

So what?

...is the most important question of all. Read back what you have written and ask yourself “so what”. If you have to come up with extra information to answer the “so what” question rewrite to answer the question in the first place. When you have written a paragraph that could not possibly leave anyone asking “so what?” only then you have got it right.

“The fourth why”

...is a variation on the “6 Ws” and “so what” techniques that helps you to dig deep into the context that surrounds your subject matter.

- Something has happened that you’re going to write about.
- Ask why it happened.
- Then ask why the thing that explained the first “why” happened.
- Then ask why the thing that explained that happened.
- By the time you get to the third or fourth ”why” you’ve got to the heart of it.

Ten key words

Make a list of 10 words without which you simply cannot write the piece. They do not have to be the exact words you will use – think more of the facts or concepts that must be there. Once you have that list of 10 keywords (not including articles or prepositions), you have the essence of the story. Now rank those words in order of importance, then turn that list into a sentence. Often this will be something approaching a decent lead paragraph. In general, start your sentence with the subject of your story, unless you have good reason not to.

How long before you reach a crucial word?

This is a variation on the ten-key-words approach. Read your introduction and count the number of words you use before you reach the most essential word. If you get near the end of the sentence before reaching that “must have” word, then stop and rewrite. You should be hitting key words very quickly.

Active or passive voice?

In general, it is better to write a lead paragraph in the active voice, but balance this with the need to start a piece with its subject.

Lead paragraph length

25-30 words are usually ample to convey the key information and context. Sentences longer than 30 words start to lose focus and impact and digress into unnecessary detail.

Soft leads

Not all lead paragraphs are hard and factual. Features often start with a “teaser” – an anecdote, a description, a narrative, a question. So do “soft news” stories. This technique is also called a “delayed” lead. A soft lead should not change the
structure of the top third of a story. It should be followed by the same recipe: essence, detail, quote, context.

Structure

Build blocks

Try to group all of the information relating to one element of your piece in one block of paragraphs. Do not talk about the same thing in completely different sections, except in a thematic way. Put the most important block of information first. This should be the longest block, and should form the middle section of your piece.

The second, third and fourth blocks should contain progressively less important information, arranged as an inverted pyramid. The last block should contain the least important angle, and it should be possible to cut it out without harming the piece overall.

Write sequentially

Within these blocks, each sentence should connect to the next like a link in a chain.

For example: you make a statement, expand on it in the next paragraph, illustrate it with a quote in the third paragraph, and give some figures or background in the fourth paragraph. Then you move on to the next “block” by using a signpost sentence.

Use signposts

Signposts warn readers that you are moving to the next theme. A signpost is a transitional word or sentence that marks the end of one block and the beginning of the next. It can be as simple as “but” or “however”, or can be a short sentence which summarises and announces what is going to follow, like the last sentence of the paragraph above this one. Think of them as the cement between the blocks.

Flagging

If you are unable to avoid introducing an important idea relatively low down in your piece, at least to refer to it briefly higher up as well. This is called “flagging” – raise a flag high up in the story that something important is coming lower down that is worth reading on for. That way it is less likely to be overlooked.

The kicker

Particularly in soft news stories, features and case studies, it can be worth saving a good quote or nugget of information for last, to finish the story with a flourish and reinforce its impact. A return to a personal story or anecdote from the top of the story, an ironic afterthought, or a splash of colour can end a story with a smile and a sense of closure.
Language and content

Keep it simple
Be concise. One word is better than two. Use as few words as possible: this will concentrate your message and make space to say more. Cut out the waffle. Examine each word and ask if it is essential or redundant; if you can do without, cut it out. Use simple grammatical constructions, avoiding multiple sub-clauses, commas, semicolons (and brackets too).

Keep it short
Short sentences and short paragraphs are clearer. Two short sentences are better than one long sentence. Sentences should usually contain no more than 30 words, because any longer than that and they become hard to understand and remember since readers have to hold too much information in their short-term memory, which starts to strain the mind just as this 49-word sentence is starting to do. Paragraphs should contain no more than three sentences and one basic theme or idea.

Use strong language
Replace dull words with lively synonyms. Choose words that convey movement and dynamism, while avoiding clichés and ornate or flowery terms. Write as if you care. If you don’t sound interested, your readers won’t feel interested.

Use straightforward language
Write with normal words such as you use in everyday business life. You are communicating with normal human beings. Your goal is clarity, not to impress readers with clever words.

Vary your vocabulary
Avoid repeating words and phrases. This can be a challenge when writing at length on one theme; try to find synonyms and alternative formulations to avoid the jarring effect of reading the same terms over again.

Write with verbs
Weak writers sprinkle their copy copiously with flowery adjectives and adverbs. Good writing revolves around simple, strong, straightforward verbs. Deploy powerful verbs in active, declarative formations. The passive voice should be used sparingly. Overusing participles (verbs in forms that end in “-ing”) is a mistake.

Cut out jargon
Picture the least sophisticated member of your target audience and remove or explain any technical terms that they would not understand. That includes corporate or management buzz-words as well as industry jargon. Avoid or at least spell out acronyms and abbreviations.

Write in the third person
Do not use “we” or “I” except in quotes.
**Style and tone**
Write in a style that is appropriate to your audience. In-house corporate communications can sometimes be chatty in tone, whereas publications for outside audiences should usually be more formal and couched in businesslike language.

**Colour**
“Colour” means using your senses. A well-written story gives a reader the feeling of having been in the place that you describe and of knowing the people that you quote. Often the reader will remember your story for a little detail, not the big picture. The best details are the ones that tell the big picture.

**Be balanced and objective**
A press release emulates the impartial tone of a news piece. It is not marketing or advertising. Don’t sound overexcited or “over-sell” your message. By all means inject energy into your writing, but don’t overdo it – avoid hype.

**Read it out loud**
Well-written copy sounds right when spoken. If it strains your voice, simplify it. If you run out of breath, shorten the sentences. Reading out loud often uncovers mistakes that are difficult to spot by eye.

**Use evidence**
Assertions become convincing when backed up with facts. Give context, comparisons and sources, and be precise.

“Thanks to this ETC project, local authorities have spent less than half as much on widgets recently” is not very useful or convincing for a journalist. It would be much better to say: “Thanks to this ETC project, average spending on widgets by local authorities fell by 75 percent to €200,000 in 2012 from €800,000 in 2011, according to an independent survey by ABC polling in May 2012”.

**Edit and rewrite**
Few of us get it perfect first time. Many of the best writers return to their prose repeatedly, bringing a fresh mind to the task. Write a first draft, leave it, and come back to it. If the deadline is tight, don’t panic: time pressure can actually help you to crystallise what is important and write it clearly.

**Context**
MED projects do not exist in a vacuum, they interact with other systems and people’s lives in complex ways. Often a good news angle can be found by stepping back and looking at where a development in a project fits into the bigger picture. All stories are part of the bigger picture, and it is this link with other events that makes them relevant.

Stories are put in perspective by events that happened before or elsewhere, or because of the impact they may have on events later or elsewhere. This perspective is what we call context. Context is the reason why readers would want to read your story, it is the “so what?”.
Always ask whether what you are describing is part of a bigger theme. A trend, anywhere in the world, always makes for good context.

Context is important enough that it should usually feature in the lead paragraph and also persist lower down the piece.

The most elementary form of context is rank. Superlatives such as “the world’s biggest” or “the fastest-growing” provide crucial context. Milestones are as compelling as superlatives. When something happens, readers want to know if it’s the first time or the second time, or how long ago it last happened, or how long since something similar happened.

**Background**

Context is often confused with background. Context gives meaning to the story and is essential: you cannot write a proper story without it. Background is the description or explanation of basic facts relating to the story. It is useful, but less important.

Unlike context, background does not necessarily have to appear high up in the story. Do not stick one-paragraph slabs of background in the middle of your piece. Try to weave in little bits of background as it unfolds.

**Do not leave holes**

Do not mention an element without explaining it. If you have just mentioned Europe’s second-busiest sea-port, the reader will wonder immediately which is Europe’s busiest sea-port. Tell them. A well-crafted piece guides the reader from A to Z, without ever having to pause or wonder what the writer meant.

**Numbers**

Numbers are the single-biggest cause of holes and errors. If you mention a number, give some context or something to compare it with. Numbers need company. On their own they often mean nothing. If a figure has changed from 446 to 903, don’t expect the reader to find the meaning: do their calculations for them. Tell them it has doubled. Don’t burden a piece with too many numbers: one or two in the top third should be enough to illustrate any trend. Put the rest of the figures in the bottom third of your article.

Check all numbers. Beware confusing millions and billions. Beware decimal places.

**Style**

Write in a style that is appropriate to your audience. Communication within a MED project can sometimes be chatty or informal in tone, whereas publications for outside audiences should usually be formal and couched in businesslike language.

Ensure that the layout and content of everything you print and distribute conforms to not only your project’s but also MED Programme and EU guidelines for publication, including all relevant and applicable logos. Be consistent with linguistic style, either according to your project’s own style guidelines if they exist or according to a standard newspaper style guide.
This will determine such issues as capitalisation and how to express dates and numbers. Layout guidelines should apply to text style, font and sizes, as well as presentation and capitalisation. Style consistency is a sign of professionalism and should be used not only for printed materials but also for e-mails and websites.

**Accuracy**

Check everything, including photograph captions. Be extra-careful with names, figures and unfamiliar or technical words. Check that days of the week coincide with dates. If you say a certain number of points follow, count them. Be sure not to infringe copyright or libel laws – if in any doubt, consult a superior before publishing.

**Energy and interest**

Write as if you care: if you don’t sound interested, your readers won’t feel interested.

**Quotes**

Quotations add legitimacy and emphasis to your messages. They can also inject humanity, personality, emotion, immediacy and colour – but only if they are lively and clear. Quotes are a good way to make abstract ideas seem concrete, personal and relevant to the real world. You can get away with slightly more lively, informal and opinionated language in a quote without losing a balanced tone overall.

Be sure to quote people with authority over your subject matter. These can range from project managers with a broad overview to personnel with more hands-on experience where appropriate. Quotes from third parties such as people whose lives have been touched by a project can be especially valuable

Journalists need quotes to bring their story alive. A strong quote is valuable to any project because it is the part of a press release that is most likely to be reproduced unchanged in print.

Good quotes sound like realistic spoken language. Avoid hype, slogans, corporate buzz-words. Do not just put quote marks around written prose. Written English uses longer sentences, more formal vocabulary and more complex grammar. Spoken English uses shorter sentences and simpler, brighter vocabulary including contractions. Written English is punctuated logically; spoken English is punctuated “respirationally” – to give pauses where people naturally breathe. Use words that people actually spoke, or speak your rewritten quotes to ensure they sound natural.

Talk to people as part of your research: spoken words are much more fertile ground for gathering strong quote material than written words. Encourage people to speak enthusiastically about the subject. Listen out for powerful and descriptive words and phrases that you can use in quotes.

The first quote in your story is very important. It can make the difference between a reader reading on and giving up. Try to get a quote in by the third or fourth
paragraph, if not the second. Delaying much longer than that without a quote can leave a piece of writing with a dry, academic tone.

Double-check the spelling of the name and job title of everyone you quote. Mistakes make people angry and undermine your credibility.

Don’t waste quotes on purely factual information. Use quotes to give reasons, explanations or judgments and express opinions or emotions. Quotes are for illustration, decoration and emphasis, not conveying new information.

Make them personal, using phrases such as: "I believe..." or: "For me, this is..."

Most people most of the time are not very eloquent. PR professionals have the luxury of rewriting and inventing quotes that sound more effective. Check that the person being quoted is happy with the quote, whether the words are theirs or yours.

Adopt language and tone appropriate for the person being quoted.

Don’t use too many quotes or quote too many different people. Spice up a story with a few good quotes, and keep them short.

Make available a photo of the person quoted, where appropriate.

“Put full sentences inside the quote marks.” Broken sentence fragments in quotes are “worse than useless to” a journalist.
Conversational
Try to write the way you speak. Get rid of old-fashioned phrases. Why say “Due to the fact that ...” when you can write “because...”? Would you normally say “the aforementioned information”? Why not “the information” or, if you need to refer back to a point, “the previous information”? Don’t say “motorized mobility” – when you would normally say “cars”.

Clear
The reader should be able to understand precisely what you are saying. The language should be adapted to the reader. Use specific examples that the reader can relate to. Don’t assume that your reader understands the jargon of your project area.

Concise
You should eliminate any unnecessary words. Why use four words, “in as much as,” when you can use one word, “because”? This is not to say that you can’t write long articles, but the longer the report or article, the more ineffective it becomes. People are unlikely to finish reading a long report – especially if it is on a website. Try to punctuate your articles with images, pictures and charts.

Complete
Make sure you have included all the relevant information the reader needs to know. The biggest problem with leaving out information is that the reader has to make assumptions. Use dates, figures, data to ensure your text is based on the facts.

Constructive
In modern writing, use words or phrases that set a positive tone. Constructive words are like smiling when you greet someone. They leave a good impression. Words such as “failure”, and “error” tend to distance the reader from the writer and gives a negative impression of the project. Words such as “Agreeable”, “Proud” and Success” help create a positive tone.

Correct
The last step in any writing process is to proofread it. You automatically check your image in a mirror before meeting someone. Your writing is your image on paper. If it is full of spelling and typographical errors, it will detract from what you are trying to get across.
Presentations and Speeches

- How to prepare for presentations and speeches
  - Messages
  - Efficient use of time
  - Structure
- How to keep the audience involved
- Physical, vocal and visual delivery
- How to handle nerves and fears
Good presentation skills are particularly important for MED projects with end-of-project events to manage and results to present. These skills are also scarce and difficult to build – partly because there are many rules for what goes wrong, but no set rules for what works well every time. This guide lays out the core guiding principles to build skills appropriate to each person and the wide variety of situations in which we need to perform. It draws on perspectives from psychology, linguistics, sociology, and hard practical experience to help you create simple, clear and compelling presentations and deliver them effectively.

The content is the key. In the professional world most audiences are much too sharp for superficialities of presentation to make much difference. Effective presentation content depends on identifying a handful of clear and memorable messages around which to build everything else. While it is important not to squander a good presentation with a limp delivery, the key to a great presentation is the preparation, structure and planning.

A key theme is the need to operate as a communicator rather than a presenter. That means being planning and responding to the needs of those on the receiving end, and performing collaboratively by paying attention to feedback. The heart or thrust of your presentation should be about your audience, not about you.

On the day, the goal should be to put across an impression of your true, positive and professional personality, without any tricks or contrivances. Good presenting is individual: build on what is already there without introducing any artificial elements. Then inject some energy: be expressive and enthusiastic to excite and inspire your audience.

Aim for “enhanced conversation” as a tone or flavour. “Conversational” deliveries seem relaxed, spontaneous, comfortable, confident, responsive to the situation and naturally expressive. Have a conversation with your audience. They may not actually say anything, but make them feel consulted, questioned, challenged, argued with; then they will stay awake and attentive. Your job as a presenter is to communicate with your audience and stimulate them into wanting to get the information you have, not just to present that information at them.

Performance is the icing on the cake, and a natural skill. We all dramatise our actions in everyday life, whether it be the punch-line of a joke, or when giving a present or opening a door for someone. It is an enactment, not a phoney façade, but a natural dramatisation of expression, involving timing, planning and visualising our impact upon others. This is the skill on which to build presentation.
Planning and preparation

Preparation is crucial for delivering a great presentation. Many of the best natural presenters appear relaxed and spontaneous precisely because of how much effort they put in beforehand. Even with material and situations with which you are very confident, neglecting the planning stage is always risky.

Messages

Human beings are surprisingly inefficient at taking on board new information in a limited amount of time. For instance, a typical newspaper story or broadcast news item will revolve around only two or three basic ideas. Much more than that, and readers, viewers and listeners become confused or bored. The same principles apply to presentations, which should be constructed around no more than three key messages.

What is a message? A message is a guiding idea or theme or proposition that you want to convey to a specific audience. It is the essence of what you want to say.

Boiling down everything that you want to say to a few key messages can be a difficult process, but it pays dividends in clarity and impact. The most important aspect of most presentations is not what happens in the room but what happens later as a result: we intend to change attitudes or behaviour. Messages are the foundations of all effective communication: in order to be understood they must be clear and simple; in order to be remembered and acted upon they must be consistent and repeated. Messages do not exist in a vacuum: they are aimed at specific audiences.

Preparation

Psychologists and presentation experts identify three phases of preparation:

1. Incubation involves drawing together all of the information, ideas, basic facts and figures for a presentation and chewing them over mentally – leaving them to stew for a while. This can begin with a brainstorming process, a first stab at generating key messages and a vague structure for the presentation, but without imposing too much order. You may talk it over informally with colleagues or friends. The mind imposes order on information unconsciously over a period of time, and through this incubation process a natural structure and order for the presentation of this information often emerges by itself.

2. Illumination is the arrival of inspiration after a period of incubation. The final presentation does not spring forth fully formed, of course, but often you will arrive at a moment of realisation when the foundations of a presentation fall naturally into place: an order of concepts, ideas for how to get them across in ways that can be easily identified and remembered.

3. Refinement is the formal process by which this framework is transformed into a presentation, practiced and prepared for delivery.
Because a presentation is delivered orally, use speech and conversation as a tool for preparation. Talk to people about your presentation, try out ideas and arguments and phrases informally to get a feel for what works naturally.

**Efficient use of time in preparation**

**Allow sufficient time for incubation.** Often time requirements determine that we must prepare for presentations up against a deadline, but just as often we create or exacerbate these pressures ourselves through procrastination or poor time management. A well-structured and prepared presentation takes time, not just intensive work shortly beforehand, but spread out over a period leading up to the presentation. Ideas need time to develop unconsciously.

**Allow sufficient time for practice.** Incubation matters not just for the preparation of messages and structure, but also for practice. A good presentation must be tried and tested several times to become smooth and natural in delivery, and practice – like most kinds of learning – is most effective when distributed over time. If you are going to rehearse a presentation five times, you will learn it much better by doing so once a day for five days than five times in one day on the day before its final delivery.

**Allow a margin for error.** A preparation schedule needs breathing space, in case other work priorities intrude on your time, or the facts and situation for the presentation change and you need to adapt on the run. “Writer’s block” and “speaker’s block” can take time to overcome.

**Structure**

Your key messages will provide a frame for the content of the presentation. But how much information can you fit in? That will be determined by the time available. In some cases you will have a defined time slot; in others you can determine this for yourself. Either way, it is important to be concise in order to convey as much information effectively as possible. Bear in mind that people’s attention will start to wane after about 20 minutes.

In English, most people speak around 150 words per minutes. Fewer than 100 words can become boring and monotonous; more than 200 is hard to follow. That means we can convey roughly the equivalent of two normal paragraphs of text per minute. That could mean one element (message, idea, illustration or piece of evidence) per minute.

About 25 percent of a presentation should be for the introduction and conclusion (see below); the remaining 75 percent divided among the key ideas in the body of your presentation. So for a 10-minute presentation you have time for seven or eight elements; for 20 minutes, about 15 elements.

Make full use of the time, but be realistic about what can be conveyed effectively. Focus and select the most important information. Choose information that is best suited for oral delivery. Leave data, routine or technical information for the
handout; use your spoken presentation for meaning and explanation. Choose aspects of the brief that are best suited to this audience and occasion: their needs, attitudes, knowledge and expectations.

Making a short presentation can be just as challenging as a long one precisely because of the need to cut it to its bare bones and yet remain compelling and get the message across.

**Getting started: presentation points**

Where a clear structure does not present itself logically or immediately, the most effective strategy is to generate many ideas by brainstorming. Think up every possible idea, without limits or order. The goal is quantity, not quality at this stage: this is the generation of raw material.

Different people have different styles for organising material at this stage. Some use a visual mind-map or concept map, like a spider diagram with lines and colours linking ideas; others use indented lists; others use moveable components like Post-It notes that can be shifted and rearranged on a wall.

Look for obvious clusters or natural categories. The goal is to generate many ideas, label and rearrange them, rework, adjust, select and cull until you have up to three major groupings that cover the most important ideas and can fit into your time frame. Too few points and you will lack structure and organisation and waste the opportunity to cover more ground. Too many and you will lack focus and your audience will not remember them. Exclude those that are less relevant, and focus on those that are necessary to prove your point. Stick to the point. For any detail that you cannot communicate in 20 minutes, try another medium such as handouts or brochures.

The end product should be presentation points focused on your key messages that are distinct and exclusive, central and indispensable to your agenda. There should be little or no overlap between the elements, in the interests of clarity and efficiency of presentation. Select main points that are mutually exclusive: each idea should fit in only one place.

**Arrange your presentation points**

Presentation points need to be arranged and structured appropriately in order to maximise effectiveness, logical persuasion, and the unfolding of premises and arguments. This can be achieved either through a topical pattern (one that arises naturally from the materials, as is most common), or using one of a variety of traditional or formal persuasive patterns.
Traditional

1. Chronological: by time
   a. narrative unfolding over time;
   b. past-present-future
   c. step-by-step process
2. Spatial: by location
   a. Geographic
   b. Conceptual areas
3. Cause-effect:
   a. origins to manifestation
   b. Problem-solution

Topical

1. Elements have no pattern except their relationship to the topic
2. Listing the components that add up to argument
3. Combining aspects of cause-effect, problem-solution, etc
4. Pros and cons

Build your presentation points into an outline

A common pitfall in presentations is that the audience understands your overall topic but cannot recognise, understand or recall your specific points or arguments. Your presentation points must be clear propositions that can be evaluated true or false, not questions or vague assertions. Make them full declarative sentences and turn them into a full sentence outline, organised hierarchically:

1. Full sentence point
   a. Full sentence sub-point
      i. evidence
      ii. evidence
   b. Full sentence sub-point
      i. evidence
      ii. evidence
   c. Full sentence sub-point
      i. evidence
      ii. evidence
2. Full sentence point
   a. Full sentence sub-point
      i. evidence
   b. Full sentence sub-point
      i. evidence
3. Full sentence point
   a. Full sentence sub-point
      i. evidence
   b. Full sentence sub-point
      i. evidence
Link your presentation points with transitions

A presentation should flow smoothly and seamlessly, and to achieve this you need to fill the gaps between your logical elements. The audience is also much more likely to follow and take on board your messages if they remain constantly aware of what stage of the argument they are at. To achieve this, good presenters make frequent use of transitions: verbal signposting to tell audiences where they are, and where they are going. You can’t use too many transitions. They serve to tie the presentation together and formalise its structure. Give the audience a verbal map - explain the point of your presentation, indicate where you are going and how you will get there.

Also make use of internal previews and summaries, which serve a similar purpose: tell the audience what you are going to tell them, remind them what you are telling them, and at the end, tell them what you have told them. Repetition is the key to understanding and memory.

The introduction

Audiences make judgments very quickly based on first impressions. Psychologists call it the “primacy effect”: given a list of pieces of information, human beings consistently recognise and remember the first items best. The introduction is crucial because it must grasp their attention and establish your credibility, fast. The introduction should develop a relationship with your audience and orient them to your topic. An introduction should take 10 to 15 percent of your speaking time. The intro must settle these five questions:

- Are they listening?
- Do they want to keep listening to me?
- Do they want to know more about this topic?
- Do they understand where I’m coming from?
- Do they understand where I’m going?

Hook their attention

- The first few moments really are crucial to the success of the presentation: even before you speak, in the moment that attention orient towards you as you prepare to start. Develop a rapport fast that prepares your audience to listen to you. Plan first actions and sentences very carefully. Command attention from the first words. The first sentence you use, as in a novel, should immediately capture the imagination of your audience. It has to be one of the strongest sentences in your tale. It’s the hook to help you reel in those whose imagination you’re trying to capture. Be imaginative or dramatic, and consider the following approaches to the opening few words:
  - Suspense
  - Novelty
  - Humour
  - Conflict
  - Story
Establish a good relationship with your audience

Try to create a personal bond, establish yourself as a human being rather than a distant and aloof speaker. Humanise yourself. Create an atmosphere of collaboration and dialogue with the audience: involve them. Generally, project the idea that “I’m doing the talking now, but I’m also here to learn from you as well as instruct”. The aim is to establish your credibility. In the process, to create a bond, you may wish to refer to the occasion or setting, refer to someone present, or use humour.

Motivate your audience towards your topic

All audiences start off thinking: “So what?” or “What’s it to me?”. You need to show them fast that the topic has a link to their own experiences and is worthy of attention.

It helps at an early stage to establish a context for your presentation, perhaps by fitting it into a familiar framework, or placing it historically. Then give the audience a framework for what you are going to explain, to smooth their understanding as it unfolds. Explicit previews of the content are often useful, especially for complex or technical material – unless it is so complex that later points only make sense after earlier ones have been explained.

The opening should give the audience a preview of what they will be told in the context of why they should care: how will they benefit, what problems will this information solve. Tempt them with brief snapshots of some interesting gems coming up in your presentation. State what your key points are going to be.

The mid-section

The body of the presentation is the guts of your argument, the battleground on which you will seek to establish and prove your messages and make the audience care about them enough to achieve your desired outcomes.

Think laterally about how to get your point across. The following are some tactics that are regularly effective:

- Quotation
- Startling statement
- Provocative question

- Metaphor and simile
- Irony
- Contradiction
- Humour (where appropriate)
- Analogy
- Colour
- Link to topical events
- Specific examples
- People
- Humanity
Metaphors and analogies are vital to communication. 'It's like climbing a greasy pole', for example, conveys far more than just literal meaning. It conveys image and feeling and enables others to empathise through similar experiences of their own.

Stories are a very powerful way to bring to life and make interesting even the driest of topics. People love stories because of the pictures they paint and because they bring added colour and enlightenment and even inspiration to a subject. Keep them short and simple but scintillating. Tailor a story to your audience so they can relate to it and therefore you and your theme more easily.

**The conclusion**

Conclusions carry the power of the “recency effect” – the flipside of the primacy effect is that the information that audiences hear last is also very likely to be remembered. The conclusion also provides logical and psychological closure, and ties all the threads together with a sense of completeness. Just like the introduction, it needs to be planned precisely, almost to the point of memorisation. Briefly summarise your main points, and make it a rousing call to action (if that is the purpose of the presentation) rather than just petering out. If you can think of a thought-provoking final thought or quote which resonates with your overall theme, this will make more impact still. Rehearse the end of the presentation and look the audience directly in the eye when you deliver it. Avoid fumbling with notes and additional 'by-the-way' points which greatly reduce the overall impact.

**The conclusion has two main goals:**

- Logical closure: make sure they understand and agree
  a. Summarise the main ideas of the speech
  b. Re-establish the connection of the topic to a larger context: pull ideas together into a pattern, refer to broader implications or ramifications.

- Psychological closure: make sure they feel and care
  a. Remind the audience how the topic affects their lives
  b. Make an appeal: a call to action.

The call to action is extremely important: it is your best opportunity to change the audience’s behaviour or attitudes once they leave the room, which is usually the core aim of a presentation.

**The clincher**

The very last sentence is as important as the very first sentence. Deliver it firmly and decisively and from memory, maintaining eye contact. This is just as important as your opener. You need to end on a high note and therefore the close has to be as compelling as the opening. In fact, a brilliant close to a speech can, like a knock-
out punch at the end of disappointing boxing match, positively transform the audience’s overall perception of the presentation. The conclusion must sum up what you have said, as a reminder of your key messages, and also inspire thought and action.

End as if you have done well. Do this even if you feel like you've done badly. First, you're probably the worst judge of how you've done, and second, the audience may not have made up their mind by this stage, so it is an opportunity not to be wasted.

How to convince and be credible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Do</strong></th>
<th><strong>Don’t</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leave no doubt the presentation is finished.</td>
<td>Apologise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps tie back to the attention getting line at the start: answer a question</td>
<td>Trail off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to opening joke or story</td>
<td>Introduce new info or ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider a proverb or quotation</td>
<td>Read it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain eye contact</td>
<td>Make it too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change the mood or style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Say “in conclusion” until you really are at the conclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Credibility**

It is not just what you say, it’s how you say it. You have structured your presentation to get the message across in a way that the key points can be easily identified and remembered. To achieve those goals, your style of delivery must establish your credibility. Sociologists identify many characteristics that distinguish speakers who are seen as “credible”.

- Competence
- Dynamism
- Intention
- Personality
- Intelligence
- Authoritativeness
- Extroversion
Trustworthiness
Composure
Sociability

Projecting credibility

1. Don’t be afraid to blow your own trumpet. Tell the audience why you have authority to be speaking to them.
2. Demonstrate your knowledge by substantiating your messages thoroughly: show you have done your homework
3. Show yourself to be very well prepared and organised
4. Be especially careful to appear balanced and objective and consider opposing views
5. Explicitly address concern and goodwill towards the audience

Be aware of your image in all dealings with the audience, including informal chats beforehand. First impressions are especially important. Don’t try to emulate others: audiences will spot easily if you are trying to be anything other than yourself. Everyone has their own style of speaking. Aim for a delivery style with which you feel comfortable; play to your strengths and control your weaknesses.

Language and style

Modern psychological theories point to language being the essence of thought. Words are not just for communicating, they are fundamental to thinking – so when preparing a presentation, don’t just throw language in at the end. “Talk ideas into being”: develop your ideas through language to get an effective end product.

First, know exactly what you want to convey. Second, decide how that will be most clearly conveyed to your audience. Use language that is both clear and vivid.

Be precise in word selection (without sounding pretentious) and careful with unfamiliar vocabulary, especially if speaking in a language that is not your native tongue.

Use specific and concrete language; minimise abstract words like love, freedom, justice, beauty.

Be economical with language. The bloated language of bureaucracy is everywhere: wordy, redundant, euphemistic. Use the fewest, most straightforward words that still effectively convey meaning. Make every word count

Avoid clichés and mixed metaphors

Personification: make it human. “The economy is limping”, “Profits are hobbled by high fixed costs”, “The wind is whispering”.

Hyperbole: deliberate overstatement. “I have said it a million times...”

Use repetitive language or structure. This hammers home a point in a vivid and memorable way. E.g.: “How serious is the situation? Three of the mountaineers...”
have frostbite. What caused the problem? They pushed on for the summit. How could this be prevented? They should have turned back when the storm clouds gathered.”

No words or phrases are repeated, but the repeated format gives it momentum.

Do the same to introduce a series of paragraphs: “We must act now to ... We must act now to ... We must act now to ...”

End several sentences with the same words. E.g.: “What remains? Treaties have gone. The honour of nations has gone. Liberty has gone.” (-David Lloyd George)

Repeat key words within a sentence. E.g.: “But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate – we cannot consecrate – we cannot hallow this ground.” (-Abraham Lincoln)

**Antithesis:** contrast two ideas. Not...but; Not only...but also; Never...unless.

**Use fresh language.** Discard buzzwords and clichés and jargon.

**Vary the rhythm:** alternate long and short sentences.

**Avoiding information overload:** Trying to convey too much information causes, in this order: anxiety, confusion, irritability, anger at the source, and finally just tuning out. Your job is to sort and sift the facts and data and deliver it at the right pace in chunks of the right size for the audience to digest. Be selective, and use the following principles:

1. Give the audience a framework to organise information
2. Move from the simple to the complex
3. Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar
4. Pitch it at the right level of complexity. Learning proceeds best when the focus is just beyond the knowledge level of the group, so that it is challenging without being discouraging.

5. Use organisers:
   a. Signposts. “First, I will ... Then, ...”
   b. Enumeration. “There are three reasons for this. One, ...”
   c. Acronyms. E.g. Soften: Smile, Open posture, Facial expression, Touch, Eye contact, Nodding.
   d. Slogans, catchwords, memorable phrases

6. Use emphasis cues
   a. This is very important
   b. If you only remember one thing...
   c. Speak louder or softer for emphasis
   d. Pause before and after key ideas
   e. Step forward
   f. Use facial expression

7. Use examples liberally
8. Use analogies
9. Use multiple channels
   a. Words
b. Hands

c. Visual aid
d. Charts
e. Recordings
f. Video

10. Use repetition and redundancy

**Attention and interest:** It takes more than a snappy introduction to maintain interest, and you have to do more than just talk. Too much uninterrupted talk can lead to boredom even if your information is first class. Depending how alert your audience is, you will need to intervene to stop them wandering off at least once a minute, if you want undivided attention – which of course you do. Show a visual, tell a story, use a prop, move around, change the tone of your voice, change the pace, ask the audience to do something, write on a flip chart or demonstrate a process.

Following are some useful tactics for maintaining attention.

1. Activity or movement: lively behaviour and treatment of the content that makes it appear as if something is actually happening.
2. Reality: reference to actual people, events, places; being specific and concrete rather than abstract.
3. Proximity – drawing on what is close at hand; people in the room, current events, local references.
4. Familiarity – the use of recognised examples, well-known phrases, commonplace events.
5. Novelty – the opposite of the familiar; startling facts, odd turns of phrase, surprising images, unusual combinations.
6. Suspense – creating curiosity about what will happen next. Posing puzzles or provocative questions.
7. Conflict – setting up pros and cons, opposing viewpoints, competing schools of thought.
8. Humour – playful remarks, silly or exaggerated images, amusing plays on words, ironic twists of fate, entertaining stories.
9. Vital self interest – something that is important to listeners. Matters of survival, or saving them time, earning money, making life more pleasant.

**Keep the audience involved**

- Use the names of people in the audience
- Refer to the immediate setting or shared experience.
- Use concrete examples rather than hypothetical ones to illustrate a point.
- Ask questions, ask for a show of hands or a straw poll
- Ask rhetorical questions
- Ask listeners to visualise examples
- Use the word “You”.
- You’ve probably seen
- Do you sometimes wonder
- In your morning paper
- “Has this ever happened to you...”
Physical delivery

Effective delivery is unobtrusive. The audience should attend to what you are saying, not to your grand gestures or beautiful voice. You do not need to put on a huge performance to give a good presentation, but you do need to go beyond your natural personality, speak your own words, adapt to the response you receive. Performance is amplified conversation. Assume the role of the most lively, confident, poised, expressive side of yourself. Picture yourself describing an exciting event to friends. Imitate yourself at your most lively and animated. Develop and use your individual style: be authentic, and have your character and integrity show through: with added energy.

It should come naturally: we have more experience communicating than performing. We do it all the time. We don’t have to think about our body language, voice patterns, and so on. This is evident in the paradox many of us will have noticed that a person can give a flat, dull, wooden presentation, and then become very animated in the question and answer session, as if when the pressure of the presentation itself was lifted they were able to relax as the delivery switched from performance to interaction. Relax and enjoy it from the start.

Your physical presence is an important component of your presentation. There is nothing less inspiring than a presenter who stands rigidly nailed to the spot. Your body language has just as much of an effect on an audience as your words and the way you express those words. If you walk on with your head down and shuffle uneasily to your stage, then you will be sending out a message which says that you’re unsure of yourself. To generate and maintain attention and interest, you need to be animated: gesture and demonstrate to make your points.

Be conscious of your appearance and the message it sends – and above all, be natural and avoid distracting attention from your message.

Identify distracting habits

We all have idiosyncrasies and personal mannerisms, habits of movement – fiddling with glasses, twirling hair, tapping fingers, and so on. In isolation they are fine. It is the repetition of them that becomes distracting. Get feedback to identify any that you need to control.

Gestures

The overall energy of a presentation is enhanced by the use of gestures and limited movement. When under the spotlight, and concentrating hard, the temptation is to remain rooted to the spot. Dynamic gestures and movements reinforce the ideas of the speech. Make gestures larger to a larger crowd – without overdoing it to the point where it appears contrived or conspicuous. Don’t stand as if with two frying pans tied to them. Gesture as you normally would in conversation.
Posture
Stand or sit with a relaxed but alert and purposeful posture. Standing is better while presenting; it focuses attention on you and gives you a better view of the audience. If you can be comfortable without a lectern, great. If the psychological support helps, take advantage of it.

Movement
It is usually good to move for the same reasons as for gesture. Movement adds variety and emphasis. You can move toward or into a certain section of the audience. It relieves boredom and tension. Movement works best at transitional moments, to signal a change in mood, content, or form.

Movement should be purposeful, relevant and motivated by the content of your speech. Sometimes speakers wander around the platform without apparent aim, creating a distraction. Don’t pace around, shuffle or rock. Don’t move when you are expecting your audience to concentrate or digest something technical or difficult. If you want to make an important point and you have been moving about, you can then stop still for dramatic effect.

Maintain eye contact
Be familiar enough with the material that you can look at as many members of the audience as possible, as often as possible. Eye contact denotes openness and interest; looking away or down is a sign of insincerity or shiftiness. Children do not look you in the eye when they lie. If you find eye contact hard to sustain, look at people’s foreheads, or between audience members, so it seems to them as if you are looking into their eyes. Real eye contact is better though, as it enables you to see listeners’ faces to get feedback on how the message is being received.

At the start of the speech, when you are getting into your stride, find a few listeners who are responding positively. Look at them and use their nods and smiles to help you through this period. Then widen your focus. Don’t skim. Look at individual people for at least three seconds.

Aim to have eye contact 85 percent of the time, and especially at the most important moments: introduction, conclusion, and key messages.

Facial expressions
Slightly exaggerate facial expressions. Smile genuinely to reinforce your message: it is one of the easiest ways to establish a rapport, show goodwill, and put audiences at ease. But don’t overdo it like George W Bush, who forces a contrives little smirk at the end of every sentence.

Our voices and facial expressions will naturally convey feelings. The best approach to expressing them is to allow emotions to arise spontaneously as you speak. The feelings come from your conviction and by tapping into your experiences. Don’t force them. The audience will probably detect it if you are being less than authentic.
Vocal delivery

Speak clearly, correctly and conversationally: don’t put on a performance. A presenter’s voice should sound like private speech, but exaggerated to fill the room. Vary your voice for interest and emphasis. Try to eliminate useless space-filling sounds and phrases: Um. Er. You know. I mean. So to speak. Etcetera. Speak loudly enough for everyone to hear, and loudly enough to sound especially confident: usually louder than normal speech. Broadcast your voice to the furthest corners of the room; you will naturally keep your head up and open your mouth wide.

Speak at a rate the audience can follow, which is typically a little slower than in normal conversation. In any case, being loud and enunciating distinctly will require more pauses for breath. Go more slowly than you think you need to, particularly with as adrenalin tends to speed us up. Your audience need the time to assimilate and interpret what you are saying. Practise words that are unfamiliar or easy to stumble over. Change and movement are interesting, so vary your voice.

Vary your pitch to convey interest and confidence.

Vary your rate of speaking to establish a mood or add emphasis. Slowly sounds thoughtful or deliberate, or imparts a sense of drama. Speaking fast shows excitement and activity.

Vary your volume: raise or lower for effect, usually for a punch-line or attention grabber before something important.

Visuals

Good visual and audio-visual aids can enhance a presentation to the extent that studies have found increases in information retention of up to 50 percent. Bad visual aids can make a presentation unbearably tedious. One major risk is that the presenter becomes secondary to the slides. Do not narrate your PowerPoint. It should not duplicate your verbal presentation. Do not use it as a prompt or script for your own presentation: that is the purpose of private speech notes. Speak to the audience, not the screen: the visuals should support the speaker, not vice versa. Resist stock clipart. The principle returns that nothing should distract from you and your message. Do not use too many slides.

Use visuals to give a big picture quickly: graphics, pictures, cartoons, bar charts, and key words. Use your own words to elaborate. Visuals should be simple, clear, and with a defined purpose: to support the presenter. They should be large enough to be seen by the whole room. Text should be brief and minimal: single words and phrases. While there is text on the screen, the audience will be reading it, not listening to you. Clear, simple pictures, graphs, charts and illustrations are most effective. Do not crowd the screen: use lots of white space. Animations and reveals should be subtle and used for particular effect. Maintain styles and continuity.
between slides. Use simple typefaces, and no more than two fonts. If possible, have a colleague turn the pages so you are free to move around and concentrate. Use bold colour. Make eye contact with the audience: do not turn to the screen. Keep up the pace and keep talking as the slides are changed. Practice with them. Make sure they look attractive and professional.

Think laterally with visuals. Consider using a cartoon or striking photograph to illustrate a point rather than writing it out in text bullet points to repeat verbally. Coordinate them carefully with your presentation: don’t confuse the audience by talking on one subject while they are looking at a slide illustrating something else. Google Images and Microsoft both have a good bank of photos that you can use free of charge, there are other providers such as Getty Images and photos.com that have royalty free photos that can be accessed for a subscription fee.

**Nerves and fear**

Not many of us actively like giving presentations. Most people feel neutral or slightly negative about them as a way of passing our short time on earth. Many of us become nervous at the prospect. One in five people has a fear of speaking that is acute enough to affect their performance. One in 20 is effectively paralysed by fear.

The best course of action is to first understand, analyse and accept the natural nervousness around public speaking; then manage it by preparing, relaxing and visualising.

**Fear in perspective**

Fear is usually worst before the speech and right at the start, during the introduction. As you get into your stride and the audience responds, it recedes. This knowledge can help control apprehension: it will get better.

Nerves can be a good thing. They show that you’re keyed up and that your body and mind are ready to perform. We all want to do our best and not make a fool of ourselves.

It is hard to understand and define what is so scary about public speaking, which is one reason that it can be hard to deal with. Try to analyse and isolate specific fears that can be translated into problems to solve. What are you afraid will happen? What will be the consequences? What can you do to prevent that happening?

- Afraid visual aids won’t be clear – so fix them.
- Afraid not properly prepared or practised – so prepare and practise.
- Fear of speaking in a foreign language – so prepare and practise.

A lot of fear is to do with failing to meet our own high standards. It can help to recognise this as a positive motivating factor.

Another common factor is the fear of negative evaluation, which translates into a kind of fear of the entire audience.
Remember:

- An audience is just a group of individuals. They respond to you no differently than they would in small groups or individually.
- Most audiences are supportive. They want to hear a good speech – they are rooting for you. They want you to be confident. They empathise with nervous speakers and this makes them feel embarrassed – so they want you to succeed. Audiences are also sometimes impressed or appreciative that you have made the effort to speak in a foreign language.
- Try consciously to change the way you picture the audience from “critic” to “recipient” of your presentation, and your purpose from “perform” to “share”. You are talking with the audience, not performing for them.
- Centre your thoughts on hypothetical audience members who are sincere and responsive.

The physical effects of nervousness and fear often stem from a “fight or flight” response.

These can include:

- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Trembling
- Sweating
- Dry mouth
- Muscular tension in the throat: quaver or strain in voice

The most effective solution to these physical effects is physical activity. To calm your nerves beforehand, take a brisk walk or pace up and down, or clench and unclench your hands (out of view of the audience, in case they draw any conclusions from such apparently strange rituals). During the presentation itself, you can make a physical outlet for your nerves through the use of gesture and vigour.

Also consider specific relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, visualising serene settings, imagining warmth and heaviness. These are very individual: find out what works for you.

Fear often makes you visualise the worst outcome. Do the opposite using positive self suggestion, in the same way that sportspeople find it useful to visualise victory. “I will be calm, relaxed, conversational and authoritative, my voice will be clear and assured, and the audience will smile and nod attentively, laugh, applaud and feel motivated.” Build in contingencies, such as, If I forget what I am saying, I will check my notes and continue. Visualise also the relief and elation you will feel afterwards.
Resist the temptation to use alcohol or medication to calm nerves. It frequently backfires and may adversely affect your performance, and it does not address the root causes of the problem.

“Drying up” is a common fear – stopping dead in mid presentation and losing the way. Some people find it helpful to memorise a “saver story” that can be slotted in at any stage while they reorient themselves. Otherwise, you can always fall back on your key messages, and your presentation notes and lectern are an ever present safety net.

Plan and structure your presentation so that it can be followed easily by your audience. Before you finalise your materials examine these key questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is your audience and what preconceptions do they bring?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What precisely is the central issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree does the audience understand the issues and terminology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are main ideas that need to be expressed and which ideas can be left out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you going to structure your content so that your messages are consistent and clear?</td>
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Being interviewed

- Different points you need to think of before media interviews:
  - Why and how to prepare for the interview
  - DOs & DON'Ts of interview
  - How to answer difficult questions. Using difficult questions as a platform for your message.
  - TV interview practicalities (eye contact, pose, gesture, appearance, clothing and etc.)
  - Radio interview practicalities.
The stakes are high when you talk to the media. Get it right, and they will transmit your message to the heart of your target audience, in a format that your audience will trust. Get it wrong, and at best you’ve wasted your time; at worst you will fuel bad publicity, in which that same trust will work against you.

Proper preparation and training make a remarkable difference to the outcome of media interviews. They can help you get the right message across every time in confident and effective media interviews – even at the height of a crisis.

**Make the news**

**Your interview must make news**

You need to give your interviewer a story that he or she wants to pass on to readers, viewers and listeners. Experienced print reporters are all too familiar with the frustration of coming away from a long political or business interview in which the interviewee would not deviate from a personal agenda that was just not newsworthy. In a broadcast setting, this same frustration is very likely to direct increasingly negative and aggressive questioning, which in turn will set the tone for a negative story. Even when you are already under the spotlight, such as during a crisis or rolling news event, the number one rule is to say something newsworthy. Otherwise your interview will produce a story that you don’t like, or no story at all.

**Know your media**

In order to generate good news in an interview, you need to think like a journalist, see stories in the way that journalists see stories, and speak in language that journalists can use in their stories. A journalist will always try to find an angle on the news – that is, a way to interpret or explain events that will appeal particularly to his or her readers, viewers or listeners. (An ambitious journalist will also look for a unique angle that will mark his story out from his competitors.) The best way to control the agenda of an interview is to give the journalist a ready-made news angle that makes great news for his particular audiences – an angle, of course, that suits your agenda too.

**Know your media and know your reporter**

Read, watch and listen to your target media regularly. This will help you to identify what they consider to be newsworthy and what angles they take on events. You can take this to a personal level by searching for previous stories written by a particular journalist – identify themes in his or her interests and attitudes. Apart from the practical benefits to your preparation, getting to know your interviewer can be a great confidence boost going into the interview itself.

At this stage you will also be able to identify any likely preconceptions and negative news angles that journalists may be likely to bring to the interview: you can
prepare the arguments and evidence that you will need to disprove such views and substitute a positive news angle.

**Get the angle right**

A journalist uses the news angle to tell readers why they should care, and different readers of different media care about different things. For instance, journalists from regional media will tend to look at events from a local angle because their audiences care most about what the local impact will be. International journalists may be more interested in the big picture. Trade press want an angle that reflects how developments affect their industry. Newswires want exclusive real-time information. Don’t just push your agenda: adapt it to give each journalist what they want.

A very good way to prepare your agenda for an interview is to imagine the best possible headline that you would like a journalist to write afterwards, and that you can realistically imagine appearing in a publication. That’s your news angle. Remember: Put yourself in the place of the publication’s reader, what are they interested in? It must be interesting and newsworthy for the journalist and the audience.

The number one thing that every journalist wants is a good story that will interest his or her editor and the media’s target audience. If you provide this for them, everyone is happy.

**Get the message right**

A news story typically revolves around a small number of themes – rarely more than three fundamental ideas, because otherwise the story would be too complex to be easily understood. There is room for remarkably little information in a typical newspaper story or broadcast news item. Likewise, it is unlikely you will be able to convey more than three fundamental ideas in an interview, particularly for broadcast media.

⇒ Strong and consistent messages can influence the focus of a news story and help control what angle the journalist takes. **Prepare and memorise your key messages.**

**Prove it**

*Reporters respond to facts* but they are sceptical about pure talk and ideas. Facts help persuade them that they are not being spun an agenda, and facts give them the foundations that they need to generate a credible story. Your messages are propositions or arguments; to persuade anyone to believe them you will need
proof – particularly when defending yourself against a negative preconception or promoting a contentious proposition.

Memorise or have to hand “proof points” that validate, illustrate, explain, bring to life and lend authority to your messages. Proof points can be hard information like statistics, or soft information like anecdotes and personal stories. They should be colourful and memorable.

### Preparation

Messages and proof points are the foundations of interview preparation. Messages should be consistent through time, but their details should be reviewed and customised to the needs of each particular news situation and each particular interview. Particular interviews will require particular proof points to support the arguments you are likely to want to make.

A question-and-answer (Q&A) document is often used to crystallise this process by anticipating all questions that are likely to be asked and preparing responses that incorporate key messages and proof points to back them up. It is especially important to prepare for areas of weakness. The list of questions should include all of the questions that you would least like to be asked, along with the best possible answers to them. Now is the time to prepare those answers – not off the top of your head when the journalist asks your nightmare question. Preparing for and covering your weaknesses in this way is not only practically effective, it is another great way to boost your confidence for the interview.

A Q&A document is not a script to be memorised. It is obvious to the interviewer when an interviewee is reading back verbatim prepared answers; this undermines credibility. To be trusted and believed, you need to be relaxed and spontaneous. Therefore, a Q&A should be used as a broad guide for the ideas that you need to communicate, not parroted word-for-word.

**Practise, but don’t rehearse.** It is very useful to practise for interviews by giving your list of questions to a colleague and asking them to role-play a probing journalist. For the same reasons though, this should be viewed as practice and not rehearsal – you are not preparing precise lines to roll out again later, rather the goal should be to build confidence, experience, and familiarity with the situation and the material.

### General advice for interviews

Interviews are strange, contrived situations that are unfamiliar to most people who don’t take part in them regularly or professionally. They can have a similar dynamic to normal meetings with colleagues at work, or normal conversations or debates with friends, but don’t be fooled. An interview is a game, an intellectual
challenge, and ultimately a contest between the interviewer and the interviewee for control of the story.

At the beginning it can feel as if the interviewer holds all the cards. He or she gets to choose what questions to ask and what answers to use in print and broadcast (unless it is live). By journalistic custom, you have very few rights. You should be able to ask to see your own quotes and to know when, whether and in what form and when it will be broadcast or published; but you have no right to see the whole piece before it is aired. You can ask beforehand what themes and subjects the interview will cover, but you have no guarantee that the journalist will stick to those topics on the day. You can ask for a list of questions, but almost always the answer will be no.

This is where issues of control come into play. You have power to the extent that the journalist needs access to you and your information. These are your bargaining tools in setting the terms for the interview.

However they may seem, journalists are not your friends, and they are ultimately loyal only to the story. Nevertheless, treat them with respect, because whether consciously or otherwise their feelings towards you will colour their treatment of you during the interview and subsequently their treatment of your interests in the story itself.

Treat all journalists equally well, regardless of how lowly their publication. Obscure local or trade publication articles might have little immediate impact, but can easily come to the attention of bigger media. When major reporters are preparing to cover you and your organisation, they will search through previous coverage for their background, and what they will find will be exactly these little and obscure stories. Finally, major journalists were all minor journalists once – with long memories.

Most interviews bring together conflicting interests: yours and those of the journalist and any other players in the story of which you are a part. Expect to be asked aggressive, melodramatic, or ignorant questions: the journalist wants to improve the story with drama, conflict and (over)simplification. These are not usually in your interests, so don’t rise to them. Remain calm, confident, and measured. The bottom line is that you cannot control the reporter and should not seek to do so. All you can control is yourself and your own behaviour.

⇒ Above all: Use your messages. Use the facts.
DO

**Push your messages.** Your messages should be a thread running through your contribution to the entire interview. Consistency and repetition are your way to ensure as much as possible that the journalist takes away the right information and the right angle, and puts these into print or broadcast. Make a point of trying to include one of your positive messages in every answer you give. It can be an intellectual challenge to turn questions and conversation around in this way without sounding strained, but it is an invaluable skill to master. But beware the perception of spin.

**Use facts, examples and anecdotes** to illustrate, substantiate and bring to life each of your messages. Use examples that are appropriate to the media that will publish or broadcast your interview.

**Give good quotes and sound-bites.** Besides information, what a journalist is really looking for in an interview is a set of strong quotes to illustrate the story. The same goes for text as for broadcast: quotes add colour, authority, immediacy, personality, humanity. Give good quotes. If you come up with a good phrase while practicing for the interview, remember it. Use strong and lively language and short sentences so that your words can be edited easily. Your quotes are your only opportunity to appear verbatim in the finished product – so make them shine. You will probably only get a few sentences of your own direct speech in a print article, or 15 seconds in a news broadcast. The reporter will choose the quote that best illustrates their story – so make sure it is one that helps your agenda.

**Be humble,** open, friendly, non-defensive, accessible, normal, calm, and human. You want the journalist and viewers or readers to warm to you and empathise with you: this will translate into attention and trust for your messages.

**Be honest.** Giving a little ground where you can do so without causing damage makes you seem reasonable and inspires trust in whatever else you say. Honesty is a very powerful positive signal.

**Body language** is particularly important for television interviews, but also plays a role in any face-to-face interview. If you sit up straight, make eye contact and speak naturally, you will more readily inspire trust. If you cross your arms, avoid eye contact and swivel in your chair, your lack of comfort will be apparent and this will hurt your credibility.

**Start and finish well.** Go in strong and don’t let up at the end. How you start sets the agenda for the whole interview; the interviewer will be taking notes for ideas to return to. Your final comments will be the ones people remember most readily, so no matter what mistakes have been made during the interview, you may be able to rescue it with a good positive finish.
Don’t raise issues that you don’t want to talk about. It might sound obvious but it is surprising how many people, having prepared to cover their weaknesses, voluntarily start talking about them when they might not have come up at all.

Keep it simple. Don’t get bogged down in unnecessary detail.

Use basic universal language and no jargon. Technical terms and abbreviations that are everyday to you will often be meaningless to outsiders. Pitch your language for the level of expertise of the lowest common denominator, the reader or viewer of the media in question with the least specialist knowledge. A useful mental discipline is to picture your grandmother or grandfather and imagine explaining it to them in a clear and engaging way. It is almost always possible to break down jargon into clear language without "dumbing down" or patronising too much. If you succeed, the result is much more clear and accessible.

Be succinct. Make your point quickly and directly; then stop talking. Watch for signals from the journalist that they want to move to a new topic. Time is limited, especially for broadcast, and succinct language makes the best quotes.

Forget process, talk action. Internally, communication about process is very important. For anyone on the outside, process is very boring and usually irrelevant. Don’t talk about institutions, procedures or bureaucracy – talk about action, people and results.

Bring a press kit where appropriate to give the journalist all necessary background information.

Participate actively. Do more than just answer the questions – raise questions. While answering, think about the next question and drop suggestions or dangle information that will invite a new line of enquiry and guide the conversation towards topics that suit your messages.

Correct yourself immediately if you make a mistake. It is easy to forget and find it has become a matter of public record.

Use your brand. Wherever possible (and without seeming contrived), use your brand name – project, programme, or Europe in a broad sense. Don’t say “I feel strongly that ...”, say “[BRAND] feels strongly that ...”. Get your name out there. Too many spokespeople get the message right but forget to say who they are. When that happens, audiences do not register your brand and therefore don’t change their views or behaviours towards it.

Object to loaded questions. If a question is based on incorrect information or a biased proposition, say so. Otherwise you may seem to accept this view implicitly.
**DON’T**

**Don’t digress.** Politicians, for instance, have a maddening habit of making party political points in interviews on non-partisan topics. The same goes for any kind of agenda you may have beyond the scope of the story that the journalist is working on. Unless you think they will be genuinely interested, you can be confident that changing the subject will annoy the journalist and not make it into print anyway. If it’s a live broadcast, it will annoy the listeners or viewers too, because they are in the middle of being told a story about something else.

**Don’t rise to it.** Journalists can be aggressive or even obnoxious in their questioning, and you may not be used to being spoken to in this way. Don’t take it personally; don’t get angry or defensive or emotional. They may be trying to make the story appear more dramatic, or trying to make themselves appear more probing, or trying to intimidate or unsettle you, or perhaps they really are just ignorant. The obnoxious question may even be edited out so all anyone hears is your indignant or defensive answer. Likewise in a broadcast panel debate, do not engage in personal animosity with other panel members – this is also a digression.

**Don’t be unsettled by rapid interruptions.** Some journalists try to unsettle their interviewee by asking many questions very quickly one after the other, without allowing the time to respond fully. Keep your cool and set your own pace. Take your time answering each question, or use a phrase such as: “You have asked a lot of questions. Let me go through them one at a time”. If you really have to get a point across without being interrupted, don’t draw breath between sentences – roll straight into a linking phrases such as, “… and what that also means is this:…”

**Don’t be intimidated by repetitive questioning:** the reporter may be trying to trick you into discrepancies, but equally may be giving you a chance to say the same thing in a better quote or sound-bite. In any case, stay cool and respond with using messages as normal, trying different examples and tactics each time.

**Don’t be afraid to give an honest answer** even to a negative question. It can be as simple as saying, “Yes, but…”

**Never say “no comment”**. It makes you sound defensive, evasive, and as if you have something to hide. There is always a better way to say nothing, such as “I can’t confirm or deny that for the moment. What I can say is…” If you can’t comment on an issue for reasons such as the law, confidentiality or commercial sensitivity – or if you just don’t have the information – then say so.

**Don’t be intimidated by a tape recorder.** It can feel like having evidence taken down against you in a police interview – but it is there to protect you. Good journalists will usually use one to check quotes and information.
**Don’t be taken by surprise.** Journalists will sometimes call unexpectedly or ask for an interview without warning. If you don’t feel prepared, ask to meet or speak by telephone later – even if it’s only a few minutes to give you a chance to collect your thoughts. Note down the journalist’s name, publication, deadline, and ask them what kind of story they are working on. That will help you prepare for the news angle. And do call them back.

**Don’t speak “off the record”**. If you don’t want to see something in print, don’t say it. Some journalists are more scrupulous than others, but to be safe you should assume that everything you say, whether on or off the record, might be published. You need a very good reason to speak off the record, and a journalist you trust utterly.

**Never say “to be honest” or “to tell the truth”**. It implies that you weren’t before or that you aren’t always.

**Don’t use negative vocabulary**. Single words like “unfortunately” are powerful in setting the tone for your entire position. Be positive.

**Don’t repeat negative material from questions**. For instance, following riots recently a police chief was asked: “Have you lost control of law and order?” He answered “No, we have not lost control of law and order”. This set a negative and defensive tone, so the focus of the story became: Police chief denies losing control of law and order. If he had answered “No, we acted decisively to make sure law and order was never even in question,” the angle is positive. A negative quote easily becomes a damaging sound-bite, as Bill Clinton found out after pledging “I did not have sexual relations with that woman.”

**Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know”, if you couldn’t be expected to know**. It is better than rambling or digressing – and it is honest. You can always offer to get back in touch with the journalist with more information if necessary.

**Don’t overdo it**. While it is important to push your messages and remain positive, do not exaggerate or engage in hyperbole. Remember, journalists are suspicious of hype, and they respond to facts rather than hot air. Use your proof points. Do not be perceived to spin.

**Don’t be defensive** or engage in argument with the journalist. The journalist controls the terms, so you will probably not win the argument. Even if you do, you will lose in the court of public opinion. Instead, be positive, open, humble and honest.

**Don’t speculate**. You don’t know what will happen in the future, so avoid responding to questions that ask you for a prediction. Your words may be used against you if things don’t turn out as expected.

**Don’t over-answer**. For some people a natural response to the anxiety of being
Being interviewed is to talk more than they usually would. Saying too much can dilute your message, or take you into unintended territory. Make a conscious choice to stick to your messages, then stop talking. When you hear yourself say something good, that is a signal to stop while you are ahead. If there is silence after you have finished speaking, don’t feel obliged to fill it by rambling on – wait for the journalist, or say, “what else would you like to know”?

Don’t let your guard down – particularly after a good answer.

Don’t criticise third parties. Conflict and controversy make great news so journalists may try to encourage you to criticise or disagree with views attributed to a third party. This will rarely serve your purposes.

Don’t be forced into a false dichotomy. Some journalists will try to make you choose between two blank options when in fact the situation is more complex. If you don’t like the options, don’t choose: explain.

Don’t assume the journalist knows anything. Journalists sometimes pretend they know more than they really do, in order to get you to confirm sensitive information. It’s a classic investigative journalism technique known as “fishing”. Never assume a journalist knows anything that isn’t in the public domain unless they have clear evidence.

Don’t assume a journalist is really that ignorant or clever – mock-ignorance can be an act to get you to drop your guard; purported expertise can be bluster.

Don’t joke unless you’re really sure it would be funny in any context.

Never, ever lie. In an interview, you are creating a public record, and untruths have a habit of coming to light and returning to haunt you.
Difficult questions

Media training used to be simple. In the early days, spokespeople would be told: “don’t answer the question” or even (literally), “don’t even listen to the question” – just speak your rehearsed lines. Nowadays, that would be seriously counterproductive. Failing even to address the question is guaranteed to antagonise an interviewer and make an audience suspicious.

The techniques became slightly more sophisticated with the “blocking and bridging” philosophy of the 1990s, in which spokespeople were encouraged to evade questions by answering them briefly in a non-specific way with a generic get-out phrase, and then quickly try to make a smooth transition to a topic that suited their agenda.

Nowadays, audiences are much more sophisticated and media-savvy, and they recognise when spokespeople are being slippery. Journalists are likewise becoming increasingly unlikely to let them get away phrases like “What I think you mean by the question is…”

Here are some more common blocking and bridging phrases, of varying effectiveness:

- “The underlying question is…”
- “That’s an interesting question, and to put it in perspective…”
- “I’m glad you’ve asked me this because it brings me to a point that I’ve been wanting to make…”
- “I don’t have precise details, but what I do know is…”
- “What I think you mean by the question is…”
- “Let’s not lose sight of the key issue here, which is…”
- “This is indeed important, but what’s even more important is…”
- “What’s important to remember is…”
- “I can’t say that, but what I can say is…”
- “Before we move on to another subject I want to add…”
- “Even more importantly…”
- “You should also remember…”
- “There is more to the story, specifically…”
- “What I want to explain here is…”
- “You make a good point there, but our main consideration was…”
- “That reminds me…”

In the current media environment, spokespeople need to make every effort to actually answer the question, whenever possible – and are left with the challenge of finding a way to do so while also serving their own agenda, on potentially negative ground. It is hard work, but it has its advantages because the interview becomes a much more exciting and interesting media event, thereby engaging the audience, and thereby improving your capacity to get your message across.
Victory is no longer measured in terms of rhetorical point-scoring like a political debate, or according to technical rules like in a court of law. To win over the opinion of your target audiences in the public is more of an art than a science. You need to make them trust you, believe you, and preferably like you. You need to explain, argue, enthuse and inspire.

This raises some paradoxes. For instance, some negative material in a story can be an asset. If you concede a few points but still end up on top overall, your victory is worth more because it is credible – the debate is perceived to have been balanced, the reporting rigorous. Furthermore, it reaches more people more deeply, because drama and tension make good news. Many reporters see their job as shining a light into dark places, seeking the truth, probing, investigating on behalf of the public to expose wrongs. Be prepared for hard questions, and see them as an opportunity when they come up.

**Answer the question – but don’t only answer the question**

Run with it and make of it what you can. Answer it and say more. Consider the question as a springboard for your answer. Identify a keyword that will let you bridge smoothly to a positive message, rather than using a clumsy generic and evasive bridging phrase. There can be a positive theme hidden in many negative questions; use it to bridge seamlessly to positive ground.

When in doubt, always fall back on the facts. They are safe, and effective.

This version of the **ABCD** technique most fully sums up the modern approach to handling difficult questions:

- **A**nswer the question if it is at all possible to do so. (At the very least **A**cknowledge it).
- **B**ridge, in a smooth and non-evasive way, to a message. If possible, use a keyword from the question.
- **C**onclude. Back it up by laying out your facts and proof points; make sense of them, explain them, wrap it up into a conclusion. Useful phrases include “That is why we believe...” or “What that mans is...”
- **D**angle. Get ready for the next question by raising your own question – leave an issue open or unanswered, “dangle” an interesting idea that the journalist may seize on for the next question instead of moving into negative territory.

**Acknowledge and action**

Sometimes, it’s best not to try to deny a negative question, but instead to acknowledge the problem quickly and openly and immediately focus on what practical action is being taken to resolve the problem. Honesty and pragmatism are powerful positive signals, even in a negative situation.
“Yes, we made mistakes in the past. The important thing is that we learned from them very rapidly and worked hard to fix the problems, and that effort is now paying off as we can see…”

**Practicalities for TV interviews**

- Ignore the camera and speak naturally to the interviewer. Don’t stare down the camera lens at the viewer.
- Make eye contact and make a special effort to keep looking at the interviewer; if your eyes flit around the room you will look suspicious and uncertain.
- Try to relax and speak naturally.
- Gesture normally to project a relaxed image: stillness looks stiff and wooden on screen. But movements can look exaggerated too, so don’t wave your hands around too wildly.
- Sit up straight: if you slouch then you are not projecting your voice and neither are you projecting enthusiasm.
- Don’t use a reclining or swivel chair, because its movements will look exaggerated and distracting on screen.
- Don’t sit back or cross your arms: it looks defensive.
- Smile! It transforms your image. Look alert and interested.
- Stay calm if subjected to hostile or aggressive questioning.
- Don’t use written notes because you won’t be able to resist the temptation to look at them, and that makes you look unsure of yourself.
- Don’t have anything in your hands, even a pen, because nervous energy will make you fiddle, and that is distracting on camera as well as making you look even more nervous.
- Arrive early. It can take a long time to set up equipment for a broadcast interview. Give yourself time to relax and gather your thoughts.
- Ask for a glass of water. Studio lights are hot.
- Stay where you are when the interview ends until the TV crew take your microphone off and ask you to move.
- Never assume that you are off camera or microphone even when the interview is apparently over.

**Clothing and appearance:**

- Dress professionally (or appropriately for the occasion)
- You can get away with brighter and bolder colours on television than in real life, but don’t overdo it or viewers will remember your outfit, not your message.
- Blue, grey, beige and black suits look good on television. A navy blue suit is safe. Contrasting colours are good. White is often not flattering to skin tone
and can make eyes and teeth look yellow so use with care. Be aware of how your clothing will contrast with or blend into the background behind you.

- Avoid fine patterns like stripes and checks, particularly herringbone: they create a distracting interference effect on screen.
- Wear a jacket, shirt or top with a lapel or seam that a microphone can clip to.
- Jewellery should be minimal and simple for women. None for men.
- Women should wear slightly more make-up than normal. If offered professional makeup, accept it (both men & women)
- Glasses should be non-reflective and non-photosensitive if you will be interviewed in bright light. Nobody trusts you if they can’t see your eyes.

**Practicalities for radio interviews**

Radio is the “theatre of the mind”. Peculiarities of the voice are particularly obvious and used to form a general impression of the speaker’s personality and credibility. A faint voice paints a picture of a timid person; a loud voice can sound aggressive or arrogant.

- Try to sound confident, yet cooperative and calm.
- Microphones can be sensitive to direction and distance. Keep a constant distance from the microphone and speak directly towards it.
- Just as for a camera, try to forget that the microphone is there. Look at the interviewer and speak naturally to them.
- Don’t speak too close to the microphone: your voice will take on an unusual intimate quality.
- Don’t lean away: your voice will sound weak and distant.
- Have a glass of water and drink if your mouth is dry.