

Earned Media

Trying to get your candidates message out through the media without having to pay for it is the essence of earned media. It is better to think of this as “earned media” than “free media” because it’s not free, you have to work for it, and you have to understand who the media are, how they work, what they need and what they’re looking for.

Types of Earned Media

Print press

- Daily and weekly newspapers
- News sections
- Editorial writers
- Local and syndicated columnists
- Op-eds and guest columns
- Letters to the editor
- Sports and lifestyle

Specialty press

- Alternative
- Ethnic
- Labor
- Newsletters (community groups, interest groups, labor)
- Magazines

Television

- News
- Public affairs broadcasting
- Local talk shows
- Reporters’ round tables
- Cable (Citizen variety shows on local access can be a valuable)

Radio

- All News
- Talk
- Public affairs broadcasting on commercial and public radio

Internet

- Affiliated news sites
- Politically focused blogs
- Issue oriented blogs
- Your own campaign’s site

The Role of the Press in a Political Campaign

The press sees its role on a campaign as covering "news," as opposed to reporting whatever the campaign considers to be news. This can lead to conflict, misunderstanding, wasted time and energy, and bad feelings – unless you understand that their definition of news is different from yours.

Following Controversy

An old newspaper maxim holds that "if it bleeds, it leads." News follows the path of maximum controversy. In the context of a political campaign, this means that attacks, mistakes and problems are more likely to generate significant press coverage than policy papers or issue speeches.

For example, you may schedule a press conference for six state representatives to announce their endorsement of your candidate. Some of the press show up, the statements are made, some questions are asked, and your event is destined for a short piece in the morning paper. However, if one of the reps personally attacks your opponent, has recently switched from supporting your opponent to your candidate, or is perceived as issuing a lukewarm endorsement of your candidate, the event will receive more prominent coverage. It isn't necessarily the story you wanted, but it is a better news story from the reporter's point of view.

Not a Moderator

Campaigns often feel that the press should moderate the debate between candidates, determining who is right and wrong on issues of fact or judgment. This is a subject of some debate within the press community; the media is more aggressively policing political campaigns, for example through newspaper "ad watches" evaluating the veracity of commercials. However, the majority of the media still feel that their role is to cover the campaign, not participate in it. Do not assume that the press will investigate every claim or charge you or your opponent makes; be prepared to prove or disprove everything.

Developing Relationships

Reporters covering your campaign will get to know you, the candidate and the other members of the team. As you and the candidate develop relationships with the press, remember that they are always professionals doing their job-which is not to publicize or promote your campaign but to report on it. Don't be surprised when a "friendly" reporter writes what you believe is an unfavorable piece on your campaign - and don't take it personally.

The 3 P's of plan writing: PLANNING, PREPARATION & PERSISTENCE

Develop an earned media calendar within your campaign plan. This portion should be allotted time and financial resources. Just like you did with the other parts of the plan, map events far into the future, working backward from Election Day.

Sample Earned Media Plan

Week's Theme	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 JOBS & ECONOMY	2 <u>Radio Actualities</u> Comment on monthly unemployment figures	3 <u>Factory Tour</u> With local TV crew and newspaper photographer	4	5 <u>News Conference</u> At small local business, release "plan for creating jobs" pamphlet	6 <u>News Conference</u> Same as day before, but in another section of the district	7
8 CANDIDATE'S JOB-CREATION PLAN	9	10 <u>Talk Radio Appearance</u> Candidate takes calls on news station re: Job Creation Plan	11	12 <u>Attack Release on Opponent</u>	13 <u>Radio Actuality</u> Sound bite on yesterday's release	14
15 HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES CREATE JOBS	16	17 Rotary Club Luncheon Invite press and distribute speech	18 News Conference Endorsement	19 <u>Radio Actualities</u> Sound Bites from Endorsement	20 <u>Call-in Radio Talk Show</u>	21 <u>Voter Contact</u> Release schedule. Downtown walk, speech at Democratic dinner
22 JOB CREATION Plus: Sunday Paper Op-Ed	23 <u>Round-Table Session</u> 25 small business owners. Release statement and photo	24	25 Rotary Club Distribute Speech	26 <u>Tour Vocational-Technical School</u> Invite Newspaper and TV crews	27 <u>Guest Deejay</u> No Politics-Just Fun	28 <u>News Conference</u> With High School and College Students
29 OPPONENT IS OUT OF TOUCH ON THE ECONOMY	30	31 <u>Joint Appearance with Opponent</u> Distribute Fact Sheet on Opponent's Economic Record				

Using the Media

Op-Eds/Letters to the Editor/Columns

Even without editorial support, of course, there are ways to get your message onto the opinion pages of the newspaper. Op-Eds can be a very effective way of making a point, either generally or on a particular issue. Most newspapers have specific policies about what they will print from candidates. Find out what these guidelines are, and do the maximum that you can. Also, try to orchestrate articles by others in support of your candidates or his or her positions. This can be a particularly effective way of calling attention to a policy idea that is part of your message by having some well-know expert write about how great it is.

In addition, many public officials are able to place regular columns in weekly newspapers. Typically, these are sent to the newspapers as camera-ready copy, complete with a headline, photo and pulled-out quotes. If your candidate is already an officeholder, or even if he or she is not, you should investigate whether any of the newspapers in your area will allow you to do this.

Finally don't forget letters to the editor. Organize teams of volunteers and other supporters to keep a steady stream of letters flowing to the newspapers in their areas. For best results, letters should be short, timely and factual. Many smaller papers will run almost any letter they receive. In larger dailies, letters will need to respond to specific articles or come from community leaders to have a good chance of getting published.

Letter To the Editor Coordinator

Appoint an 'LTE COORDINATOR' – To maximize the number and quality of the letters that appear in newspapers, especially weeklies. Duties include: Disseminate sample letters and distribute talking points on a regular basis (especially by email). This is a great job for an eager volunteer to do at home.

Guidelines:

- One letter in every paper each week of the campaign
- Have sample letters to hand out to volunteers, make sure you clearly include your message.
- Identify volunteers who are willing to sign letters or write them on their own or who will write letters for others to sign.
- Encourage local supporters, opinion leaders, and local elected officials to write letters on your behalf.
- Always include the letter writer's name, address, and signature.