
Press conferences

Adopted from Paul Mundy and Bob Huggan

Press conferences (1)

- Call a press conference if
 - Your organisation has something important to announce
 - Technological breakthrough
 - Major expansion
 - Merger with another organisation
 - Response to criticism
 - Other announcement where media may wish to ask questions

Press conferences (2)

- Can be very useful
- But also can be difficult and risky
 - What if no one attends?
 - What if a journalist asks aggressive questions about something you don't want to talk about?

How to run a press conference (1)

- How to improve chances of attracting media and getting your message out
- 1. Think like a media editor
 - Ask yourself:
 - *Why should I send a reporter?*
 - *What kind of story will the reporter get?*
 - If answers are not positive, then don't call a press conference
 - Know **why** you are holding a press conference
 - Know **what** you want to say

How to run a press conference (2)

2. Cater to the press

- ❑ Know their deadlines and constraints
- ❑ If the announcement is aimed at evening TV news, don't call conference for 4 pm
- ❑ Choose time that allows reporting in prime broadcast time and in next morning's newspapers

How to run a press conference (3)

3. Manage time

- ❑ Allow time at start for latecomers to arrive
- ❑ Provide snacks and refreshments, but make the announcement within 30 minutes of starting time
- ❑ If later, busiest reporters may have left
- ❑ Keep it short: 45 minutes maximum

4. Stage-manage

- ❑ MC introduces each speaker
- ❑ Practise beforehand

How to run a press conference (4)

5. Check venue 1-2 hours before start
 - Equipment working?
 - Everything ready?
6. If outdoors, have indoor location ready if weather is bad
7. Presenters
 - Keep number of presenters to minimum
 - Limit length of their prepared remarks
 - Put large-type name cards in front of speakers

How to run a press conference (5)

8. Staffing

- Enough staff for a press table
 - Greet reporters
 - Provide name badges
 - Hand out press kits
- Facilitate interviews with spokespersons

How to run a press conference (6)

9. Materials

- ❑ Printed materials
- ❑ Photographs
- ❑ Video footage of your organisation for TV crews
- ❑ More than enough! Journalists compete: they will not share

10. Sign-up sheet for media people, with column for phone numbers and email addresses

- ❑ Use to update your address list

How to run a press conference (7)

11. Visuals

- ❑ Use visuals (charts, diagrams) during presentation
- ❑ Large, big type, colourful graphics
- ❑ Display so cameras can zoom in

How to run a press conference (8)

12. After press conference

- ❑ Spokespersons stay a short time for follow-up interviews

13. Back at the office

- ❑ Have someone at office to answer questions during press conference
- ❑ Reporters who cannot attend may call to ask for press kits

Press conferences: Resources

- Indoor or outdoor
- Good sound system for speakers and journalists' questions
- Audio-visual projecting and recording equipment
- Speakers' table, podium or platform
- Refreshments and serving staff
- Enough chairs
- Press kits
 - Folder or plastic briefcase
 - Press release
 - Copies of speeches
 - Photos of organisation HQ, director, staff involved, relevant activities or products
 - Organisational brochure