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Section 1: Foreword

The information presented in this guide should help you to improve your relationships with the media and, as a result, contribute toward the objective of presenting a favorable image for your firm.

Keep in mind that the requirements of local and national media are vastly different. A story with lots of local flavor may be suitable for local use, but hold no interest for national media. Story proposals for national media should be judged on the basis of what would be of interest to a national audience. Let the types of stories a particular media outlet uses be a guide to your submissions.

When contacting a media outlet, provide material that is well organized and contains essential facts, such as names and telephone numbers of individuals who can supply additional information. This makes it more likely that busy editors will pursue stories that may interest them.

Go beyond the basic facts to emphasize why you believe a media outlet's audience would be interested in your story. Suggest a "hook" for focusing a story. This will increase the likelihood that the editor will put a "spin" on it that is similar to the one you would like to see published.

Think in terms of a long-term relationship with the media. Although a project story you have brought to an editor's attention may not emphasize its construction aspect, most editors will give the contractor recognition for its role. And the initial contact can open the door to future opportunities to propose stories, and for you to become recognized as a knowledgeable source of construction-related information.

Productive interaction with the media serves the interests of both parties.

Gordon Wright, Senior Editor
Building Design & Construction



Section 2: Developing a Media Plan

When dealing with the media, it is wise to have a media plan, so that all materials and communications can have a uniform look and “voice.” News releases, brochures and opinion editorials can all communicate a message about your company that is consistent and what you want to say. You cannot control what members of the press write about you, but you can control what YOU say and the image that you present to the community.

- To develop a plan, you first have to decide what your message is. What is your mission? What are your primary goals and objectives? And what message do you want to get across to your targeted “publics?” You should consider these questions when developing a media plan. For example, your firm may place an emphasis on safety and may, in fact, have won awards for strong safety performance. You may want to ensure that a component of your media plan focuses on safety.
- Once you have decided what you want to say, you need to conduct some preliminary research. You first need to identify who your key “publics” are—potential clients, subcontractors, community members and, in some cases, even lawmakers. You also want to create a media list that includes publications, television and radio programs that are read, watched and listened to by your target audiences. Find out key items like circulation, areas covered and focus to develop your list. Don’t forget to include the “trade” publications—that are often the most likely candidates to routinely cover construction projects and company-related information.
- The media plan itself should include a variety of “tools” that help you get your message out. These include news releases, letters to the editor, opinion editorials, an Internet site, feature articles and special events.



Cultivating relationships with the trade media

Relationships with the press should be cultivated over time. Perhaps some of the easiest connections to make are with editors of construction-related publications. These editors need you as much as you need them; the construction industry is their “beat,” and they are always looking for good material to include in their publications. As a result, you may find them receptive to your ideas about projects you are working on, an innovative service, or awards won.

When you identify a construction-related publication that covers your area or your type of company, call or arrange a visit to introduce yourself to the editor and/or other publications staff. Get to know them. Then stay in touch. Give the editors a call from time to time or drop them a note, perhaps to update them on what you are doing or to comment on an article that has appeared in their publication. The main point is to form a mutually beneficial relationship that will strengthen over time.

Some tips: (These tips from Kirk Landers, editor of *Construction Equipment*, were featured in an edition of *CWA News*.)

Prioritize your targets. There is a limit to the number of close editorial relationships you can maintain over an extended period of time, especially if you have responsibilities beyond press relations. Target those magazines that have the most significance to your communications goals.

Don't play the advertising card. The quid pro quo school of PR (I'll advertise if you run my product release) is an insult to any editor who is serious about building an audience. It also brands the speaker as an amateur with dated notions about marketing communications.

Educate your target editors. Very few editors have expertise in the subjects they cover. Therefore, make education part of your relationship with target editors. Give them annual updates on what's happening in your company and your markets—technical



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changes, market share shifts, new applications, etc. This kind of information leads to article ideas and also stamps your company as a great reference for stories that touch on related subjects.

Meet face to face at least once a year. Use trade shows, association meetings, business travel to editors' cities, and similar occasions to cultivate relationships. Meals are better than meetings in the booth. If that's not possible, meet over a cup of coffee.

Follow up. Find a way to speak with your target editors at least once a year, if only for a few minutes. This can be a phone call. It can be mostly social, but make it a point to remind the editor of what you talked about at your last face-to-face meeting ("You know, we've really taken to heart what you said about press releases. I hope you're seeing the difference.").

Have specific, realistic objectives. What do you want to get out of your relationships with editors? Have specific, long-term objectives for each magazine based on the type of material it publishes. Make sure your objectives are realistic.

Don't let a friendship supersede business. Initiating and building relationships can be challenging. However, sometimes the most challenging situation for both a communicator and editor comes after a strong friendship develops. It's easy to spend an entire dinner talking sports, family and industry gossip and never get around to discussing the needs and interests of the magazine and your organization. Similarly, sometimes communicators are reluctant to convey criticism or discuss negative subjects with a favored editor for fear of taking advantage of a friendship.

These are business relationships and business friendships, and one of the main advantages to both parties is the foundation of straightforward communications.



Developing the feature article

Writing a feature article for possible publication in a local newspaper or trade journal can be a good way for you to garner some publicity for a specific project, employee or community service activity. Because many newspapers and trade journals accept “freelance” articles, you may find numerous opportunities to highlight a specific project or activity in depth. This not only showcases your company and the good work that it is doing, it also allows you to more effectively control the coverage that appears in the publication, because the article is written by you or someone on your staff.

Before submitting a feature article, find out if your targeted publication will accept articles. If so, find out what the word count and any other restrictions are so that your article fits into the parameters of the publication. Also, make sure you are familiar with the writing style of the publication: In order for an article to be accepted, it must be similar in tone and style.

Perhaps you’re not a writer. You can still “pitch” the idea of a feature article to editors. You can either write a short “pitch” letter or call to explain why the readers of your targeted publication would enjoy reading about your project/activity. Remember, editors, particularly editors of trade journals, are always looking for an interesting topic to feature in their publication.

Some tips for writing a feature:

- Your first paragraph should be interesting and be able to pique the reader’s interest immediately. You want the reader to read the entire story, so you want to get them “hooked” right away.
- Your article should tell a story, with a clear beginning, middle and end. Try to center the story around an event that is inherently dramatic. For example, if you are working on a Habitat for Humanity project, make the main focus of your article the day(s) you spent building the project. This lends a narrative structure to



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your article and makes it more likely that readers will read the full article.

- Be sure to focus on people and include plenty of quotes. People like to read about other people and like to hear what they have to say. If you are working on a Habitat for Humanity project, for instance, include quotes from project managers or employees working on the project.
- Be familiar with your target audience. Readers of a construction trade magazine will be looking for different things than readers of the local newspaper and will be more comfortable with construction-specific terminology.



Nine keys to effective media relations

1. Develop solid relationships. Take the time before a crisis strikes to get to know the key reporters in your local area and with the construction trade media who cover construction. There is no substitute for letting someone know that they can always pick up the phone and talk with you on a subject. Your company should have a list of key reporters with phone, fax and e-mail addresses if possible. ABC chapters are a good resource.
2. Learn about the media work cycle. Journalists have a tough job to do just like construction professionals. Theirs is a profession with its own ebb and flow. Be sure to learn about journalists' deadlines and to always meet them.
3. Always be clear and truthful. Don't try to be coy and deceptive with a journalist. It will always come back to haunt you.
4. Don't go off the record. If possible, always stay "on the record" when talking to a journalist. Going off the record only creates dilemmas for the journalist and potential problems for you. You don't have to offer any information that you do not want to offer, but you should never offer background information that you do not want to be attributed to you or your company.
5. Relax. A journalist will assume you have something to hide if you appear withdrawn or nervous, and this is an even more important consideration if you are doing a broadcast interview. Remember you are being given an opportunity to present your side of the story, so just relax and relay your thoughts.
6. Stay on message. Determine the key points you want to get across in the interview. Such as:

"XYZ Construction has an outstanding record of safe, efficient, high-quality and cost-effective construction in this community. In addition, our employees are deeply involved in giving back to their community through volunteer service."



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Regardless of the interviewer's questions, continue to come back to these key points. Turn negative questions into positive responses. Never affirm the negative. If the journalist asks: "Does your firm have a disastrous safety record?", do not reply: "No, our firm does not have a disastrous safety record." In the public's mind, it will register that your spokesperson mouthed the words, "our firm" and "disastrous safety record." Instead, say something like "Our firm has a long record of safe, high quality construction. We are dedicated to a safe workplace, and are proud of our firm's (involvement in national safety programs, awards, manual, safety toolbox talks, etc.)."

7. Prepare. Anticipate the tough questions that the journalist may ask. Keep responses brief and positive. If there was a violation in the past, express regret and the steps that the firm put in place to eliminate this problem. Return quickly to your main point about the firm being a "better business" leader that is engaged in the local community.

8. Be positive and enthusiastic. Have an open face. You want to be perceived as the "good guy" that you are. Don't appear on television with a scowl on your face. Don't sound anxious or annoyed when talking with a reporter over the phone.

9. Reiterate your main point. Be repetitive. Be repetitive. Be repetitive. When you want to make the point that your firm is a good firm, a solid member of the local community with a great track record, keep coming back to that point.



Press releases

The news release is the main vehicle by which you disseminate information about your company. New hires, new projects and awards won are all good subject material for news releases.

The editors and journalists you are trying to reach must sift through many releases from many organizations. You want to make sure that your release is read and not thrown on the discard pile. Your release should be written and formatted as professionally as possible. Some basic guidelines:

- Your company should develop a letterhead template that includes the words “News Release” or “Press Release” at the top. This letterhead should also include the name of your key contact person, phone number, fax number and e-mail address.
- Your “lead” sentence should have a news angle to hook the editor and keep him reading. Ideally, it should also include your company name and an action taken on that day or another date certain.
- Avoid flowery prose and overuse of adjectives—the editors or reporters reading your release don’t have time or inclination to try to figure out your point if it is not clear, and they are less likely to trust information that is clearly biased. Save the opinions for the quotes from your spokesperson.
- Include plenty of quotes, because quotes are usually what journalists pick up from releases. The quote from your spokesperson is where you should include any information that is more opinion than fact.
- Always be able to back up your statements and be sure of your facts. If you’re not sure of something, leave it out.
- Make sure you include contact information so the editor/journalist can call if they have more questions.

Journalists appreciate being kept informed. They need you as much as you need them. But remember: good media relations is based on



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relationships and trust. If you send out releases with erroneous information, you will lose credibility with the people you need to communicate your message to your “target audience.”



Special events

Sometimes you can “create” news by staging a special event. Reporters are in the business of covering “news,” and an open house, ribbon-cutting ceremony or special activity are all the types of events reporters tend to cover because they involve action and occasionally even drama. On the other hand, you don’t want to throw the proverbial party to which no one comes. Make sure there is a reason for your event and that it has news value.

What is news? Media scholar Kathleen Hall Jamieson says news is “the report of an event that happened or was disclosed within the previous 24 hours and treats an issue of ongoing concern.” This basic concept is the underpinning of what constitutes “news” and can inform your decisions about creating “happenings” likely to be covered by the press.

Some tips:

- Planning is key. If every last detail is not thought about and planned, things could go wrong, which could prove embarrassing if members of the press are in attendance. Plan your event far enough in advance so that you have adequate time to make arrangements and attend to every detail.
- Alert the press. Send out a media advisory or news release telling reporters the details about your event: when, where, who, etc. Or, if you are having a social event, send them an invitation. A few days before the event is to occur, call the reporters to remind them about the event and ask them if they plan to come. Make sure you include reporters and editors from publications that specialize in covering the construction industry.
- Keep them happy. At the event, make sure you introduce yourself to the reporters in attendance and make sure they have everything they need to write their story. you may want to have a media sign in sheet that leaves room for reporters to write their address and phone number. That way, you can reach them after the event if you



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need to. If there is food at your event, make sure the reporters are fed.



Writing a letter to the editor

The philosophy behind your newspaper's letter-to-the-editor page can vary dramatically. The key variable is the size of the paper. Some editors see this page as a community bulletin board on which all sorts of opinions may be posted. For example, you might see a letter from a homeowner complaining about a recent county commission vote, even if the newspaper never covered the commission. This wide-open policy is typically found at smaller papers, where there can be more of a challenge to fill space.

A more common approach is the one taken by many mid-size to large newspapers. These papers receive many potential letters to the editor each day. For the editors of these larger papers, relevance is the key consideration. They only print letters to the editor that offer feedback, criticism or praise for stories and opinion columns that have recently appeared in their paper.

You should read the letters to the editor that are frequently printed in your local newspapers. This is the single best indicator of the style that works with the editors of those papers. Once you determine the best approach, then you're ready to begin.

- Read the publication regularly. You need to be familiar with the publication to be able to comment intelligently about it in a letter to the editor.
- Know what you're writing about. If you criticize a column, you need to be sure you are factually correct. The same holds true for praise or additional observations.
- Watch your tone. There are times when an indignant approach may work, but usually a reasoned and respectful tone is best. You can be direct and critical without being unprofessional. If you are writing representing ABC you want to be professional. Furthermore, this is a wiser approach since you will likely in the future need to work with the journalist whose story you are critiquing.



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- Be sure you're clear on word-count requirements. All papers have either a specific or general word-count limit on letters to the editor. Call ahead to be sure, rather than risk having a good letter rejected because it's too long—or too short.
- Cite the story you are responding to at the beginning of your letter. Usually it is best to refer to the columnist, story title and date of the story in your opening paragraph.
- Write and rewrite. Often it is the best written pieces that are run. Have someone look over the piece for any grammatical errors, typos, punctuation errors, etc.
- Ask for deadlines and how the paper would like to receive your piece. In most cases, it is best to fax your letter, and then follow up to be certain it was received.
- Provide information on how you can be reached. Most papers will follow up with you directly to verify you wrote the piece before they run it. Include your daytime telephone number when you send your letter to the newspaper. Some newspapers require both a home a business telephone number for any letters submitted.
- Follow up. If you haven't heard anything after a few days, give the editor a call. Inquire politely.
- Don't get discouraged if you don't get into the paper. Continue to send letters on a variety of topics which affect ABC and merit shop construction. Eventually your persistence will pay off.

In some cases, you may decide to write a full-blown opinion editorial.

Most of the previous points hold true for op-eds as well. Often it is more challenging to get an opinion editorial into a newspaper than a letter to the editor. The goal of the op-ed page is to give writers from outside the newspaper staff an opportunity to voice their opinions on matters of community/public interest.



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Opinion editorials are usually longer than letters to the editor. Additionally, they do not necessarily need to be in response to a particular story run by the newspaper in which they appear. They are simply the writer's opinion on a particular issue.

The best opinion editorials are filled with factual data supporting an argument. They are written like a good news story, with the lead at the beginning, the body of supporting evidence in the middle and a strong conclusion encouraging readers to take a particular course of action at the end.



Section 3: Crisis Communication

What do you do when the worst happens and an accident or other crisis occurs at one of your jobsites? If not handled properly, the reputation of your company could be at stake. However, with proper planning and an appropriate response, a crisis doesn't necessarily mean disaster in terms of your standing in the community and with your clients.

The key is to develop a plan for responding to a crisis before the crisis occurs. In your planning process, try to consider several scenarios in which a crisis could occur and devise a plan to respond to each one. Decide who will be the spokesperson, what you will say, what you will do. This will enable you to respond quickly and appropriately when faced with a volatile situation.

Realize that during a crisis, the media could be either your friend or foe, depending largely on how you respond and how you treat them. Try to build relationships with local journalists so they know you and your company long before a crisis occurs. That way, when the unexpected happens, a relationship already will be established. They will know your company and know what you do, and their story will likely reflect that.

If a crisis does occur:

- Appoint one individual to serve as a spokesperson. Having one spokesperson prevents conflicting messages from being communicated to the media and avoids confusion in identifying who has the authority to say what.
- Be honest and forthright in what you say. It is better to acknowledge that a mistake has been made and explain what you are doing to address the problem than to try to cover it up. If you are not sure of something or don't know the answer, say so.
- Do not say "No comment." It makes you look evasive and defensive and breeds hostility among reporters. If you cannot comment on something, explain why.



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- Make sure all key personnel are able to stay in touch via cellular phone at all times and give reporters a way to reach your spokesperson after hours.



Section 4: Communications Advice

by Arch Lustberg

Conversation is the root of all oral communications. The goal of communications is to implant in my mind what's in your mind. And that is done best when you talk to me. The burden of the effort is on the communicator. Don't ever forget that. Moving your mouth and saying words in a common language isn't enough. The one who appears to be reasonable, sensible, trying to be reassuring usually wins. Let it be you.

Remember your goal is to be liked. You want to win over the other people in your audience. Think of Mike Wallace from "60 Minutes."

When the person he's interviewing looks shady, evasive, unlikable, you root for Wallace. You want him to burst that awful person's balloon. When the person he's interviewing looks pleasant, likeable and in control, you tend to wonder why he's so rotten to that nice person.

Use my techniques to make yourself that likeable person everyone is rooting for. And, remember, practice makes perfect.

Practice with your colleagues, your family, your neighbors and your coworkers. See how warmly people react to the smile, the open face, the gesture and eye contact. Put these new skills to work the next time you meet a stranger. Open your face, smile and say (don't shout) "Good morning!" You'll probably make that stranger's day. You'll probably get such a pleasant response, you'll make your own day too.

When you're called upon to speak to the media or before an audience, make it a point to be the same human being you are when you talk to your neighbors and friends. Don't be surprised when you're met with equal warmth and enthusiasm.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



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- * Know in advance exactly what you can and cannot say about the organization you represent.
- * Develop a positive attitude and frame of mind. Maintain it no matter what.
- * Eliminate negative buzz words.
- * Pause, don't talk until your mind is working.
- * Maintain a sense of rapport with the person with whom you're talking.
- * Make your points in terms that are meaningful.
- * Relax. Breathe normally.
- * Keep it short and simple.

YOUR FACE

- * Don't close your brow in an effort to look professional. Instead, raise your brow to project a warm, welcoming person.
- * Smile at every appropriate opportunity.

YOUR BODY

- * Stand comfortably, but erect.
- * If you're seated, keep your back straight and lean forward away from the back of the chair.
- * Force yourself to use gestures but only when they look natural.

YOUR VOICE

- * Make your tone warm by opening up your face and using gestures.
- * Use pitch and rate conversationally.
- * Use only enough volume to be heard.

TIPS FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS



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Not many years ago, few people were likely to be interviewed by the media. Times have changed. With more and more cable stations, "news" magazine shows, radio talk shows and trade professional journals, we've all become fair game.

Most people have a natural fear of the unknown when it comes to media interviews. Training will help you become more comfortable with the role of interviewee. But for now let's go over some basics: First, remember that the interviewer is a conduit, a way to reach your audience (the viewers, listeners or readers.) Most journalists are decent, honorable people. They want you to do well. Some "tabloid" reporters may not, but don't let them bait you into a fight. Use them to reach your audience. You'll reach your audience if you're likeable. We listen to people we like. We want to believe people we like. But it's hard to like someone who frowns and snaps at a reporter, even in response to an attack. Once you reach your audience, through being likeable, you want to project competence. It doesn't matter how brilliant you are if your audience doesn't perceive you that way. So let's look at some Dos and Don'ts that will help your audience like you and trust your information. Your goal is to be so good and interesting that they'll put your interview on the air or write a glowing article. Next best is to be so good that they decide not to use the interview. The damaging scenario is that you're terrible and you show it. That won't happen if you follow these Dos and Don'ts.

LUSTBERG SAYS DO

- * Prepare, practice, rehearse
- * Dress appropriately: long-sleeved shirts and over- the-calf socks for men; clothes that cover cleavage, upper arms and thighs for women
- * Accept an offer of make-up at the studio
- * Breathe deeply, rhythmically, from the diaphragm



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- * Open your face: raise your eyebrows to create horizontal lines in your brow
- * Let hands fall loosely at your sides
- * Smile when appropriate
- * Sit correctly: erect, leaning slightly forward, knees together
- * Gesture when appropriate
- * Be honest: admit it when you don't know the answer; admit it if an obvious problem exists
- * Pause: think, maintain eye contact, remain silent (except on radio and telephone).
- * Be positive: say what you DO, not what you don't do
- * Be proud of yourself and your organization
- * Be understandable: simple, brief, clear, concise
- * Be quotable and memorable: tell stories, use examples
- * Look at the person who's speaking
- * Look at the person whose question you're answering
- * Vary the pitch and rate of your speech
- * Stop talking when you've answered the question
- * Be informative, educate ñ that's why you're there!

LUSTBERG SAYS DON'T

- * Wing it.
- * Wear or do anything that calls attention to itself and away from your message.
- * Allow yourself to be placed with the sun in your eyes.



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- * Frown or close your face.
- * Maintain a neutral, expressionless face.
- * Lock yourself into positions like the fig leaf (hands grasped together in front of mid-section) hands crossed over chest or hands thrust into pockets.
- * Slouch, fidget or swivel in your chair.
- * Repeat negatives, tell us what you don't do or make denials (I am not a crook).
- * Lose your cool or get angry.
- * Say "no comment." If you can't comment, explain why.
- * Be pompous by trying to look professional or using jargon or "scholarly" words and language.
- * Keep talking just because the microphone is still in your face.
- * Talk to the camera unless you're instructed.
- * Look at the TV monitor.
- * Be shocked. Expect loaded questions and rigged statements.
- * Shout, or even speak loudly (let the microphone do its job).
- * Speak in a monotone.
- * Say it (even "off the record") if you don't want it printed or broadcast.

This was adapted from Arch Lustberg's videocassette, "Communicating Effectively Through the Media."



Section 5: Corporate Public Relations Tools

Good public relations is more than just working with the media. It is a comprehensive strategy that involves creating a positive image of your company with your clients, employees and community. All of your materials and communications—printed materials, correspondence and discussions with clients, subcontractors and employees—contribute to your company’s reputation and image. As a result, you should be careful that you are consistent in delivering your message in all that you say and do, via the printed and spoken word. Brochures, newsletters and Internet Web sites all can be used to enhance your firm’s reputation.



Creating a newsletter

You may want to develop a corporate newsletter to send to business associates and clients. A corporate newsletter essentially becomes a marketing tool as it enables you to show off your company in your own words to potential clients and can raise your company's profile in the community. A good company newsletter can also put a human "face" behind your company. A letter from the company president or profiles of company employees in each issue can help your various "publics" get to know you better—publics who may be more inclined to use your services as a result. A company newsletter can also build morale and a "team" mindset in your most important asset—your employees.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- **Nameplate.** The nameplate at the top of the front page sets the tone for the newsletter and should look appealing and professional. Remember: More is not always better. Don't overwhelm your front page with multiple fonts and complicated graphics. Sometimes simplicity works best. To get ideas, look at some newsletters that you think work well.
- **Size and length.** Determine the size and format with which you are most comfortable, but keep in mind that most newsletters are printed in an 8 1/2" x 11" or 11" x 17" size. Generally speaking, it is most cost effective to print a newsletter with page counts which are multiples of four. A basic sheet of press paper folds down into what printers call a "signature"—which consists of four or eight pages when folded down to size and trimmed. By containing your newsletter to one or more full signatures, you are assuring yourself of the most economical usage of the printer's press, which translates into lower reproduction costs. Other page counts can be used, but they may cost your extra.
- **Columns.** You will generally want to divide your layouts into columns, which lend structure to the newsletter and make it easier to read. Again, look at some newsletters that you think have



attractive layouts to determine whether they are divided into two, three, four, five or other column formats.

- **Fonts.** Generally, for body text you will want to use serif fonts—fonts that have slight curvatures at the tops and bottoms—like Times Roman, New Baskerville (ABC Today type font), Palatino, or Bookman. For headlines, you will generally use a “sans serif” font such as Franklin Gothic or Helvetica. Body type should be 10-12 point sized.
- **Color.** A full, four-color newsletter can be an expensive proposition. On the other hand, a plain black and white newsletter can look dull. You can bring a newsletter to life by adding one to two “spot” colors. Also, consider using a percentage of a color (such as 10 percent black or blue) behind boxed text —this is called a “screen”—to add more variety to your pages. However, make sure you run your photos in either black and white or full four-color. You don’t want to make the mistake of running a photo in all red or all blue ink (Imagine your company president with a bright red face!). Stick with black ink for text and photos and a second color for headlines, screens, logos, etc., and you’ll be able to produce a sharp looking newsletter with no problems.
- **Photos.** Use as many as you can in your newsletter to break up boring pages full of type. But make sure that the photos are of good quality so that they will reproduce well. A good camera is worthwhile investment. Photos really add to the interest value of your publication. Remember, people love to see pictures of themselves and their friends.
- **Computer software.** Any format beyond one to two columns should be done in a desktop publishing software package, such as PageMaker or QuarkXPress. These packages allow you to custom design your publication with as many columns and graphic elements you want. Other software packages can be used, but PageMaker and Quark are the most frequently used by designers and printers. Additionally, computer and printing technology have evolved to the point that you can give your printer everything it needs on a



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computer disk; many printers no longer need “camera-ready” pages. Talk with your printer representative to determine how he or she would like to receive your publication.



Creating a Web presence

The Internet seems to be everywhere these days, and many contractors that have developed web pages to promote their services have found them to be quite useful in acquiring new business. If you haven't already, you may want to develop a Web site of your own. Look at some Web sites that you find appealing and use them as a model for developing your site. Much of the information that you would include in a company brochure or newsletter can be adapted for your site. In fact, you can even include copies of your newsletter on your site.

Keep reading for a more detailed discussion on developing a Web site, from *Building Profits in the Construction Industry* by Michael T. Kubal, Kevin T. Miller, Ronald D. Worth.

Marketing on the Web

- **Develop an organizational chart** A Web page is developed very much like an organizational chart. It starts at the top with the most important and general interest page and then fans out into pages with specific functions. Most Web sites start with what is called a home page. This page introduces your company and typically contains a very brief description (if any) and an index of the main categories contained in your Web site. After the home page, the organization chart flows to main categories and then to subcategories, until all the information you want to present is delivered in a logical manner. Create the outline and flow chart on paper and get consensus from all the people who need to be involved in the decision-making process; then proceed from there.
- **Design** Designing for the Web is different than other forms of design. Whereas designing for ads and direct mail requires a graphic approach that grabs attention, design elements on a Web site serve to aid visitors on their journey to get information. Design is critical because it helps convey your competitive strengths and creates an important first impression. But the design you choose should not slow down information exchange. Off-the-shelf software is available



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for developing Web pages. PageMill from Adobe (www.adobe.com) and Front Page from Microsoft (www.microsoft.com) are the two most commonly used software programs for designing Web sites, and NetObjects Fusion is a basic program that adds some higher levels of “functionality.” These programs generate the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) programming needed to create a functioning Web site. They provide templates in which you can plug in visuals and text, or you can import design elements created from other graphic design desktop software like QuarkXpress or Aldus PageMaker, from Adobe. You can also import photos from programs like Adobe Photoshop or illustrations from programs like Adobe Illustrator. Even services like America Online (www.aol.com) have templates that the average person can use to create simple Web sites; however, they would not create the kind of sites most businesses would need to set them apart from their competitors. Of course, these are just tools, and they don’t necessarily give you the skills you need to design a Web site that has the right mix of marketing savvy and creativity. And, the level of multimedia sophistication and programming needed to develop the better Web sites has increased dramatically in recent years. For these reasons, the business of Web site design and development has grown dramatically, with the better Web development firms investing heavily in training their designers and developers.

Building Profits in the Construction Industry, published by The McGraw-Hill Companies includes more information about building a Web site. ABC members receive a discount on the book if they order through ABC.



Developing a company brochure

You are your own strongest advocate. Many of America's most successful construction companies have a brochure or packet that describes the company's identity, successes and mission. This can be a vital tool to include as a part of a packet to clients.

The brochure does not need to be complicated. A few simple points, well-stated and illustrated with appealing art, will go a long way toward communicating the message you wish to convey. Brevity is key. A good photo of a successful project or photos of key personnel can get your message across much more powerfully than paragraphs of text.

You may want to work with a professional designer to develop the brochure, since it will be your primary company "showpiece." Look up designers and service bureaus in the yellow pages and ask for samples of their work. They can help you decide the parameters for your brochure and give you an estimate on how much it will cost to design and print.

Or, an in-house public relations or marketing manager, if you have one, could develop the brochure.

Some recommended contents of a company brochure:

- Company mission statement;
- The company's vision for the future and pledge to clients;
- Introduction and company history;
- Company officers, photographs and biographies;
- Photographs and profiles of significant projects completed by the company
- Quotes from letters from satisfied clients



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- Details about your firm's safety program, safety statistics and information on any safety awards, etc., by the company;
- Photographs and profiles of community service projects completed by the company;
- Quotes from letters of appreciation for community service;
- Quotes from articles or profiles written about the company;
- Information on employee training and benefits along with any awards won by employees for craftsmanship, etc.;
- Information on any special programs such as ABC's Accredited Quality Contractor program, Platinum Safety program and other trade association participation by your firm;
- Letters of support for your firm from area leaders/groups.