

PR STRATEGY TIPS AND TIMELINE

Here are 10 public relations strategies that can complement your marketing efforts.

- 1. Create a Top 10 List** — Brainstorm with your staff and the [Experience Columbus public relations staff](#) to identify what is new or different about your meeting. Are you working with a local charity? Introducing new technology? Highlighting a major public speaker? What will your move-in look like? What are the interesting, newsworthy photo opportunities? Whatever your top 10 may be, make sure items have mass appeal so local consumer media, including television, radio, online and print outlets will be interested. There is a story to be told in every meeting.
- 2. Target Your Stories** — Experience Columbus maintains a local media list for your use. As soon as your convention is booked, request the list from your [convention services representative](#) and vet it for appropriate contacts to add to your database. Be sure to target stories to specific departments (e.g. health, science, education or business media) for more effective results.
- 3. Look for Trends** — Is there a trend in your industry that might make a great story? Often, reporters, especially at major daily newspapers, need to see a trend to cover an industry convention. Know what the trends are in your industry and you could become a part of a major feature story.
- 4. Make a Strong Connection to the City** — Find a local angle to incorporate into media pitches. Promote your attendance and economic impact projections with Experience Columbus, so Columbus organizations and businesses will see the importance of your convention and help support your efforts. Work with a local charity by donating all extra show food and beverages to a food bank or promote your efforts with a community program.
- 5. Tell the City's Story** — From the day your attendees learn about the convention program, educate them about the host city. Experience Columbus offers free feature stories about the city as well as photos and video clips that can paint a picture of the destination, keeping your attendees interested and informed to help raise attendance numbers. If you have an industry publication, you might want to do a feature on Columbus in the publication one month prior, so attendees can start planning their visits.
- 6. Promote Only if Prepared** — Plan for media attending the events you promote. Get consent from all speakers prior to inviting media and have specific materials prepared, including the agenda, speakers' bios and a schedule of events. Prepare a Q&A document with likely inquiries media will make. Ensure all staff know key messages as media will not necessarily only interview prepared speakers. Send a media alert out one week prior with convention highlights. Re-release this information on a daily basis and make lots of targeted follow-up pitches.
- 7. Staff a Press Room** — If you plan to have media come through your show or meeting, plan on staffing a press room. This room should include up-to-date press releases, photographs and resources, computers with internet access, a strong Wi-Fi signal and at least one phone line staffed to answer media inquiries during show hours. A press room also serves as a meeting place for interviews with speakers and executives and a checkpoint for escorting media onto the show floor.

8. **Be Accessible** — List a specific room where your event is taking place and ensure plenty of directional signage is in place. Media who cannot find an event cannot cover an event and sometimes cannot wait until a public relations representative is found on the show floor. If you release information through a press release, be accessible and list phone numbers where interested media can reach you at all times.
9. **Keep it Simple** — You may know what certain industry terms mean, but that doesn't mean that the media and public do. Media will be more apt to cover your events if news items have mass appeal and can be understood by people outside the industry. Make the connection between your industry news and public interest.
10. **Timing is Everything** — The key to promoting a convention or trade show is an early start. If you are trying to increase attendance, do not rely on the local media. Your best bet for driving attendance is to focus pre-convention efforts on trade magazines and newsletters in your industry, which are more likely to give upcoming conventions and tradeshow substantial coverage. Local media almost always focus on a meeting only after it arrives. Keep current events in mind when pitching stories. Timely pitches related to current news items often generate great coverage. Consider following this sample timeline:

Upon Booking	<p>Prepare PR Timeline <i>Request local media list from Experience Columbus and identify what is new or different about the event that could serve as a key story idea.</i></p>
TBD	<p>Host City Announcement <i>Use copy, video and photos obtained from Experience Columbus to showcase the host city on social media, your website and in e-newsletters.</i></p>
TBD	<p>Registration Announcement <i>Include information about Columbus in call for registration in industry publications and e-announcements.</i></p>
Ongoing	<p>Major Announcements <i>Keep both trade and local media in the loop regarding major keynote speakers or conference events as they are planned.</i></p>
One Month Out	<p>Feature Columbus in Industry Publication <i>Give attendees a sense of what they can expect to see, do and experience in Columbus as they are prepping and packing for the trip!</i></p>
2-3 Weeks Out	<p>Send press release or invitation to attend to targeted local media <i>Specific points of interest:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the tradeshow is open to the public, local media may be interested in sharing with their audiences - If there is a large local economic impact, local business media may be interested in reporting
One Week Out	<p>Send media alert with event highlights</p>
During Event	<p>Staff a press room</p> <p>Send daily updates to local media on key event highlights</p> <p>Consider holding a press conference</p> <p>Execute targeted follow-up pitches to with specific areas of interest</p>