

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Why a Strong Story is Vital to Your Zonta Club

All over the Zonta world, frustration is expressed about our lack of visibility and the dearth of general knowledge about the important work we do. But while we might wish to see more action by Zonta International to generate publicity, the reality is that unless we have a good story to tell, none of it will matter. All of our issues - lack of visibility, declining membership and lack of support, ultimately stem from what we do within our clubs.

The following is a list of public relations fundamentals. Put these to work and your club can craft a story that will not only attract media attention but raise your profile in the community, revitalize your membership and attract new members and supporters.

1. Find your niche

What are you known for? What do you do well? Is the work you're doing being done by others? To be attractive to the media and prospective members, your service needs to be unique and exciting to make you stand out in the sea of non-profits and rival service clubs all vying for their attention and time. Rethink old projects. Do a needs assessment in your community and find a new project. Keep it simple. You should be able to describe what you do in a compelling way in 15 seconds.

2. Stick to the mission

Focus, focus, focus. One good service project that is mission-driven and executed well is better than a basket of small service projects that aren't necessarily focused on empowering women and may duplicate work being done by other groups. Your club will be relevant to the traditional media, social media, prospective members, and a source of pride for current members if it's known for meeting a need not being met elsewhere.

3. Brand your service

Make sure the unique need that you are fulfilling in the community has a name. Some examples: "Life Forward" is the name for Santa Clarita's series of workshops to help disadvantaged women learn financial literacy and job skills. "Support the Girls" is the brand Antelope Valley gave its project that provides new bras for women in a transitional home. "Wings" is Burbank Area's grant project. Make sure the brand and the logo are on everything associated with the project.

4. Make a difference

Are you making a difference in your community? How do you know? Measure your outcomes. Know why you are successful. If you can't quantify what you're doing how do you justify doing it? Reporters, prospective members and even your own members are skeptical. They need to see results in order to care about what you're doing.



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5. Publicize your accomplishments

Let everyone know about the unique need that you fulfill in the community and how exciting it is to be part of the solution. If you do something groundbreaking, that no one else is doing, you will get media attention and traction on social media.

6. Package and market the club

It's a new era with a new service mission built on a proud legacy. Produce materials that tell your story. Be proud of your history but paint a vision for the future. Describe the unique need you fulfill with your service. Describe the unique membership experience Zonta offers prospective volunteers. You're competing against dozens of other organizations for attention and volunteers - why should a reporter or prospective member pay attention to your Zonta club? Why should someone join your Zonta club? Make sure all marketing materials are professional and fresh. They need to look appealing to current and prospective members. Make sure the look is consistent from website to brochures and all other collateral.

7. Members as ambassadors

Clubs with a clear mission and a simple, standout service project are easy to describe. Your members should all be able to deliver a 15 second "elevator pitch" that describes who you are, what you do, and the difference you make in the community. i.e. "The Zonta Club of Our Town works to improve the lives of women. We run the "Amazing Women" program - it's the largest scholarship program in this community for disadvantaged women returning to school. Last year we awarded 10 scholarships of \$1,000 each. In the past five years, we've helped more than 50 women turn their lives around." Wouldn't you want to be a part of that? To a reporter, that sounds like a story. On Facebook, it is sure to attract likes and share.

8. Build bridges

Look to other organizations for speaking opportunities. If your service project(s) is unique and making a difference in lives, others will be interested to hear about it. Kiwanis, Rotary, Soroptomist, Chambers of Commerce are always looking for guest speakers, just like us. Maybe some of them will be inspired to join Zonta once they hear of the great work we're doing. Partnering with other larger and more visible organizations on service and fundraising can be a great multiplier for a small club, lending credibility and increasing impact. Support other non-profits by going to their fundraisers. Some of their board members might be interested in joining Zonta. Dinners are perfect settings to informally tell your Zonta story and build awareness and support. Be an active part of the non-profit community.

If you have questions or would like help with any aspect of public relations, please feel free to reach out to the Public Relations/Communications Chair. Best of luck!

