

HOW TO GET MEDIA COVERAGE

Getting press coverage is worth the effort since it can multiply the effects of your hard work and gives everyone involved a nice boost. And it's a lot of fun!

Make some news!

Newspapers and other media want to cover news (surprise, surprise). **Think about what makes your event unique, exciting and relevant to what news outlets are covering today.** We've found that this often makes the event more fun as well - we've all signed petitions and heard speeches before but have you seen people dive underwater with a banner or a polar bear dressed in a bikini? We hope to soon! Check out our "action ideas" (350.org/action-ideas) for more creative ways to catch the media's eye.

Target Your Audience

You're working to get the attention of the media, so remember they are your target audience. More specifically, you want to target individual reporters from specific outlets and convince them to cover your event. First, think about how people in your area get their news — newspapers, radio, or the internet? What are the most popular or influential sources? Make a list of places you'd like to get coverage and then start a list of journalists from those media outlets who are writing or speaking about issues related to your event. Remember that in most cases your local event will have the most impact in a local publication or program so focus your efforts there. Spend your time on the media that makes sense for your community.

You can search for newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations and news agencies by country at: <http://www.mondotimes.com/world>

Get a Hook

Reporters and readers love a narrative; a story line that helps them understand why something is new and different. Putting a person's face to an event makes all the difference. You're more likely to get coverage by focusing on your local event, the local people who are (or will be) participating, and why the issue matters to your community.

When you plan your "pitch" (the first 15-30 seconds you have to introduce your event to a reporter and get them interested), think about using language that shows how your event is unique — is your event the "biggest," or the "first" of its kind? Don't stretch the truth, but sometimes how you describe something makes all the difference. For example: "this event will be the largest climate change rally by people dressed as polar bears in bikinis in the history of south-eastern Paris!" You get the idea.

You can also try playing into the old “David vs. Goliath” story. There’s no need to try to appear slick; rather, emphasize that your event is somewhat homemade and you’ll likely get more interest. And finally, think about using the “unlikely allies” angle: by bringing together people or groups who don’t usually cooperate, you’re creating a story in itself.

Send Press Releases and Advisories

A press release (also known as a media release) is a written account of your event that provides details, commentary, quotes, and basic background about the 350 movement for the media. You send a press release to the media to encourage them to write about your event. **A media advisory is different than a press release – it goes out in advance of your event to urge the media to attend your event.** The advisory should tell the media what the event is focused on, where and when the event is going to be, who will be there, and why the event is being held so they have the necessary information to research and send a reporter to your event. Provide outlets with both a media advisory and a press release to give them specifics of the event and with enough time to allow them to plan ahead (more details below). This is helpful in many ways – not only do you assist the reporter with research and gathering quotes, but you also have the opportunity to craft the story how you want to tell it.

An advisory should be sent approximately 4-7 days in advance of your event (earlier if you’re sending it to a weekly paper). Once you pass it along to your targeted media outlets, it’s best to follow up with a phone call 1-2 days out and on the day of to find out if they will be able to attend. Diligent (but respectful!) follow-up calls are one of the most important things you can do to get coverage. Try to speak to the reporter directly and write down their contact information so you can get in touch after the event (whether or not they actually attend). A sample media advisory is available at 350.org/action-media.

Your press release should go out the day of your event, generally timed with the start of your event, and should be more comprehensive than an advisory. It should provide a summary of what happened in your area, with quotes from your spokesperson and any other local leaders who participated or played a role of some kind, as well as a short description of the larger 350 movement. A sample press release is available at 350.org/action-media.

Be sure to make use of both the template press release and media advisory in the toolkit. These are equally important items that will go a long way to your event being covered by the media.

For additional information, check out the Spin Project’s Guide to News Releases at <http://spinproject.org/downloads/PressReleases.pdf>

Follow Our Timeline

Use the timeline at the end of this document to make your event a media hit!

TIPS FROM THE PROS:

Be Helpful

Reporters are busy, so be able to make their job easier. Organize all the information they will need to cover your event before your first contact.

At the event, have some materials on hand about your organization and 350.org in the event they'd like further information.

Be Specific

The more specific information you give reporters the better. If the media knows what to expect they will be able to better cover your event. If a prominent figure will be attending your event mention it – your event could very well be covered on their attendance alone. Describe in detail where your event will be held – if your event is hard to find it may lose coverage because a reporter was unable to find it.

Answer “Why”

What is the purpose of your event? This will be a key point for the media to cover, so don't hide what you are advocating for, put that up front.

“350.org is the first large-scale grassroots global campaign against climate change. Its supporters include leading scientists, the governments of 89 countries, and a huge variety of environmental, health, development and religious NGOs. All agree that current atmospheric levels of CO₂—390 parts per million—are causing damage to the planet and to its most vulnerable people, and that government action at the Copenhagen climate conference is required to bring the earth's carbon level swiftly down.”

Follow-up – Don't Harass

If you don't receive a call back right away don't despair – follow up with a telephone call to see if the news outlet received what you sent them or if they need more information. Be diligent but respectful – checking in is one thing, but if you harass the outlet they will be less eager to work with you in the future.

Be Polite

Always remember to thank people – it will go a long way the next time and we need all the allies we can get! When in doubt, treat them like a client — give them what they need, gently nudge them to follow your lead, and be deferential when they tell you to back off.

THE HOW-TO-GET-MEDIA-COVERAGE TIMELINE

As soon as possible:

Target Your Audience

- » Identify media outlets that might be interested in your event.
- » Collect contact information for reporters and the editorial board at the media outlets you are targeting – this is your “media list.”

Get a Hook

- » Plan your “pitch” to reporters (you may want to plan a couple different ones). Our “How to Talk About 350” tip sheet has sample talking points for you to adapt.
- » Practice your pitch(es) with friends or family members.

2-3 weeks before your event (by October 3rd – 10th)

Build a Relationship with the Press

- » **Call your media list** (see above) and ask to speak with either a specific reporter you’ve identified or with the news desk. Try your best to reach a live person, preferably a reporter or editor, and tell them you’re doing something interesting that you want to make sure gets covered — then describe the event. Make the local connection and then point out that it’s going to be part of the most widespread day of climate activism ever, with more than 2000 communities in 150 countries involved. Ask if they would be interested in doing an “advance” story on your event (which will help draw interest). Be professional but excited—you want to make sure they get excited too!
- » **Contact the editorial board of your local newspaper** and request a meeting. Getting this meeting takes more than just asking for it. Be sure to do your research, and know what the editorial staff likes to write about – craft your pitch around them. If a prominent member of the community is a member of your organization, make that part of your pitch for an editorial board meeting. Talk about why your cause and event are important to the region they cover. If you put a local spin on it they may be interested in covering a unique aspect of the story that another paper won’t be covering. Be sure you have your story straight, your facts in order, and the 2-3 members of your organization who you will be sending to the meeting lined up.
- » **Write a media advisory** that answers the questions: who, what, when, where, and why? (don’t send it yet, except to weekly papers)—there’s a sample advisory at 350.org/action-media.
- » Have your supporters send “letters to the editor” to your local papers about 350 and your event.

4-7 days before your event (October 17th-20th)

- » Send out your media advisory.
- » Write a press release (there’s a sample for you to use at 350.org/action-media).
- » Select spokespeople and help them practice their talking points so they are prepared to speak with the press.

1-2 days Before your event (October 22nd or 23rd)

- » Put together a fact sheet about 350 to distribute to the press at your event.
- » Follow up with your target reporters with a reminder telephone call.

The Day of — October 24th!

- » Send your press release to your press list, timed with the start of your event.
- » Be sure you have all the materials you plan to hand out at your event ready to go.
- » Have a bunch of people from your group call in to media outlets with “news tips” about the big thing that’s happening that day....
- » Try to identify any reporters who show up at your event, introduce yourself, and distribute press materials to them.
- » Have fun!

After the event (October 25th)

- » Place a call to reporters to follow up about the event and thank them for coming.
- » Collect newspaper articles and any other coverage that you receive.
- » [Optional] Send out a follow-up press release that talks about the success of the event or other related stories in the news. Keep up the momentum for 350 going into Copenhagen!

