



Media Outreach Tips

A primary goal of the *Justice for Immigrants* campaign is to educate the Catholic community and the broader community about the Church's teachings on migration and the treatment of immigrants. This effort includes heightening public awareness of the immigration reality in the United States and the need for comprehensive reforms to our nation's immigration laws and policies. The Campaign must also dispel the myths and misinformation disseminated by restrictionists. If the Campaign is to be effective in raising the awareness of the public and providing accurate information, media outreach will play a vital role.

There are two important resources at the (arch)diocesan and national levels you should draw upon to develop and execute your media outreach strategy: the (arch)diocese communications office and the website www.justiceforimmigrants.org.

What follows are some ideas for organizing and implementing an effective media strategy.

1. ESTABLISH A MEDIA RELATIONS COMMITTEE

It will be important to identify and designate people to be responsible for developing and implementing a media outreach plan. The establishment of a Media Relations Committee is one good way to do this. The following is a description of some of the functions of a Media Relations Committee.

- † Interface/coordinate with the (arch)diocesan *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign coordinator and/or the (arch)diocesan communications office. These offices can assist in developing and implementing a media outreach strategy and should be regularly engaged.
- † Develop and test messages, conduct/arrange training on working with media, and identify spokespersons.
- † Become familiar with media contact feature of *Justice for Immigrants'* website.
- † Inventory media outlets and contacts.
- † Conduct outreach with media to create opportunities to promote Campaign's goals.
- † Stage media events.
- † Regularly submit letters-to-the-editor and op-eds to local newspapers.
- † Coordinate media strategy within the parish, including the mobilization of parishioners to write letters and contact media.

2. DEVELOP A MEDIA STRATEGY

STEP ONE: PLANNING

- † Start by defining the issue that is the impetus for this strategy. In this case, describe the recent immigration-related developments in your community and the history of the issue in your community. The summary of the issue should be one or two paragraphs and serves as a way to start focusing on your strategy.
- † Conduct an informal analysis of the media coverage on immigration issues to date. Identify the direction you see the coverage taking, gauge the public's perceptions on immigration, and decipher any coverage patterns that may be present. When developing a media analysis, it will be helpful to find any polls or studies on the public's attitude that may apply and focus on national and regional trends.

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- † Analyze the issue. Issues may be put into particular categories based on their level of urgency and importance. In some regions in the United States immigration may be an issue of high importance and high urgency, because of the numbers of immigrants in that region and the public perception of that phenomenon, or pending legislation. In other areas around the country, immigration may be an issue characterized by low urgency, but high importance, suggesting the need for a pro-active media strategy. Consider how this issue is framed and perceived in your region.
- † “Crisis” level issues require your media outreach committee’s full attention. The strategy will need to be both reactive and pro-active. All media outlets should be targeted and the aim should be to obtain frequent and balanced coverage.
- † In areas where immigration is an issue with less urgency, there is typically low media interest. Thus, it is important to build relationships and educate the media. The focus of this strategy consists of feature stories or pieces. Columnists are very important in this effort to put this low profile issue higher on the priority list.
- † Next, after putting immigration into a framework, identify the goals. Are you aiming to inform the public or respond to public criticisms? Create a statement of your goal(s) for the issue.

STEP TWO: THINK STRATEGIC

- † Create a strategy for achieving your goals.
- † A pro-active approach aims to generate coverage on your issue, from your perspective.
- † A “Hard News” strategy makes news with events, press conferences, rallies, etc.
- † A “Soft News” approach generates a deeper understanding with media coverage- as it attempts to showcase the issue through feature stories and interviews on radio or TV programs. The soft news strategy is more successful with the “buy-in” of an editor or producer with an interest in the issue.
- † “Educate the Media” strategy operates under the assumption that immigration is a complicated issue, and that media may require some background to write thoughtful pieces or produce positive shows. With this strategy you may want to host an educational conference and invite targeted media.
- † The aforementioned strategies may be used individually, or combined, to formulate an overall media strategy.
- † Vital to your strategic planning, is the evaluation of your target audiences. Who needs this information? Audiences can be segmented by their age, gender, education level, income, their interests and opinions.

STEP THREE: IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN

- † Formalize your Media Relations Committee. Identify roles and assign responsibilities to individuals. Determine how this Committee relates to and coordinates with the parish’s *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign. There should be one person responsible for approving all activity on behalf of the Committee.
- † Designate a spokesperson. It is useful to assign one person to the task of interfacing with the media. This individual should be very knowledgeable on the goals of the campaign. It may be necessary to designate technical experts that the spokesperson may refer media to in order to answer specific questions. [The (arch)diocesan and national *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign staff might be a resources to you for this purpose.] Another consideration will be the need to communicate in more than one language.
- † Messaging is a very important aspect of implementing your media plan. A message is a one or two sentence statement that is understandable, retainable, and suggests an action. Suggestions for messages for the *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign will be regularly features on the website, www.justiceforimmigrants.org.
- † Consider the material you may need to support your media strategy, such as statistics. Create or obtain fact sheets, background pieces, questions and answers, and other tools to use internally and to distribute to the media.
- † An important tool that needs to be created is a Media Kit. A media kit is designed to be distributed to members of the media at news conferences, campaign launches, and other major announcements. Media Kits usually contain the following:
 - † A news release
 - † Backgrounders (one-page, provides context, chronology and explanation to support the media event)
 - † Fact Sheets (one-page, hard facts- not opinion)
 - † Biographies of speakers, or newsmakers (summary of credentials and experiences of the speakers)
 - † Questions and Answers (frequently asked questions, answers, designed to save time at the media event)
 - † A visual (it’s a nice idea to provide a copy of the *Justice for Immigrants*’ logo or a photograph that the print media can include in their coverage)

STEP FOUR: EVALUATE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR MEDIA STRATEGY

- † Conduct polling and focus group analyses to find out where your constituencies stand on immigration. Polling offers quantitative results to show the range of opinions and awareness of the issue. Focus groups will enable your group to the depth of the public's feelings and perceptions, and offer a forum for testing alternative messages and materials.
- † Conducting polls and focus groups is vital at the outset of the campaign. The results of such research will guide your messaging used throughout the campaign and serve as a basis to measure the impact of your media outreach efforts.
- † The aforementioned research can be costly. Local universities and colleges may serve as a cost effective resource. Additionally, informal surveys and focus groups sometimes offer a better picture of the issue climate than no research at all.
- † Monitor the media throughout the campaign. Make sure to collect any coverage that you receive. It is important to monitor the media so that you may adjust your plan accordingly. If the coverage on the issue is inaccurate on a consistent basis, you may need to implement some additional educational programs.
- † Complete an evaluation of your efforts at critical junctions in the campaign, especially at the conclusion. Determine where the media plan was successful, when it failed, and opportunities to improve. This evaluation will be useful to future endeavors.

HELPFUL HINTS

In many grassroots efforts like the *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign, capable and dedicated novices are left to the task of media relations. The following tips are intended to help those who may not have a lot of experience working with the media.

1. HOW TO COMPILE A USEFUL MEDIA LIST

Creating a media list is a useful activity to take place in the planning stage. The goal of a well developed media list is to make a comprehensive list of media available to call upon when implementing a media plan.

- † Include all major newspapers in your area, and major weekly newspapers with a circulation of 10,000 or more. Be certain to include ethnic and "targeted readership" newspapers (African-American, Hispanic, women, etc.), which tend to be weekly newspapers.
- † Develop a list of state/local specialty publications/magazines that might be interested in *Justice for Immigrants* and the topics that are associated with the campaign's efforts.

- † Include television and radio stations with news, public affairs, or current events talk shows.
- † Monitor your state/local newspapers and keep an updated list of reporters who are covering your issues. Look for the by-lines (the credited reporter) and add them to your press list. Update media lists on a regular basis (please note that there is a high rate of turn over in the news business). Verify that you have proper contact names (i.e., assignment editor, religion reporter, editorial page or op-ed editor, features editor, etc.). Obtain correct spelling of names, telephone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. You may want to ask the individuals how they prefer to receive information.
- † Check and see if there is a local wire service bureau (Associated Press, Reuters, Cox) in your area. They will probably be interested in covering immigration issues from a local perspective.
- † Your list should include college, university and community newspapers, church bulletins, ethnic newsletters, women's organization's newsletters, etc.
- † Include organizations that might be interested in hearing about *Justice for Immigrants* — they may include information about the campaign in their own newsletter.
- † Include newspapers' community calendars. Nonprofit events or projects get free listings, but you will need to mail an announcement of a campaign event to the community calendar at least a week or two in advance.

Note: For a listing of media outlets and contact information, see website <http://capwiz.com/justiceforimmigrants/dbq/media.>

2. HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE NEWS RELEASE

When your *Justice for Immigrants* campaign is holding an event, a press conference, a forum, or any number of events, the news release will be an important tool.

- † Make certain that the news release includes WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and sometimes HOW in the first paragraph. Make sure the verbs are active and the subject concrete. Cover the most important facts first and follow with details.
- † Give your news release a catchy headline, i.e., "Saying the nation's immigration system is "broken and badly needs repair," U.S. Catholic bishops and leaders..." Write a headline as if it were the headline you would like to see published with your article in a newspaper. Write a lead (opening) sentence that draws the reader instantly to the rest of the story.

- † Be sure to include a contact name and telephone number on the top right hand corner of the page. List a phone number that will be answered by a live person even if that means both home (evening) and work (daytime).
- † Include the date of your release on the upper left-hand corner of your release. Write FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: and under that, the date (July 1, 2005).
- † Include a good quote from your organization's spokesperson. Be sure to include this person's exact title. Sentences should be short and to the point.
- † Proofread your news release at least twice. If it looks disorganized or is badly written, your organization's image may suffer.
- † Limit your news release to one or, if necessary, two pages at most.
- † At the end of your news release, write "-30-" or "###" which indicates that there are no more pages in your news release.
- † If you expect congressional action on your organization's issue or know of an upcoming event that you wish to respond to in advance, write an advance news release, and fax it to your media contacts ahead of time. This will allow you to respond immediately to an event and maximize your coverage. It also provides a greater likelihood that the newspapers will include quotes from your news release in their coverage of an event/vote/etc., in their editions the following day.
- † Timing is everything. If your news release concerns an event (conference, forum, news conference, etc.) sponsored or organized by your group, it should be faxed to your media contacts at least a week or two weeks in advance of the event. If the release concerns a current event, send it to reporters as quickly as possible - - the same day if possible. Too long of a delay between an event and your response costs you in credibility. Always remember that you're competing with numerous other organizations and events in city/state. The earlier you get your news release out about your event, the greater the possibility that your event will be chosen among all others for news coverage.
- † If your news release concerns an event, be sure to send your news release to the newswire "daybooks". A "daybook" is a daily computer print-out listing of news events scheduled for a given day, the times and locations of the events, the sponsoring organizations or individuals, and the contact names and phone numbers for more information on the event. All of the news wire services have them, and they are read in every media outlet by news directors/assignment editors. The Associated Press, UPI, and Reuters "daybook" editor's names and contact information are an important addition to your organization's media list. If your event is not listed in the "daybooks", it doesn't exist as far as news directors/ assignment editors are concerned.

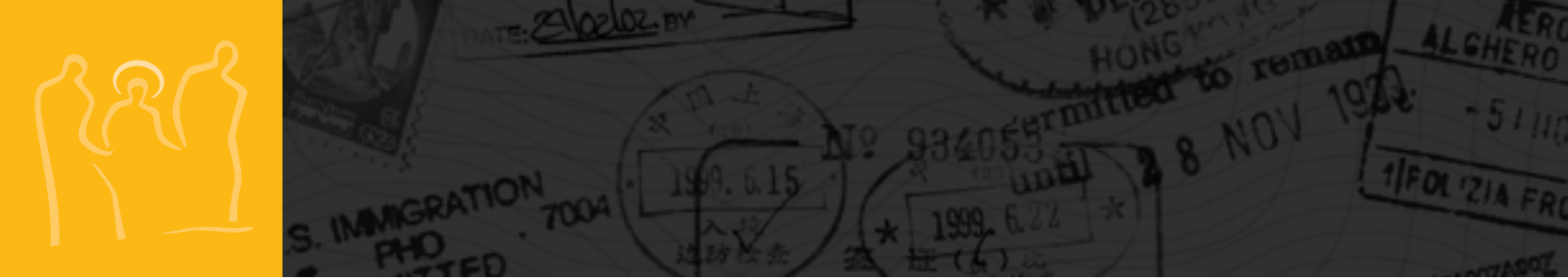
- † After sending the news release, make follow up calls to specific reporters. Assuming you have already identified specific reporters to your issue, this task should be easy. Call them, make sure that they have received your release, and ask if they plan to cover your event, or quote from your release in their article. The call is often the deciding factor in the reporter's decision to cover your event.

Note: A sample news release can be found in the Media Guide contained in this kit.

3. LIST OF POSSIBLE MEDIA INITIATIVES

Part of implementing your media strategy will undoubtedly require you to utilize one or more of the following media initiatives.

- † Appearance on a talk show or talk radio show. Many talk shows and talk radio shows have a large audience and provide a spotlight for your issue. Make sure you fill the spot with your most appropriate spokesperson for the opportunity.
- † Letter-to-the-editor. This is your chance to talk about the issue in your own words. Be careful to keep a lid on your emotions, a well-written and focused letter will be more likely to be published.
- † Guest editorial. The guest editorial or "op-ed" (opposite editorial) page is a coveted spot. Contact the editor and discuss the potential for publishing your story. A guest editorial should be succinct, well-researched, and timely.
- † Editorial Board Meeting. This is an opportunity for your campaign to supply a newspaper's editorial board with on-the-record background on your issue. The meeting should last 45 minutes to an hour. Typically, the meeting will result in a news article or editorial featured in their newspaper. It is important to come to such a meeting well prepared; as a poor appearance can damage your relationship with that newspaper and result in unfavorable coverage or no coverage at all. Prepare a five minute opening and then open the floor to discussion.
- † News Conference. This is a focused effort to create a media event in order to communicate a new and/or important message.
- † Media availability session. A spokesperson may make herself/himself available for interviews at an event. This is less formal than a news conference.



4. HOW TO ORGANIZE AND HOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE

- † News conferences are a fast way to get your message across to the greatest number of media outlets. However, they are not the only way, and they are not always the most effective way. In fact, there may be too great a reliance on news conferences as our only media strategy. One-on-one meetings with reporters, editorial board meetings, being a guest on TV or radio public affairs shows, or placing op-eds in newspapers are just as effective. Some “media center” cities like Washington, New York, and Los Angeles, have had their fill of news conferences, and tend not to respond to them. Washington alone has roughly 2,500 news conferences per year. The exception is when your news conference may be “piggy-backed” to a “hot” or “breaking” story that is already generating a great deal of media interest.
- † If you decide to stage a news conference, start planning for it several weeks in advance of the actual date of the event. Decide where to have it, who will speak, how many individuals will speak, how long their statements will be, how their statements will be complementary, how much time will be allotted for reporters’ questions, and how long the news conference will last overall.
- † If you are aiming for TV coverage in particular, and you should, try to have your news conference in a place that will provide dramatic visuals. A rule of thumb to remember is that unless you get TV to cover your news conference, it didn’t happen as far as the public is concerned.
- † Send a media advisory out to all daily newspapers, radio and television stations, and the “daybooks” wires a week in advance of your news conference. A media advisory is a brief, one page description of the event. Be certain to include the heading “media advisory,” TO: (news assignment editor, name of newspaper, radio station, or TV station), FROM: (your organization’s name, address, phone and fax number, and media contact person), DATE: (date you are sending the advisory), EVENT: (news conference on immigration policy, date/time, location, and address of event). Follow that with a brief description of the issue your news conference will address. Then, list the scheduled speakers for the news conference.
- † To the extent possible, limit the speakers to three or four people: your campaign’s spokesperson, and two or three others spokespersons that represent the campaign’s views or who can provide important and compelling background, such as an immigrant. Reporters have tight deadlines to meet, and they hate to sit through long press conferences lasting more than one hour. Also, ask each speaker to limit their remarks to two to three minutes, and no longer than five minutes.
- † Create “media kits” for your news conference. The “media kit” should consist of the news release (see “how to write and effective news release”), one-page biographies of the speakers, a one-page fact sheet about the issue, and any other very important information that you want to share with the press. Make sure to have enough kits available for all press participants and keep extras at your office for media who request one later.
- † Try to hold your news conference in the morning, between 10 am and noon. That allows reporters to meet their deadlines for daily newspapers, and for primetime TV and radio newscasts at 5 or 6 pm. Try to start on time, reporters hate to wait for late news conferences.
- † To the extent possible, do not hold your news conference on the same day as another “breaking” event, such as a State House, County Council, City Council, or School Board session, or a Governor’s, Mayor’s, or Congressman’s news conference. The exception to that is if you’re trying to “piggy-back” on an issue that is being discussed in those sessions that relates to your issue.
- † Have a “media sign-in sheet” at your news conference. This can be a lined tablet. Ask reporters to fill in their names, the media they represent, address, phone number and fax number. That way you have a permanent record of who attended your news conference. This sheet will also help you in building an affective media list; you’ll know whom to contact the next time you stage a media event, or if you want your organization’s spokesperson to be interviewed on a specific issue.
- † With the sign-in sheet in hand, you may then monitor the local radio and TV stations to see if those who sent reporters to your news conference use any footage or their newscasts. If you know which TV/radio outlets came to your event, you may tape the radio or TV newscasts at home, and have a video or audio record of a how a given outlet covered your event. You should also read your local newspapers the following day to see how they covered your event. Sometimes the newswire services will send a reporter to cover a news conference, so even if your local dailies didn’t send anyone, they may still publish the article based on the wire service article.
- † If certain media you’d hoped would cover your event didn’t make it, call up the media outlets and offer to send them a press kit, and to arrange a follow up interview with the organizations’ representatives who participated in the news conference.

5. HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND GIVE AN EFFECTIVE MEDIA INTERVIEW

When a reporter first calls or when you make contact with a reporter for a story, establish a rapport:

- † Be polite, honest, helpful, and friendly.
- † Don’t automatically agree or refute.
- † Stress the fact that you need information first, before you can help.



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- † Keep your tone professional. Stay calm.
- † Avoid “off-the-record”.
- † Don’t say anything you don’t want printed or broadcast.
- † Find out what the story is — Don’t get drawn into an interview prematurely.

10 Questions You Should Ask the Reporter on Initial Contact:

1. Confirm reporter’s name.
2. Confirm what media outlet he or she represents.
3. Ask what the story is that they are writing.
4. Determine the reporter’s angle on the story, or the approach. Ask the reporter what triggered the story.
5. Ask the reporter if he or she is talking to other sources.
6. Ask the reporter how much they know about your issue or organization.
7. Invite the reporter to look at the *Justice for Immigrants* website to learn more about the issue. Additionally, you may offer to fax or e-mail background material.
8. Ask for a deadline.
9. Ask if you could call the reporter back in order to give yourself time to prepare.
10. Don’t forget to ask for the reporter’s phone number.

Once You Agree to an Interview...

- † Never give a media interview without reading the morning’s newspapers. You will need to be very well informed.
- † Be sure to watch the TV program, listen to the radio program, or read the newspaper that will be interviewing you. Get to know the style and the format of the those media outlets.
- † Go in prepared to focus on no more than two or three primary messages to make during the interview. For each point, be sure to have two or three facts to back them up. Don’t let the reporter’s or moderator’s questions get you off track. Keep coming back to your major points. Don’t forget the reason you are there. Be prepared for the difficult questions. If you’re a guest on a radio program, or are being interviewed by a radio reporter in your office, you may want to keep a fact sheet with statistics or anecdotes that could reinforce your points or to refute misinformation. In addition, remember to turn the focus of the interview back onto your two or three major messages.
- † Listen carefully to the reporter’s questions. Always answer by coming back to the main points you want to make. Never answer with a simple “yes” or “no.” Never say “no comment.” It makes you sound guilty of something. The easier you make it for the reporter/moderator, the more likely he or she will interview you again.

- † Don’t use technical jargon. Be friendly. Avoid long sentences. Remember, you want to be quoted.
- † Never get upset or lose your temper with a reporter/moderator. You want the media on your side. Maintain a sense of humor. If the reporter/moderator is antagonistic, use your charm. Keep cool.
- † You represent your *Justice for Immigrants* campaign. Don’t give personal opinions that might compromise the effort. Never go off the record unless you have a good working relationship with the reporter, know the reporter well, and trust the reporter. Some reporters do not respect “off the record” anymore, and may print or report whatever you told them, even if it was said in confidence.
- † If you are appearing on a television program, don’t dress too “flashy;” it will distract the viewer from your message. Stripes, checks, and whites are no good on TV. Men and women should wear solid colors and dark business suits. Women should not wear dangling jewelry. Don’t fidget on camera. If you’re seated at a table or desk, don’t play with any papers, pens or pencils; the camera reveals all, and it makes you appear nervous. Even if you are nervous, you must appear calm and collected. Assume microphones are on at all times. Assume you are on camera and “on mic” until they tell you that you aren’t!
- † Maintain good eye contact with reporters. Ignore the camera. Speak clearly and distinctly in a normal conversational tone.
- † Remember, you know more about the issues than the reporter/moderator. You’ve got the upper hand! If the reporter/moderator wants facts and figures you don’t have, tell him or her you’ll get back to them and continue making your important points. If you are not sure about a fact or figure, don’t use it! You want the media to see you as a reliable source of facts.
- † If possible, try to obtain an audio or video recording of your performance if you appear on radio or television. Get others to review and critique your performance. Correct mistakes for the next interview.
- † Frequently, you may be paired with someone who has an opposing view on a radio or television talk/call-in or interview program. Producers like to do this because they feel it provides “balance,” that “both sides” of an issue are presented at the same time on the same program. Often, such spokespersons will try to prevent you from making your points, presenting your arguments, or attempt to distort or misinterpret what you’re saying. If the reporter/moderator refuses to intervene, you may cut off your opponent by saying forcefully but politely, “Excuse me, but you were given plenty of opportunity to state your (or your organizations’) position, now allow me the courtesy to do the same.” You may also say, “No, I did not say that, what I SAID was...” You may also say these things if your reporter/moderator has preset notions and wants to spend the interview arguing with you rather than discussing the issue.
- † If a certain issue seems complicated for the interviewer, break it down: use anecdotes or examples to explain or illustrate your point.