

# KEY SOLUTIONS

## KEY CLUB MEMBERSHIP RESOURCES

### Public Relations 101

Public relations is every contact that a Key Club has with its school or community. In order to make that contact positive, each club needs a public relations strategy. A public relations strategy should increase Key Club name recognition and public understanding about a Key Club's service role in its school and community.

Widespread public recognition will benefit your club in a variety of ways. Within the club, it will build pride in membership that leads to better meeting attendance, greater participation in fund-raising and service projects, and stronger retention. In your school, it will help draw prospective members, and in the community, it will make it easier to solicit public support of Key Club projects and fund-raisers.

Thus, the public relations chairman's responsibilities fall naturally into two categories: external and internal. External public relations include publicizing your club's activities and building a good reputation for Key Club and its members. Internal public relations include helping members feel proud of their club and encouraging their involvement in its activities.

### External Public Relations

#### Getting Started:

**Conduct a media survey.** Identify every newspaper, community magazine, radio and television station, and cable system that reaches your audience. Call or visit these sources with the idea that your function as Key Club public relations chairman is to help these people do their jobs, not to see what you can "get" from them. Find out how they want Key Club news provided to them: Do they prefer phone calls or news releases? Will they accept your photographs, and if so, what specifications are there? Would they prefer a fact sheet so they can write their own stories, or do they want a story already written? Whatever they prefer, do your best to accommodate them. Then develop and maintain your own directory of editors and news directors including addresses, phone numbers, and deadlines.

**Evaluate your club and its activities for their worthiness.** Look through your club's calendar and pinpoint the events that have "news value"-those events in which the community would take an interest. Routine meetings and social events will receive little attention because they do not interest anyone except Key Clubbers. So don't waste the newsperson's time trying to make these things look like more than they are; instead, spend your efforts capitalizing on your greatest public relations asset: Key Club's commitment to service in the school and community. The service projects and fund-raisers are veritable gold mines of feature, photo, and human-interest stories. The news is there; all you have to do is help the media find it. Making a master schedule of your plans for the year will help you to budget your time better and also will serve as a reminder in the weeks to come. You also may see if your community has a master calendar or bulletin board where you can post dates and times of your events.

**Prepare your public relations tools.** Prepare a general fact sheet about your club, its background, and its plans for the year. Send this to the people on your media list, and hand it out to those who show up at an event. It will serve as a reminder about Key Club and its upcoming events. The fact sheet should include a brief description of Key Club and Kiwanis, unique facts about your club, as well as your name, address, and phone number.

**Train club members about public relations.** Help them become aware that they all play a role in public relations. Everywhere they go, they give the public an impression of what Key Clubbers are like, especially when they are wearing their pin or Key Club sportswear. Regardless of all the stories in the media, the public's real opinion of Key Club is formed when they meet a Key Clubber or see Key Clubbers serving the community. So whenever your club is doing great things, its members need to identify themselves as Key Clubbers by wearing pins, putting up signs, and telling bystanders, "This is Key Club!" Give members tips on how to answer questions, particularly interview questions, and keep these things in mind yourself. Remember to insert the words "Key Club" in place of we or I. For example, instead of saying, "I really enjoy visiting the elderly every Tuesday," say, "Key Club really enjoys visiting the elderly every Tuesday." Talking like this will take some practice and might sound awkward at first, but doing this ensures that people will remember Key Club was doing that service project, not just some nice kids. Also, if a reporter will print a quote the "Key Club" phrase will appear once more.

## **Publicize an event:**

Remember to use the method your source prefers.

**Telephone Calls**-Have all information, including full names and exact times, written down in front of you and double-check everything before you call. Since verbal communication can't be referred to later like written information, it is best to use phone calls for brief items or to alert reporters to a story. This initial call can be followed up with written details if requested.

**Press Releases**-A press release (also called news release) should answer the questions: who, what, why, where, when, and how. The most important information should appear at the beginning so if an editor needs to shorten the story, he can cut from the bottom without destroying the story's sense. Sentences and paragraphs should be short and to the point.

Remember that names make news, so write accordingly. Be sure that someone besides yourself proofreads the release and double-check all spellings and numbers. Press releases should be distributed at least a day in advance, but the earlier the better. Plan to distribute them so that all the media can run the story on the same day. It's a good idea to find out when each paper's typically light news day is in order to increase the story's chance of being printed.

**Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**-Each year the broadcast industry donates millions of dollars worth of public-service announcements. However, they are under no obligation to grant time to any specific group, and they face a tremendous demand for free public-service time. Usually, a designated member of the station staff is responsible for PSA scheduling. Determine who this individual is and work with him/her to see if time is available for your message. Make certain that your message is important, interesting, and presented in the best possible form. Send the PSAs out as early as possible (ten days before the event is suggested) and be certain that your photocopies are legible.

**Television**-If you produce your own TV spot, the most economical message is a single piece of artwork with a short message printed on it. This may be actual art or a color slide, but photographs usually are not used. Graphics and lettering should look professional, and the message should be no longer than ten words. If there is a script to be read while the graphics are on the screen, limit it to 15 or 20 words and follow the format for the radio PSA below.

**Radio**-The simplest approach is to provide the announcer with a script to read. Write three PSAs-ten seconds (25 words), 20 seconds (50 words), and 30 seconds (75 words). (Thirty seconds usually is the maximum time for a PSA, and ten-, 15-, and 20-second spots are more common.) All three should be sent to the radio program director as far in advance as possible. He/she then can use the one that best fits into the schedule.

**Magazine Features**-If your club has a really spectacular project, one that has been sponsored year after year, one that has grown bigger every year and this year surpassed all expectations, you may have a magazine feature at your fingertips. Study all the magazines you can, and choose which of them is likely to have the audience your story will interest. Make sure the magazine has not published a similar story in the past 12 to 18 months, because originality is important. After you have narrowed it down to a few choices, submit your story to one of them about three months to a year in advance. Send photos if you have them and be extremely enthusiastic. Most editors will respond within two to three weeks, so you will have time to try another magazine. Do not write to more than one magazine at a time.

Triple-space the copy and capitalize everything. Leave plenty of space in the margin for the editor's notes, and use heavy paper that won't make noise when the announcer reads it. Be sure to write informally, talking out loud while you write is a good practice. As with everything you write, double-check names and numbers, and have someone else proofread it.

## **During the event:**

If the media shows up, be prepared to help them do their job. Have a "cheat sheet" of facts, names, dates, etc. Also, have a list of club members who have agreed to be interviewed and a list of those who don't shy away from the camera. Have extra fact sheets available and hand them to the newspeople as you introduce yourself. Even if a press photographer shows up, have someone from the club take pictures for the club's files and for next year's promotion.

Write thank you notes to the media that ran your stories and also to the newspeople who showed up at the event even if they didn't print a story. Send them a follow-up release with the results of the event. Get clippings of the stories for your club bulletin board and copy them for your files.

If the media doesn't show up, keep good notes, do your own interviews, and take pictures to send out with a follow-up press release. Newspapers usually only accept black-and-white photos that are very sharp and show action. Avoid shots of people shaking hands or passing out awards. Also, be friendly to any spectators and parents who show up to watch or help out. With the right impression, these people may help you some way in the future.

Send follow-up press releases and include the photos you took. Follow-up releases should be distributed immediately after the event, so you should begin to write them before the event. If the photos aren't ready, just include a note that they will be available if anyone wants to call for them.

In either case, keep good notes on who attended, who showed an interest, and who printed stories. Evaluate your results and jot down tips for the next time you have to publicize an event or to help the next public relations chairman. Review your media list, make additions, corrections, and notes where necessary. Ask the media if they received the information in the correct form, and ask them how they would like you to handle future stories.

### **Tips on improving external public relations:**

- Let people know that Key Club supports its school and community by creating posters to display at every event.
- Host appreciation banquets for parents, grandparents, teachers, and supporters. Invite a district or International officer as a guest speaker. Don't forget to invite the press.
- Encourage members to wear their pins and sportswear. When participating in service projects, this should be a must. This is the most effective advertising available, and it's free.
- Send letters of congratulations to newly elected community and school officials and to newly elected officers of other school clubs.
- Participate in Key Club Week, and use the activities of that week to improve your public relations.
- Design club stationary. This will make a good impression when writing thank you notes, letters of congratulations, etc.

## **Internal Public Relations**

All the publicity, attention to detail, and service projects in the world wouldn't hold Key Club together if Key Clubbers didn't enjoy being in Key Club. However, clubs do stay together and do constitute a constantly growing force for good in the community and school because Key Clubbers enjoy the fun and fellowship of Key Clubbing. As public relations chairman, you must help the president and the members keep Key Club enjoyable. Internal public relations may involve seeing that members wear their pins, that new members feel at home, that the Key Clubber who is ill is remembered with a card or a visit, and that Key Club meetings are so well planned, so well run, and so appealing to the members that attendance, membership, and enthusiasm constantly run high!

While the public relations chairman is not directly responsible for meeting programs, new-member education, attendance, bulletin production, or service activities, your concerns overlap all of these responsibilities to some degree. You should tactfully make a positive contribution to all of them. Good public relations can't make up for poor club administration or a lack of good programming, but it can enhance good activities.

### **Tips on improving internal public relations**

- Start a weekly club bulletin if your club doesn't already have one. Include the minutes of the last meeting, a calendar of events, reminders of future meetings, and updates. Also include personal items such as birthdays and awards members may have received. These articles can induce readership if they are comprehensive, accurate, and in good taste.
- If your club already has a bulletin, someone else may be the editor. If so, let him/her do the job, but remind the editor of the bulletin's purpose if you think it's necessary.
- Buy a club bulletin board to post in the school or your meeting room. Designate specific areas on the board for each of the officers to use for his/her announcements and reminders.
- Conduct New Member Training. Have it start or end with an introduction of the old members. Make it more like an informal party or reception than a stuffy training session. Schedule it in a fun place like a park or someone's home.
- Submit story ideas to KEYNOTER magazine. It would do wonders for your club's morale if its work were featured in Key Club's own magazine. [keyclub.org](http://keyclub.org)
- Help the club realize its importance. Compliment and thank members often. Remind them that they make a difference.
- Key Club also has a Public Relations Manual available. The manual includes sample press releases, recognition certificates, and lots of useful tips. If your club does not have one, call Key Club International at 1-800-KIWANIS or 317-875-8755 ext. 390 to request a copy.

a Kiwanis-family member

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