

Media Relations Primer

Tips for Establishing Spokespersons

- Choose articulate and experienced practitioners, conference speakers, seminar leaders, and workshop facilitators who are experts in specific subjects.
- Chapter spokespersons should feel comfortable being interviewed and should be well informed and articulate. Your appointees not only represent your IIA chapter, but the entire internal audit profession.
- Each spokesperson should present a professional image and be a quick thinker who can formulate appropriate responses readily.
- It is critical for the spokesperson to be kept in the communication loop at all times, especially when a chapter is dealing with a crisis situation. Mixed or confused messaging caused by a lack of up-to-date information can cause or compound problems.
- Spokespersons should know that, when in doubt, “I am not sure, but I’ll find out and get back to you with an answer,” is an appropriate response.
- Spokespersons should be familiar with The IIA’s [International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing](#), [Code of Ethics](#), [Frequently Asked Questions](#), and Global Advocacy Platform (available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)).
- Should your local media wish to speak with The IIA’s president and CEO or global chairman of the board, please contact The IIA’s Corporate Communications and Public Relations Department at pr@theiia.org.

Topics to Pitch to the Media

- Interesting speakers or programs at chapter meetings.
- Hot topics or issues related to internal auditing.
- Newly certified members.
- Chapter/Institute anniversary celebrations.
- College outreach programs, including grants or scholarships.
- Seminars/conferences/workshops.
- New officers.
- Special awards.
- International Internal Audit Awareness Month activities, such as proclamations or special programs/speakers.

Tips for Publicity

Publicity can provide valuable exposure and recognition for the profession in general and for your chapter. It can also help promote the efforts and offerings of The IIA. What you choose to share and how you organize that information can mean the difference between success and failure. First, decide what your target audience needs to know. Second, devise an appealing way to provide that information.

- Develop a publicity kit that includes:
 - A short cover letter pitching your story idea. Most working journalists will want to see such letters and pitches in email form.
 - A topics sheet with suggested topics for interviews and presentations. (Develop internal audit-related topics with the most potential for reaching your target markets.)
 - Short (approximately 100 words) biographies/introductions for your speakers.
 - Information on The IIA and your chapter/Institute websites.
 - One or more relevant recent press releases.
 - Clear sources for information.
 - Chapter history and composition.
 - Definitions and explanations.
 - Key messages (for internal use only).
 - A listing of officers.
 - A calendar of chapter/Institute meetings as well as local, regional, and global events for the year.
- In addition to the media, research community clubs and other organizations that might welcome a presentation on the profession.
- You might be able to secure public relations help from marketing students at a local college or university. To inquire, contact the institution's communications or marketing department.
- Ask how much time the media outlet needs to post an announcement, article, or story — and be sure to meet the deadline. The timing of your publicity depends on the timeliness of your story/announcement. A quick-breaking news development can be relayed immediately by telephone or email to a local journalists covering the particular topic, e.g. a banking/finance reporter might be most interested in a seminar on detecting and deterring fraud.
- Provide the media with press passes to conferences and seminars. The meeting or conference expenses you absorb is well worth the exposure.

Making Your Media Pitch

- Step 1: Do your homework and prepare your materials.
Editorial calendars can be one of the most powerful publicity tools at your disposal. Tailor your message to the publication's theme for the week or month you are targeting. Make sure your publicity kit materials (above) are complete and tailored to your pitch. Editorial calendars are often found online within a publication's advertising section.

- Step 2: Tailor your stories.
 - Be empathetic when you suggest your story angle. Remember that journalists must serve their specific audience with real value, seek originality in content and coverage, probably are overworked, and may or may not be an authority on the subject at hand.
 - Determine the audience and editorial style by reviewing the publication itself.
 - Imagine the headline or presentation of the story you have in mind.
 - Finally, outline your proposed story angle on paper to identify one to three key points that will be compelling and informative for readers and, therefore, to the reporter.
 - It is important that you try to make your material timely and tie it to events currently in the news.
 - If you are pitching an op-ed, or opinion piece:
 - Keep it to 700 or fewer words.
 - Focus on one issue or idea and address it in the first paragraph.
 - Provide insight and understanding to educate your reader.
 - Provide examples of real-world events that strengthen your theme or issue.
 - Avoid cliches and jargon.
 - Use language that appeals to the average reader.
 - Near the end, re-state your opinion and suggest a call to action.
 - Submit the piece to the editor or a newspaper's opinion section.
 - Follow up with a phone call or email to confirm receipt and to draw the editor's attention to your submission.

- Step 3: Watch the calendar and clock.

In general, if you are planning a meeting or event, follow these timelines when mailing, faxing, or emailing news releases:

 - Newspapers: Send information two weeks in advance.
 - Magazines: Send information two to three months in advance.
 - Television: Send four to five weeks in advance.
 - Radio: Send information two to three weeks in advance.
 - Never call a reporter after 4 p.m. In general, call daily reporters in the morning (between 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.) and weekly reporters the day after their editorial deadline. Before delivering a long-winded pitch of your story idea, always ask if the reporter is on a deadline.
 - It never hurts to contact someone at the newspaper, magazine, television or radio station to confirm how soon they need information.

- Step 4: Contact the editor.
 - Call the media outlet and confirm the name of the reporter or editor responsible for the story with a managing editor or someone else in "editorial"; that is, the part of the

magazine/newspaper staff that prepares article content (versus the ad sales, production, or other parts of the staff). Ask to speak with the reporter covering the story, and jump right in! Your success need not be mysterious — it's actually very basic as long as you are helpful, positive, knowledgeable, and assertive.

- Identify yourself and say something like: “Hi, I understand that you’re starting work on a story about _____. I have something I thought might fit into the story really well, and wanted to give you a call to see if you might be interested.” (If you get voice mail, either call back later or, if necessary, leave a high-impact 20-second message with your contact information. Then don’t forget to call back later.)
- When it’s time for you to talk, be ready with your shortest, most compelling presentation of the key points of your idea. This is a sales job, and the journalist is your customer. You are likely to succeed or fail in the first 30 seconds of your pitch.
 - To pitch coverage of an IIA event speaker:

“You know how everyone is talking about the recent fraud in _____ (city)? Well, one of the audit profession’s best-known experts on fraud detection and investigations will be speaking at a luncheon next week. Would you like to interview her?”
 - To tie The IIA and/or the internal audit profession into local news:

“Hi, I’m with the local chapter of the global professional association for internal auditors and I saw your story about _____ (company) firing their top internal auditor with accusations of unfair audit practices. I thought your readers might be interested in hearing what’s considered best practice for internal audit objectivity and independence.”
 - To tie The IIA and/or the internal audit profession into national news:

“Hi, I represent the local chapter of a global professional association that just completed a job market survey for internal auditors, and we’ve discovered that even though the economy is still sluggish, internal audit jobs are pretty secure and salaries are even rising.”
 - To pitch The IIA as an expert source:

“Hi, my name is _____, and I’ve been reading your articles about corporate governance regulations. I’m the president of local _____ chapter of The Institute of Internal Auditors, and I wanted to introduce myself as a possible source to you for similar stories in the future.”
- Step 5: Remember your manners.

Media relations is a very human, information-intensive job. Etiquette counts, which amounts to simple courtesy, integrity, and interpersonal respect. Reporters are very busy, and it’s critical that you be extremely efficient in presenting your ideas or suggestions.

“No” means “No.” Don’t keep desperately pitching a story that the reporter is firmly convinced does not fit. It’s usually far better to move on to another opportunity, or listen carefully and come back in a few days with a better angle that responds to the problems the reporter had with your first idea.

Media Encounter Tip Sheet for Spokespersons

1. Be prepared.

- Set your objective and three to four key points you want to make.

2. Take and keep control.

- Decide where to be interviewed.
- Use answers that bring the questioner to your points.
- Avoid repeating negatives. In other words, don't let the reporter dictate how you articulate your answer, e.g. "Does it worry you that internal audit findings are being questioned?" Don't use the word "worry" in your answer.
- Leave when you are finished.

3. Make your points.

- Answer in quick, clear, concise statements.
- Repeat key messages.
- Stress the positive.

4. Keep your composure.

- Never argue; be cooperative.
- Avoid appearing defensive.

5. Be honest and do not speculate.

- It is OK to say you don't know.
- **Always** tell the truth.

6. Never say, "No comment." Give sound reasons why you cannot answer.

7. There is no such thing as "off the record." Everything you say may be reported.