

## **Press Conference or Press Confusion? Ten Tips to Ensure a Worry-Free Press Conference**

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While a press conference can be a great way to get all of your targeted reporters in one place at one time to promote a new product, make an important announcement, or introduce a new member of your executive team; a press conference can also turn out to be a waste of time, money, and your professional reputation if not done right.

Is a press conference right for your company or organization? Read the ten tips below to help discover whether you have the makings for a press conference, or press confusion.

- 1- Is your last name Bush, Powell, Trump, Spears or Marriott? Oftentimes, members of the media are so busy with multiple daily deadlines magnified by the pressures of shrinking budgets, that unless your last name starts with Bush, Powell, Trump, Spears or Marriott, or the like, getting out of their desk to attend anything is not an option unless the news being broken at said press conference is BIG.
- 2- Is a press conference an absolute necessity? Would the same information be presentable in a series of one-on-one interviews with select members of the media? The reason for this is the same reason as #1—busy reporters don't have time to attend a press conference at YOUR convenience, but could attend a one-on-one interview at THEIR convenience.
- 3- Is a real-live press conference necessary, or could you hold a Web cast or some other form of electronic press conference, making it easier for members of the press to attend from their desks?
- 4- Ok, ok, you got my point, but you are not dissuaded. You are renting a room, hooking up a microphone, and holding a press conference. When are you holding it? Does the time agree with the schedules of your targeted media (i.e. not too early in the morning, not conflicting with the deadlines of members of the media on a daily deadline)? Does the time and date conflict with any other events going on that will take attention away from your press conference (for example, if you are holding your press conference during a trade show, don't hold it during the opening keynote session. If you are holding a press conference to announce a new product, the anniversary of September 11 may not be the best day to hold it)?
- 5- Are you feeding and/or watering your attendees? You should!
- 6- Let's back up. Are you lining up attendees? Press conferences are a dime a dozen in our media-driven society. Holding one does not mean that you will get attendees other than your mom and whomever from your company or organization is speaking. Who is going to attend? Who do you want to attend? How are they going to know about the press conference? How are you going to invite them? These are all things to think about approximately one-two months before your press conference. You need to have such strong news that members of the press will simply HAVE to attend your press

conference, but it is your job to make sure that they get the message. If you are holding your press conference during a trade show, it is safe to assume that trade show management's PR department is giving you a place to hold your press conference, but not promoting it for you. They are promoting the whole show—not individual press conferences taking place during it.

- 7- What are you going to say during the press conference? Don't just get up and wing it! Write out talking points and practice them.
- 8- Who is going to speak during the press conference? Is it your own in-house PR person or an executive? Is the speaker a subject matter expert or communication expert? Are you going to have subject matter experts on hand to answer questions? You should!
- 9- Demonstrations are good. If you are discussing a new product, have a demonstration of what your new product does! If you are announcing a new executive, have the new executive on hand!
- 10- Send out a news release post-press conference, stating what was discussed during the press conference. Just because a member of the media couldn't attend your press conference doesn't mean that they shouldn't have a chance to report on what was discussed!

*Linda Dickerhoof, President of Signature Strategy, Inc, is an experienced public relations professional with experience in both the for-profit and non-profit arenas and a list of happy clients. For more information, see [www.signaturestrategy.com](http://www.signaturestrategy.com).*