BALLOON RACE **PR** TOOLKIT

Fundraising using a 100% eco-friendly Virtual Balloon Race is something worth you shouting about.

So below is a selection of ideas and resources to help you get your fundraising noticed and hopefully get local community support along the way.

It's easier than you think, and we've prepared some useful tools and tips to help you.

LOCAL PRESS

A story in your local paper is a simple, effective way to let your community know you're organising a virtual balloon race to raise funds for your charity. It's a great opportunity to publicise the event, spread the word about the charity and its aims and even subtlely encourage a few donations too. Here are 10 top tips to help you get as much publicity as you can:

Your local journalists do want to hear from you. They are always on the lookout for local people doing something different and, more especially for a good cause.

Prepare a Press Release before you get in touch with a journalist, because like most professionals nowadays, journalists are amazingly busy so you need to get your information structured and ready. That's where a press release comes in useful. Some basic rules

Don't be an advert, remember you're sharing a story, so just stick to the facts

Avoid jargon: use plain language that everyone can understand – no technobabble please!
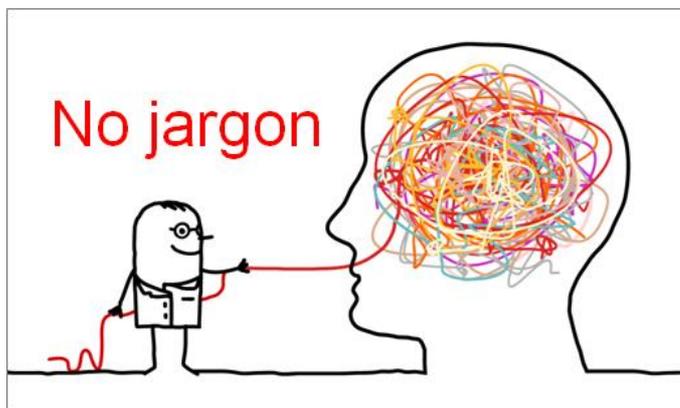
Be concise: some search engines won't even read your release if it's too long winded

Provide relevant and factual information about the charity. It is often a good idea wherever possible, to include a case study of a local person who may have a connection with the cause, which has prompted them to get involved with the event

A picture is worth a thousand words. A good photo is essential for local press and can give your story more prominence. No head and shoulders shots though please – always full body wherever possible! Tell a story through your photo, for example this could be a picture of some of the

fundraisers in charity T-shirts. The photos that you send will need to be high resolution – 1000 x 1000 pixels say.

Common structural elements include

- Headline — used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news
- Dateline — contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release.
- Introduction — first paragraph in a press release, that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why
- Body — further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news
- Boilerplate — generally a short "about" section, providing independent background on the issuing company, organization, or individual
- Close — typically just '– Ends –'
- Media contact information — name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other

Adapted from Seven Traits of Press Releases That Actually Get Read (reprinted from Veronica Jarski, Marketing Profs August 2013)

1. A Zippy Email Subject Line
The email subject line often sets the tone for the email so a subject line that captures positive attention is one that highlights the main focus of the article and why readers should care about that focus. Remember that the subject line isn't a last-minute addition to your emailed press release - the subject line *is* the friend that will either get you into the party or get the door slammed on your face. Treat your friend well.

2. A Decent Greeting
Personalization is fantastic. A "Hello, Veronica" beats a "Hi, There" any day. Any greeting that shows that the sender did take time to read the guidelines for blog submissions or to understand the Daily Fix audience puts the reader in a good mood! So when writing your press releases, take time to think about how you will address the reader.

3. Clean, Crisp Lines
Often emails have the greeting in a tiny font and the rest of the piece in a larger, bold font. Sometimes, the emails are in different colours or fonts. Clearly, a name was swapped out in a form email. So be consistent and make the reader feel as if it was originally written for them.

A fantastic press release doesn't look like a press release. Instead, a fabulous press release looks like a quick, interesting email from someone who knows his stuff. The "official" press release (if it really needs to be included at all) is an attachment or added to the bottom of an otherwise intriguing email.

4. Well-Written Summary of What's Up
An elevator pitch is the best kind of pitch. For the digital world, imagine your elevator pitch is a tweet. Just tell me quickly and briefly why the

news your about to share matters. **What's your point? And why should I care about it?**

5. Bullet Points

Bullet points make for an easier, clearer read. Also, they demonstrate whether the author knows the most important details of the press release. If someone can't write brief bullet points about their content, that person does not know his content. If you write good bullet points, you're also very quotable, which is always a plus.

6. An Invitation to Talk More

One of my favourite endings to any email or press release is: *"If you've any ideas of how this can be a better fit for the Daily Fix, please feel free to email me."* I love that line. Those emails respect the reader's time and also demonstrates a willingness to create content that better suits the audience.

7. A Shareable Piece of Content

Remember when we were kids who attended birthday parties and received little goody bags? A good press release makes you feel like you've received something fun and captivating. So, when writing a press release, be sure to include information regarding where to get additional content for the readers. For example, a good press release will mention a related infographic available for download, a downloadable whitepaper, or even a cartoon or photo of the newsworthy event.

Remember, when you're writing a press release, you are writing for a person, not a building, who will receive your press release. And if you're really stuck on how to approach that person, imagine you're writing for your neighbour, who knows nothing about your business and will end the conversation if you get too long-winded or boring.

So remember - always write for other people, not you

When your Press Release is ready, **it's time to call the journalist.**

You'll find the number in the paper itself, on their website or in your local directory. If you require any help finding the relevant number please let us know and we will be able to help. The best time to contact them is in the morning. Ask to speak to a reporter that covers your area and always check if 'now is a good time to talk'.

A journalist might be in the middle of writing a story, so simply explain that you're a local resident and you're about to do (or have done) something really exciting for a good cause. The journalist will ask for some personal details, for example, your name and age, and for more details of the event.

If you have done your press release you'll have all the information you need. When you've answered their questions you can offer to send them the press release.

They might ask you about the work of the charity and therefore you should include this in the release either towards the end of the release or in the notes to editors.

Journalists don't like attachments and have inboxes that get clogged very easily. When you send over the press release, copy and paste it into the body of the email and tell them you have a photo for them to use. Only send over the photo when they've asked for it and will be expecting it.

Remember you have two opportunities to be featured in your local press – both before and after your event. If they cover your story before the event, make sure you get back in touch after. They might be interested in a photo of you during your event and hearing about your experiences.

Remember to post mentions and links to the articles on your social media channels as it is a great motivator for participants and another way of highlighting the event and the need for involvement from your supporters.

Further information
http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Press-Release

Templates
Try to fill it with as much information as possible. The more interesting you can make your story sound, the better.
See page 7 for example

LOCAL RADIO

Local Radio stations are always interested in local human interest stories of local people who have been affected by a particular issue and how this has prompted them to raise money for a great local cause.

Once your release is prepared you can contact the local radio station to see if they are interested in covering your story and the charity event. A good hook is a human angle for example a fundraiser who has been affected by the issue so they can talk about the work of the charity and their involvement in the event.

If you want to secure an interview on local radio it is important to be selective in the stations you target. Commercial music stations may mention the event in terms of a request on air but local community stations and BBC local radio are far more appropriate outlets to contact if you want a platform to talk about the event. The following links are a useful starting point to obtain contact details:

There is a list of local community stations on the OFCOM Website with links to the stations
http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/community-main.html

The following link highlights all of the BBC Local Radio stations in the UK
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/stations

The best way to contact the station is by phone in the first instance. Ask for the news desk or the production team for the particular show you think would be interested including your event. Think about the angle that you are going to pitch into the journalist in terms of a news hook. For example:

You could offer an interview with your fundraising manager talking about why you decided to use a virtual balloon race to raise money talking about the environmental benefits and the fact that this easier to organise and is less costly allowing even more money raised to go to the good cause.

Alternatively, you could offer an interview with a fundraiser who has been helped by the charity and has been prompted to take part.

If the journalist is interested they will ask you to follow up by sending a release, which will outline the event,

If you hear nothing back after a few days then remember to follow up with a phone call to see if they have looked at the release and if they need any further information.

If you are invited to be interviewed, remember to get the details of times and who will be interviewing. Also ask if they have any particular questions they are looking at asking, as this will help you to prepare your interviewee ahead of the interview.

If it is not yourself who will be interviewed, brief your interviewee with as much information as possible about the interview. In particular the key things you want them to mention (the date of the balloon race and how people can get involved)

Remember to use your social media pages to post about the appearance and I you can link to coverage do it! This can be an excellent way of building interest and motivating fundraisers and potential donors in the run up to the event.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an excellent way to promote your fundraiser and a very inexpensive way to announce and promote your event ahead of the Balloon Race launch. It is vital that you start thinking Social Media at the earliest stage in planning your event.

One of the first things to do is to create a hashtag for the event. Ideally, a hashtag should be short, obviously relevant and feature your organisation's branding.
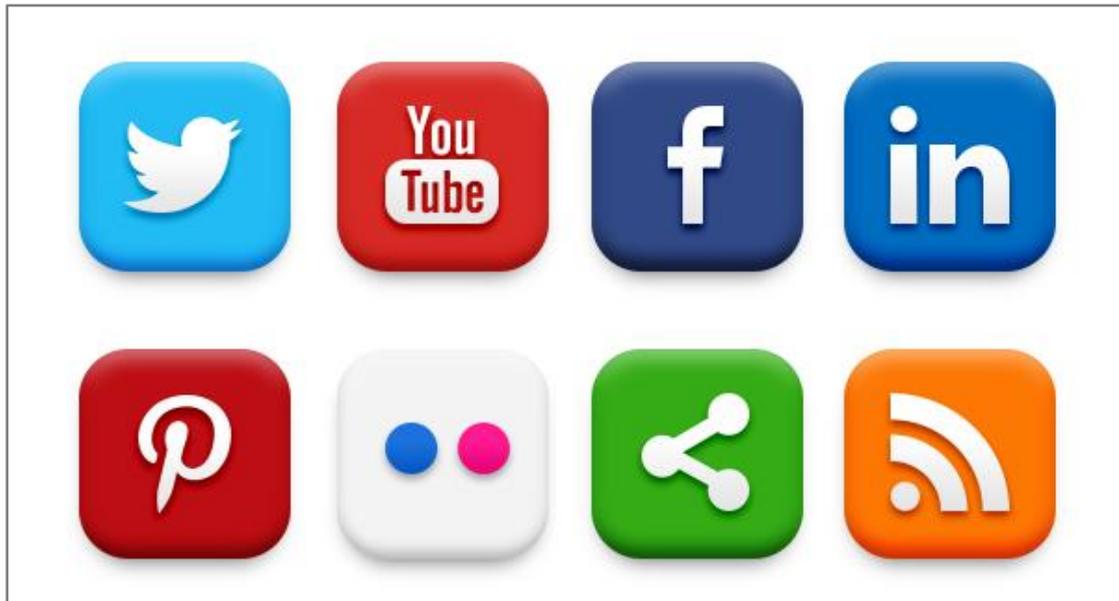
An example of a hashtag may be **#xhospicevbalrace**

Make sure you search for the hashtag before you agree on the final version to make sure that it's not already in use.

Some ways of using social media to promote the event include

Name check fundraisers taking part in the event

Highlight articles on your website and in the press on Twitter and Facebook

Remind people that the event is taking place and include links to where they can find more information and take part

Interact with your Facebook fans and Twitter followers to see if they are taking part and how they are getting on ahead of the event

On the day of the event you can provide a feed about the race. Commenting on progress of the race and interacting with balloon racers. You can also remind people to look at the race to check their progress.

After the race you can use Facebook and Twitter to update followers on the race including:

-The winner of the race
-Thanks everyone who took part

-Post race PR
-How much money has been raised
-Information on what the money will be used for
-Share pictures and images from the event

Press Release Template to promote your Virtual Balloon Race

PRESS RELEASE
Date

(Charity X) launches virtual balloon race to raise funds for XXXXXX

Local Charity (X) is calling on local supporters to reach for the virtual skies to take part in a balloon race to raise money for (what is the money going to be used for).

(Charity X) have teamed up with award winning Purepages Group based in Bolton, Manchester, inventors of this eco-friendly web-based fund raising system, to raise much needed funds.

The virtual balloon race not only allows local charities to raise money without a considerable negative effect on wildlife, but also reduce event costs to make sure the funds go the people who need them.

As (Y) from (Z) explained:

" Real balloon races using helium filled latex balloons have been seen as responsible for a growing number of deaths to sea birds, turtles and other animals when they, the latex balloons, eventually fall back to Earth after accidents or losing their helium gas.

We saw the virtual balloon race as the perfect eco-friendly alternative. The virtual event also allows us to keep event costs to a minimum, helping us to make sure that as much money of possible goes to help the people we work with. We hope that as many people as possible will take part in the event. "

Mike Phillips, managing director of Purepages, further added: "All UK eco-charities are currently working really hard to get the Government to ban the use of such latex balloons for fund raising purposes, so we're pleased we can offer a great virtual experience instead.

The virtual balloon race mimics a real race and is programmed to use current weather information to ensure the balloons move according to prevailing wind patterns. Fundraisers can also choose balloon colours and decorate them ahead of their release.

The balloon race will take place from (Dates of the race) people will be able to track the progress of their balloons, and sign up for the event at (Web address).

- ENDS -

For more information please contact (Contact information of event organiser and press contact)

About Charity information goes here