

Generally speaking, a magazine like Charity Times is not where charities should be trying to get their public appeal kind of stories printed, as we are not read by the public. We do have "charity" in our title, however, which immediately puts us on the PR radar for any story that has anything to do with the sector.

It may seem an obvious statement, but it is important when approaching a publication with your story to know the remit of that publication. The stories run in *Society Guardian*, for example, are different from what you'd find in a monthly women's glossy, which of course is vastly different from that which appears in a management title like Charity Times. I am sometimes met with confusion from charity PR's when I say I won't be able to use a particular story about, for example, a trek to South America which raised £2,000 for a good cause. While I think such stories are indeed inspirational, they are not within the focus of the magazine.

Every publication will have stories that it

Getting the right message across

It's not always easy to get your story into the press, particularly if you aren't approaching the media in the "right" way. Charity Times finds out the kind of stories different elements of the national press will run, what editors are looking for from charity PR's, and how to better your chances of getting into the national consciousness

is interested in, and it comes down to the press officer to figure out what these are and tailor their approach. Sending out a bulk email and then sitting back and waiting for the phone calls to come rolling in does not foster a working relationship with the media and will rarely be successful.

Also, I think it is important to bear in mind the point that the BBC's Dominic Casciani makes below concerning the amount of email that floods into the media, some relevant and some not. To ensure your story at least gets a look in, provide a quick summary in the body of the email. I often receive emails which say something along the lines of "a story you will be interested in" with a PDF attachment. Having to open an attachment to know what the story is about, despite the air of mystery this creates, is simply annoying.

You'll also notice below that other publications are looking for the human interest side of stories – again, a magazine like Charity Times is not. That comes down to the press officer knowing the publication they're pitching to. When the time is taken to do that, and the time is also taken to foster a relationship with a publication, the chance of successfully getting your story told increases vastly.

Christopher Andrews is editor of Charity Times magazine

BBC

What works for journalists? For a start, a personal touch. I have 296 unsolicited emails sitting unread in my inbox – all of them from the last seven days.

The press officer who randomly punts something without following it up – or better still making the call first – is increasingly unlikely to get a hearing. Quite often just an introductory hello-my-name-is



phone call can start a fruitful relationship.

Beyond this, we need phone numbers. If a charity is not available to get their point into the daily news machine, they may very well lose their chance to be heard because things move on so quickly.

Charities are dealing with complicated issues – try to make time to get the story across to a journalist in all its complexity – it builds trust amid the wider clamour for a hearing. And this brings me to the central issue which sorts the good from the bad: exactly what are you offering?

A reporter is more likely to give a story decent coverage if they speak to the actors – the people behind the research or the people you want us to talk about.

When we ask the question, "Have you got any case studies?" the answer we want to hear is "yes". Let us speak to people ourselves, if you know of people who want to speak.

The things that many journalists are increasingly sceptical about include surveys, opinion polls and "research" which turn out to be none of these things.

Think carefully before you present your story using these devices: if the story is good enough, why would it need to be dressed up?

Providing your story tells an audience something they may not have previously appreciated – and tells the stories of real people – then you have a good chance of getting a hearing.

Dominic Casciani covers community affairs for the BBC News website

Community Newswire

The Community Newswire runs 175 charity stories a week, giving our staff an excellent perspective on the sector's PR work.

Virtually all our stories gain coverage, with many making it into the national media. These come increasingly from smaller charities, proving the media are interested in more than just big names.

We are regularly delighted at the depth and quality of charities' work, and this ensures Community Newswire exceeds its targets.

It is revealing, however, that the feedback from the media is that they appreciate having releases written up by professional journalists.

We're told that many charities seem to believe a good cause should automatically gain coverage and send out a quota of press releases.

There can also be a fixation with policy and not people, making it harder for the media to find a human interest or local angle on a story. There is also a lack of targeting, with the regional media overlooked even when they are the most relevant outlet.

We also often find a lack of strong quotes, frequently caused by impenetrable jargon and acronyms. Having said this, charities are recognised by the UK media as a growing source of original and important content with no lack of newsworthy material.

Dominic O'Reilly is Community Newswire manager

Best magazine

A jam-packed women's weekly magazine, such as *Best*, can literally never get enough stories. Every week we rely on our army of contacts to ensure that we bring our readers the very best stories in print that week.

Charity organisations have always been one of our first ports of call throughout our 18 years in business, as their stories invariably make our readers cry, think, and even occasionally laugh. Our health department is on first name terms with most charity PRs.

We're always delighted to hear about news from charities, especially when they relate directly to our readership, so women's health issues always find their way to the top of the pile. But our readers are equally concerned about their children's, husbands', ageing parents' and best friends' well-being too.

Our charity PRs also know that to really get a point across, a never-been-read-before case history works wonders and will have their phones ringing constantly from concerned readers. Sometimes a photo really can say more than 1,000 words.

However, possibly the biggest growth area in our relationship with charities is celebrity-endorsement. Get a superstar, soap star or TV presenter on board and you are literally guaranteed column inches.

In the past 12 months, ten of our celebrity coverstars have been a tie-in with a charity campaign. We've had LK Today star Lorraine Kelly talking about her marathon efforts to raise money for smaller charity concerns in Scotland. (She also shared with our readers the secret behind her new trim figure).

Coronation Street's Wendy Peters (Cilla) talked about baking cakes to boost ChildLine coffers and Carol Vorderman shared her get-slim secrets for the same charity.

But our charity tie-ins are especially memorable when the celebrity has first hand experience of the charity. Tamzin Outhwaite spoke to *Best* at length about the charity set-up in honour of her cousin James Baldwin, who died of Leukaemia. GMTV's Fiona Philips' raised awareness of Alzheimer's by talking about her mum's brave fight with the disease.

Not only do these stories raise awareness of the charities in question, but bring comfort to those of us who are in similar situations.

Andrew Fleming is deputy editor of Best magazine