

SilverFox Training Top Tips Series

MANAGING THE PHOTO-OPPORTUNITY

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but in media coverage terms an illustration does more than that. It lifts the story and attracts the attention of a wider audience. Editors will often print a good photograph with a caption even if the story itself is of little interest.

If you have a subject or event that is interesting enough, you can organise a **photo-opportunity**. This provides an opportunity at a fixed time for photographers to come and take a picture that you have set up specially for the occasion. It may involve the presence of special people, an unusual event or a presentation. In order to attract press photographers, it must be important enough to get the picture editor interested in sending a photographer. This is done by sending out a photocall notice to flag up the opportunity.

You should, however, be realistic and get your own photographer to take pictures which you can send to local papers yourself. This is because you cannot rely on picture editors sending photographers to you if they are already busy.

Many newspapers and magazines still prefer black and white photographs and a standard size to offer them is 20.32 x 15.24cm. For colour magazines, it is useful to have a selection of high quality 35mm colour transparencies to offer the journalist.

If the publication is prepared to receive submissions by e-mail – increasingly the case these days - you may enquire what format the publication prefers. Usually photos are sent as .jpg or .gif attachments. Often vertical trade publications may not have sophisticated IT infrastructures – avoid gumming up their network with gargantuan downloads.

Example of the photocall notice:

PRESS PHOTO CALL

HEADING

Date: Day, Date Month Year

Time:

Location:

Contact: Name and Contact details

Story: Brief description of photo content

Photo Opportunity: Time and invitation

For further press information please contact:

Name

Company

Tel:

Ref:

Example of the photo with caption

PHOTO W/CAPTION

Picture shows:

(name), director of (company) . (name) resigned today after citing major differences with the Chairman and the Board of Directors about future strategy (describe).

For further information, please contact:

(name)

(company)

Tel:

Fax:

Email:

Ref:

Rules to observe in setting up your own press photography or photo-opportunities include:

- Avoid uninteresting presentation and handshake shots if possible. If there is no real alternative, try to incorporate appropriate ‘props’ or arrange the subjects so that the presentation shot has depth, or is shot from an unusual angle.
- If you do take shots of people shaking hands or receiving a prize, avoid large gaps between them or distractions in the background.
- Get branding into the picture. This can be a logo, and/or sponsor representative. Don’t position the logo so that it can be easily cropped out. Also do not overplay the sponsor logo, otherwise the picture will not be used.
- Stick a caption on the back of the photograph detailing who is in the picture and what it is about.
- If possible use a professional photographer. Brief him/her thoroughly and ensure s/he can meet your deadline.

Remember, the success of your photo story depends on how interesting, amusing or striking the image is!