

10 TIPS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT MEDIA'S IMAGE

1. Get out and meet people

Create opportunities for student leaders and advisers to meet other campus leaders, administrators, etc. on good terms: host a media open house, visit other student organization meetings to let them know about your services, offer organizations free sessions on how to design ads or write press releases, serve on campus committees or projects, regular meetings between media & other leaders.

2. Be visible

Participate in student organization fairs, career fairs, street fairs, service activities, intramural sports (also a great staff development activity), enter contests, cross promote with other campus media, give away or sell branded t-shirts, help students move in to dorms, co-sponsor an event or charity. All activities best done in matching, logo-embazoned t-shirts.

3. Promote media accomplishments

Write press releases and letters to administrators about awards won, alumni achievements, newly elected leaders (great to send to hometown newspapers), new technologies, trips to conferences, milestones such as anniversaries.

4. Give stuff away

Students love free things and your logo is out there for all to see: cups, mugs, mini footballs, post-it pads, magnets, t-shirts, branded lollipops, pens, key chains, bottle openers, stress relievers, can cozies, downloadable custom desktops.

5. Involve local professionals

Host a lecture series on media topics - bring in alumni and professionals to help develop your students, and invite students at large to attend. This can really endear student media to academic departments. A professional advisory board can contribute to staff development as well as help the media in times of crisis.

6. Solicit feedback

Conduct focus groups, issue accuracy surveys to sources, include story feedback links on the website, conduct marketing and readership surveys. Respond to real issues with concrete change.

7. Do high school outreach

Write letters, send your newspaper and brochures, visit high schools or high school media groups, host high school workshops, contact high school students who win journalism awards or attend regional conferences.

8. Develop a strong policy & ethics manual

It helps to have clear policies, based on professional standards, to point to when people complain.

9. Communicate with readers & audiences

Have an ombudsman or other clearly designated reader advocate who can deal with editorial complaints, explain why the media does something, operates a certain way or corrects its mistakes. If a controversial ad will run, consider a pre-emptive editorial column that addresses why the decision was made.

10. Train students well

Every media student is an ambassador. Teach them how to make every element of interaction with the public as positive and professional as it can be – phone manners, work attire, reacting to complaints, dealing with sources, doing classroom recruiting visits.