



# PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES

LEVEL 4 PROJECT



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**TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL**

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# INTRODUCTION



The main purpose of public relations is forming positive relationships with the media and public. The purpose of public relations is to create and maintain a positive reputation for a person or organization. It's also used to increase public awareness, generate goodwill, and build credibility.

In this project, you will learn to promote awareness of an organization, formulate a public relations strategy, and use various public relations tactics. You will also learn to identify which media channels are available to reach your intended audience.

*Keep in mind that if you want to initiate a public relations campaign on behalf of your club, you must work with the vice president public relations.*

# YOUR ASSIGNMENT

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to practice the skills needed to effectively use public relations strategies for any group or situation.

**Overview:** Create a public relations plan for a real or hypothetical group or situation. If it involves your club, it must be hypothetical unless you communicate with the vice president public relations and club president. Share your plan in a 5- to 7-minute speech at a club meeting. This speech is not a report on the content of this project, but an example of how you will or might apply what you learned.

**For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 14.**

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Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



**Video:** Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



**Interactive Activity:** Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



**Resource:** Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.

# ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

**5**  
EXEMPLARY

**4**  
EXCEL

**3**  
ACCOMPLISHED

**2**  
EMERGING

**1**  
DEVELOPING

Pre-Project					Statement	Post-Project				
5	4	3	2	1	I am confident in my ability to formulate a public relations strategy.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I can use various public relations tactics to communicate my message.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I can identify which media channels are available to reach my intended audience.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I know how to promote awareness of an organization, cause, or event.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5	4	3	2	1

# COMPETENCIES

**The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.**

- Formulate a public relations strategy.
- Display an understanding of how to use various public relations tactics to communicate your message.
- Demonstrate knowledge of how to promote awareness of an organization or event.
- Identify various media channels that can be used to disseminate your message.

## DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is the practice of creating, promoting, and maintaining a favorable image of an individual, organization, or cause. The audience may be internal, such as employees, or external, such as the general public. Public relations messages are disseminated through the use of tactics such as posting to websites and social media, sending news releases, and holding special events.

Public relations usually has one of three purposes:

- To create positive public opinion where none currently exists
- To reinforce existing positive opinion
- To change existing negative or neutral opinion into positive opinion

Advertising and marketing focus more on creating demand for a product or service as well as influencing the behavior of consumers. These activities may require a large budget. In contrast, the result of a good public relations strategy is free or low-cost publicity. Many organizations successfully combine public relations, marketing, and advertising to spread their message to the public.

## **BRANDING**

The focus of this project is on ways to obtain free publicity through the use of effective public relations.

Part of public relations is protecting the individual or organization's brand. A brand is an exclusive and desirable idea embodied in products, places, services, people, and experiences. For example, the Toastmasters International brand is embodied in the tagline "Where Leaders Are Made."

The Toastmasters International Brand Manual is available online at [www.toastmasters.org/brandmanual](http://www.toastmasters.org/brandmanual).

## **CREATING A PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY**

The following steps can be used whether you want to build your personal brand, increase awareness of your club, create support for a cause, or let the public know about the products and services of a company or other organization.

Though your core public relations message remains the same, you may tailor it depending on the outlet and the audience.

### **KNOW YOUR OBJECTIVE**

The first step to determining your strategy is knowing the purpose and desired outcome of your communication. For example, if your club is holding an open house to attract new members, your objective is to promote the meeting and the benefits of Toastmasters to your audience.

### **DEFINE YOUR MESSAGE**

Analyze the qualities and values of your organization and how these will benefit an audience. In the example of the open house, consider what community members will gain from attending your club. Benefits include networking and meeting new people. If they join the club, they will gain public speaking and leadership skills along with self-confidence.

## **IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE**

Once you have defined your message, identify your target audience. Your audience is determined by many factors, including your objective, your geographic area, and what you are publicizing. Perhaps you need to reach specific segments of the public, such as people who speak a certain language, are of a particular age group, or who have children. For a special event such as a Toastmasters open house, your audience is anyone 18 years of age or older who can travel to your location.

## **RESEARCH THE MEDIA**

Different media channels, such as news websites, television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines, typically specialize in certain types of news. A local television station that broadcasts in a language spoken by some members of your community wants news that pertains to its audience. A magazine that covers parenting and children is not likely to be interested in your club's speech contest winner unless there is some connection to its readers.

Search online to find which media operate in your area and the audience they serve. You can often find this information on their websites. Know how each audience will benefit from what you are promoting. You can also determine how and to whom newsworthy information must be submitted. Pay attention to any deadlines and how far in advance they must receive information.

## **CONTACT THE MEDIA**

Create a compelling story and develop brief talking points so that you can convey your message in a way that will capture the attention of media outlets and audiences. Be sure to include pertinent information such as who, what, when, where, and why you are promoting an organization or individual. The message should be clear and your facts correct.

## **DISSEMINATE THE MESSAGE YOURSELF**

There are many ways to communicate your message to the public. Some you may already know and can do yourself, such as giving a speech, updating an existing website, posting to your social media networks, or using a website for posting classified ads.

Other options for do-it-yourself public relations include making fliers or posters and obtaining permission to post them in high-traffic areas where members of your target audience may see them, such as colleges and universities, markets, libraries, and community centers.



# DETERMINING NEWSWORTHINESS

Newsworthiness is determined by the media in many different ways. Here are some of the most common:

## Timely

Reporters look for events and activities that are happening now or in the near future. Something that happened last week is no longer news.

## Relevant

The organization, cause, or event you're publicizing must have relevance to your target audience. For example, if a heavily traveled road will be closed for a period of time, the news is relevant to anyone who regularly uses that street.

## Prominent

If an important person, place, or thing is a part of your news, it's more likely to interest reporters. For example, if your club gives an award to a member, it's not necessarily newsworthy. However, if the club member is a prominent figure such as the mayor of your town or chief executive of a well-known local organization, the news media may be more interested.

## Topical

If your organization, cause, or event can be linked to a culturally significant holiday, time of year or event, it's more likely to receive news coverage. An example is promoting a product or service that can be given as a gift before a holiday when gifts are typically exchanged.

## Human Interest

Great stories that elicit an emotional response are always in demand. People who triumph over adversity, have a fascinating talent, or experience something that others can only imagine are all examples of human interest stories. Every person has one; you just have to discover it. It is likely that there are individuals with newsworthy human interest stories in your organization or club who would be willing to share them with you.

## Visual

If your organization can provide great images (photos, video, etc.) to visual media such as television, print or online news, you increase your chances of attracting reporters' attention.

# PROVIDING THE RIGHT INFORMATION



What you are publicizing may help to determine when you complete these public relations tactics. If it's a popular, high-profile, or regularly scheduled event such as a free community concert in the summer, you may want to begin publicizing it two to three months, or more, in advance. For smaller or more informal events or activities, 7-14 days is often sufficient. Allow more time around holidays or large-scale events in which many people participate, such as summer vacations or the beginning of school terms.

Be sure to provide the information that your audience needs to reach you or a designated contact person, such as name, phone number, and email. Also include brief information about:

## **Who**

Who is involved or featured

## **What**

What you are publicizing

## **Where**

Where your club or organization is located, or in the case of a special event, will be located—include a map or directions if necessary

## **When**

When your organization is open, your club meets, or your event will be held; if an RSVP is required, include the deadline for doing so

## **Why**

Why the public should know about your message (i.e., the benefits to them)

# PUBLIC RELATIONS TACTICS

Many public relations tactics can be used to communicate your message. Determine which ones meet your unique situation.

## NEWS/PRESS RELEASES

A news release is a concise written announcement sent to the media to gain publicity. Journalists may use news releases to contact you for more information. News releases are quick and inexpensive to produce and distribute to journalists electronically.

## PITCHES TO JOURNALISTS

You can contact specific journalists or editors directly. This is also known as “pitching.” Pitches are brief and include: the main points of what you are seeking to publicize (such as a Toastmasters open house), why it’s important to the audience the journalist serves, and why he or she should report on it.

Pitching stories is less formal than a news release and is most effective when you already have a relationship with the journalist.

## INTERVIEWS

Podcasts, webcasts, television shows, and radio stations may interview guests who can provide specific information to the media audience. They may seek guests who are experts on certain topics and well-known.

Use media websites to research the topics or organizations typically covered by specific media. If appropriate, you can propose a guest interview about a specific topic.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Holding or sponsoring a special event is a great way to inform the public of your message. An event may be small and local or bring together individuals and organizations from around the globe. It may be open to the public or to a select group of guests. Events may be held live and in-person or virtually online.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Many news organizations use social media to connect with the public. Research each news organization’s website for detailed audience demographics to assist you in tailoring your message.

Use the Sample News Release on page 19 as a guide for completing a news release for your club, area, division, or district. If you are not a club officer or district leader, be sure to check with leadership before disseminating any information on behalf of Toastmasters International.



Proofread your final news release carefully when you are done writing it. Ask another person, such as a club officer or district leader, to review the news release before it is distributed. Contact your vice president public relations or district-level public relations manager for a list of media contacts.

## EVALUATING PUBLIC RELATIONS

Plan to monitor any results of your strategy and follow up as required. After beginning your public relations tactics and strategy, track inquiries, new members, and other results of your efforts. If possible, compare these results with those from before you started your public relations efforts to determine effectiveness.

Most organizations have specially trained, designated spokespersons who are authorized to address the public and the media, especially during times of crisis or negative public opinion. Here are some of the responsibilities of these professionals:

- Anticipate adverse public responses and have plans in place to address them.
- Meet with others in the organization who will be called upon in an emergency to practice coordinating responses.
- Know the main stakeholders who must be provided information during a crisis or negative public opinion.
- Confirm and acquire appropriate approval of all information before it is released. Know who will be delivering the information to which audiences and how it will be disseminated. For example, the chief executive officer will contact board members directly, while employees may be notified of an issue in a meeting or by email.
- Provide identified audiences with ongoing information, including the facts about the situation, who is involved, and any action or response by the organization, if applicable.
- Remain calm, professional, and honest about the crisis or negative public opinion.

## EXERCISES

In addition to this project assignment, you can learn more about public relations by performing one or more of these exercises. They will help you gain experience, but are not required to complete this project.

- Meet with the vice president public relations of your club to discuss his or her responsibilities.
- Learn the steps to becoming vice president public relations.
- Review public relations resources available on the Toastmasters website.

## REVIEW AND APPLY

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- What are the steps to formulate a public relations strategy?
- How can you use public relations tactics to communicate your message to the public?
- What strategies can you use to promote awareness of your club or organization?
- How can you determine which media channels to contact for the most effective distribution of your message?

## COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT



Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report.

**Review:** Return to page 3 to review your assignment.

**Organize:** Use the Project Checklist on page 14 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

**Schedule:** Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.

**Prepare:** Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 16–18 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.



# PROJECT CHECKLIST

## Public Relations Strategies

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to practice the skills needed to effectively use public relations strategies for any group or situation.

**Overview:** Create a public relations plan for a real or hypothetical group or situation. If it involves your club, it must be hypothetical unless you communicate with the vice president public relations and club president. Share your plan in a 5- to 7-minute speech at a club meeting. This speech is not a report on the content of this project, but an example of how you will or might apply what you learned.

**This project includes:**

- Creating a public relations strategy
- A 5- to 7-minute speech

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

Plan a simple public relations strategy.

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Schedule your speech with the vice president education. If you need more time to share your strategy with your club, you may schedule an 8- to 10-minute speech with the approval of the vice president education.

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Write a speech to share your public relations strategy with your club.

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Rehearse your speech.

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- After you have completed all components of the assignment, including your speech, return to page 4 to rate your skills in the post-project section.

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**Additional Notes**

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# EVALUATION FORM

## Public Relations Strategies

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Speech Length: 5 – 7 minutes

**Speech Title** \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose Statements

- The purpose of this project is for the member to practice the skills needed to effectively use public relations strategies for any group or situation.
- The purpose of this speech is for the member to share some aspect of his or her public relations strategy.

### Notes for the Evaluator

During the completion of this project, the member created a public relations plan.

About this speech:

- The member will deliver a well-organized speech about a real or hypothetical public relations strategy.
- The speech should be informational, but may include humor and visual aids.
- The speech should be engaging.
- The speech should not be a report on the content of the “Public Relations Strategies” project.

### General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

5 EXEMPLARY	4 EXCELS	3 ACCOMPLISHED	2 EMERGING	1 DEVELOPING	
<b>Clarity:</b> Spoken language is clear and is easily understood					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Vocal Variety:</b> Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Eye Contact:</b> Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Gestures:</b> Uses physical gestures effectively					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Audience Awareness:</b> Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Comfort Level:</b> Appears comfortable with the audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Interest:</b> Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Topic:</b> Shares some aspect of his or her public relations strategy					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Visual Aids:</b> Uses visual aids effectively (use of visual aids is optional)					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

## Public Relations Strategies

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

### Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

### Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

### Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

### Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

### Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice

- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

### Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

### Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

### Topic

- 5 – Delivers an exemplary speech about some aspect of his or her public relations strategy
- 4 – Delivers a compelling speech about some aspect of his or her public relations strategy
- 3 – Shares some aspect of his or her public relations strategy
- 2 – Mentions some aspect of his or her public relations strategy but does not fully address
- 1 – Speaks on a topic other than his or her public relations strategy

### Visual Aids (Optional)

- 5 – Visual aids are an integral and seamless part of an exemplary presentation
- 4 – Use of visual aids enhances the speech or presentation of the public relations strategy
- 3 – Uses visual aids effectively
- 2 – Use of visual aids is somewhat effective but could be improved
- 1 – Use of visual aids is ineffective

# SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

The boxes below identify the parts of a Toastmasters news release.

The opening paragraph tells the basic facts about your news: who, what, when, where, and why.

Headlines and subheads should be short, engaging, and tell the reader what to expect in the news release.

Put your name and contact information here.

Identify your club by name and location.

You can summarize information here if publicizing an event.

Include a quote from someone in the organization and provide any additional information.

Provide reference information about your club and district here.

Be sure to include necessary contact information if you want people to respond.

Refer to [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org) for current membership, club, and country numbers.



The sample news release is titled "Superlative Speakers Toastmasters host open house with guest speaker" and is dated April 2, 2016, in Lakeside, Alaska. It features a quote from Amanda Rodriguez, Club President, and a quote from Laura Sun, Club Vice President. The event is free to the public and will be held at the Lakeside Library. The release includes contact information for Gerard White, Media Contact, and provides information about the club and the organization, Toastmasters International.

 **Media Contact:**  
Gerard White  
1-222-345-6789  
[gerard@superlativespeakersclub.com](mailto:gerard@superlativespeakersclub.com)

**Superlative Speakers Toastmasters host open house with guest speaker**  
Event is free to the public

**LAKESIDE, Ala., April 2, 2016**—Superlative Speakers Toastmasters Club ([www.superlativespeakersclub.com](http://www.superlativespeakersclub.com)), Lakeside, Alaska, is to host an open house to meet members and watch special guest speaker, Jamie Hancel, Talent Acquisition Specialist of New Tech Pursuits talk about the importance of communication skills for today's professional.

"Superlative Speakers Toastmasters provides a supportive and positive environment where members have the opportunity to develop their communication and leadership skills," says Amanda Rodriguez, Club President of Superlative Speakers Toastmasters.

Club Vice President, Education Laura Sun, who has served in various club positions, will be the Table Topicmaster. "Table Topics are one of my favorite parts of the meeting," says Sun. "This is where guests and members are randomly selected to speak for one to two minutes. It helps you think and speak clearly on your feet."

Superlative Speakers Toastmasters Open House  
Date: 9, April, 2016  
Location: Lakeside Library, 1817 Shore Way, Lakeside, Alaska  
Time: 5:30 pm. – 7:50 pm.  
For more information, email Gerard White at [gerard@superlativespeakersclub.com](mailto:gerard@superlativespeakersclub.com).

Superlative Speakers Toastmasters Club meets each Tuesday at 7:00 pm. at the Lakeside Library between Shore Way and Albatross Avenue in Lakeside. For more information about this event and the club, please visit [www.superlativespeakersclub.com](http://www.superlativespeakersclub.com).

**About District 143**  
District 143 comprises more than 30 corporate and community clubs in Lakeside, Alaska. To learn more about District 143 please visit [www.district143.toastmasters.org](http://www.district143.toastmasters.org).

**About Toastmasters International**  
Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of meeting locations. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, the organization's membership exceeds 1 million members in more than 150 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people of all backgrounds become more confident in front of an audience. For more information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org). Follow Toastmasters on Twitter @toastmasters.



[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)