

6 Essentials for Successfully Working with the Media

By Megan Wendell, Founder & President

[Canary Promotion](#)

Last week I spoke to a fantastic group of artists at a [Leeway Foundation workshop](#) focused on marketing for individual artists. Attendees ranged from artists just starting to develop their careers to mid- and late-career artists with published books, years of travel, and numerous performances under their belts.

The panel of speakers was equally diverse and offered a wealth of valuable information about how to market oneself as an artist.

My topic of choice addressed how to approach the media and create successful working relationships with members of the press. With so much to discuss, I started to think about what tips I could share in a limited period of time, and I came up with a list of some essential elements for working with the media.

While these points were geared toward independent artists, most of these tips are universal when creating a press campaign. What other tips would you add?

1. Be a Storyteller

Think about what defines who you are, what you do, and why you're doing it. Identify what makes you and your work unique and embrace that. Being able to define that first for yourself and then translating it into a concise message for the press and the public means that you'll be making a strong statement about your work from the get-go, and that you'll have an important tool as you create a promotional campaign.

One way to approach this is to consider what you would talk about in an interview with the press. Start to tell that story in your bio, press pitches and press materials. Not sure where to start? Have a friend or colleague "interview" you, and you might discover some interesting talking points you hadn't thought of before.

2. Be a Good Writer

This is not something that comes easily for all artists, but there are a few basic guidelines you should follow. Open with compelling information that will catch the readers' attention, BUT don't overhype your work or use clichéd language. Adjust your marketing language (copy you might use on a postcard, website or in an email) to be appropriate for a press release, and don't use "you" or "I."

Include press release basics: who, what, when, where, how to buy tickets, etc. Make sure your contact info is included and easy to find on all materials.

How you frame your message in your press materials can influence how the press talks about you, so make sure what you've written is a strong representation of you and your work or event. For more on PR writing, you can read my blog post, [7 Ways to Improve Your PR Writing](#), or read some of the press releases, available on our [clients' pages](#).

3. Be Informed

As with any marketing you do, it's crucial to know your audience. Read newspapers,

magazines, blogs, listen to the radio, and watch what local TV is covering. Think about how your story might fall into a timely topic - something being covered on a local or national level.

You want journalists to take the time to get to know you, so you need to do the same. Get to know their coverage before sending out a pitch. Once you've done that, send a personalized pitch along with your press release and tell them why you think they'll be interested in your work.

Another way to connect with the press is to seek out journalists through social media outlets, especially Twitter. Follow them, keep an eye on what they're tweeting about, then interact.

4. Be Visual

A strong visual identity is absolutely essential to all of your promotional efforts. Invest in a photo shoot if at all possible – it's worth the money as you'll be able to use those images for multiple purposes, and you're likely to get more page space when you offer compelling visuals to run with a story. Images for the press should be at least 4x6 inches and 300dpi.

5. Be A Valuable Resource

If journalists know you're easy to work with and you have the information they need when they need it, they're more likely to work with you on a regular basis. Respond to press inquiries quickly and be available for interviews.

Organize a file of all your materials for press – bio, press releases, calendar listings, high-res images, press kits – and have that ready to send to anyone who requests it. Even better, have this information available online as an electronic press kit.

6. Be Authentic

It can sometimes be overwhelming for artists to think about marketing and PR while they're also dedicating so much time to creating new work. It's important to think about your brand as an artist, but make sure it's still authentic and true to who you are and what your work is about.



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From Canary Promotion's Blog: Birdfeed

7 Ways to Improve Your PR Writing

I recently read a blog post, tweeted by [Mark Ragan](#), Publisher of PR Daily, titled "[Why is PR writing so atrocious?](#)" In it, Ragan laments the sad state of writing in the PR industry – so bad that he has to "sit down with a jug of Jack Daniels and a bottle of Advil" when he reviews press releases.

Ragan makes some good points – an overabundant use of buzz words, write-by-template releases, and publicists who don't really understand the topic or industry about which they're writing.

But here's the really important question – how can PR writing be **good**? Here are my answers – 7 tips to make your writing, and your overall media relations work, better.

1. **Know Your Client:** The biggest recurring issue I see in the PR industry is publicists not taking the time to understand what they're representing. You must research and understand the client, their work and their industry in order to write about and pitch them effectively. And the good news is – this can be a lot of fun! I think of my work in PR and marketing as being a perpetual student.

At Canary Promotion, we work with arts, culture, entertainment, and mission-driven clients. We have researched such far-flung topics as the work of famed children's author and illustrator [Maurice Sendak](#), [Anton Chekhov](#) and the history of Russian society, [Arctic Exploration](#), and even [1970s horror](#) literature and movies. Do your research, and you'll start to see how your client fits into the bigger picture.

2. **Know Your Audience:** Sending personalized pitches, tailored to each press contact will always garner better results than blasting out the same pitch and press release to a big list of unnamed contacts. You may need to write slightly different versions of your pitch and press release, depending on the type of media outlet you're contacting. Think about what aspect of the story will most appeal to the editor or reporter in question and lead with that angle.
3. **Read, Read, Read:** How do you learn about your audience and your client's industry? Read as much as you can on relevant topics. How is the media covering the industry? You may find that your client has a great companion story to a previously published article. Contact the writer of that article with a well-written pitch and let them know about it.
4. **Be a Journalist, Conduct Interviews:** The best way to find great story angles is to sit down and interview your clients, their collaborators, and maybe even their audiences or customers. At the beginning of any new client engagement, we meet with key people at an organization to talk about their mission, their vision and their goals. This immediately gives us a more personal connection to the work. It provides insight into the client's identity and how we can shape their message in our writing.
5. **Make Outlines:** Have a bit of writer's block? Start with an outline. While filling in the blanks of a template can produce a pretty bland and poorly written release, mapping out the flow of your release and the main points you want to hit upon can help keep your writing more focused.



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(Improve Your PR Writing continued)

6. **When in Doubt, Edit:** Self-editing can sometimes be a challenge. You've written three pages, and you're not sure what information in your release could be cut. Walk away from what you've written for a few hours and come back to it with fresh eyes. Think about your intended audience. Do they *really* need that extended client bio or all the technical specs of the product? In some cases, they might. But if it's not crucial to telling the story, it might be time to turn those three pages into two.
7. **Tell a Story:** How do you want to see your client portrayed in the media? What is the story you're trying to tell? Make sure you're conveying a compelling but focused message with a press release that highlights your key story points and guides members of the press toward the story you want to tell.



www.girlsrockphilly.org

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High resolution photos available
upon request and at:

www.canarypromo.com/grp

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 18, 2010

**Girls Rock Philly Expands to Serve More Campers in 2010
Now Accepting Applications for Camp Week
& for Area's First Ladies Rock Camp**

*Philly's only rock 'n' roll summer camp for girls to be held August 9-13;
Ladies Rock Camp announces new dates, May 29 – 31*

PHILADELPHIA – [Girls Rock Philly](http://www.girlsrockphilly.org) (GRP), a non-profit organization presenting Philadelphia's only rock camp for girls, is **now accepting camper and volunteer applications** for its fourth summer of teaching junior rockers, ages 9 to 17, how to rock out. Last year's camp served 50 girls from the Greater Philadelphia region, with fifty percent of campers receiving scholarships or financial aid to attend camp week. The 2010 camp week, to be held from **August 9 – 13**, will expand, for the first time in GRP's history, to serve 80 girls.

GRP's week-long summer day camp is held on the campus of **Girard College** (at Girard Ave. & Corinthian Ave.) in Philadelphia. The program culminates in an **end-of-camp showcase**, open to the public, this year to be held on **Saturday, August 14** (location TBD), followed by a professional recording studio experience to create a compilation CD. For more information and to submit an application, visit www.girlsrockphilly.org or call **(215) 789-4879**. Applications are honored on a first-come, first-served basis.

GRP also announces new dates for Philadelphia's very first weekend-long **Ladies Rock Camp**, a rock camp experience for women ages 19 and up. The camp will be held from **May 29 – 31, 2010** on the campus of **Freire Charter School** (2027 Chestnut Street) in Center City Philadelphia. Ladies Rock Camp will provide an opportunity for twenty-five women, ages 19 and up, to learn an instrument or hone their existing skills, form bands, write songs, attend workshops, perform in the end-of-weekend showcase, and network with other women musicians in their area. The end-of-weekend showcase will be held on Memorial Day, May 31 (location TBD). No previous musical experience is needed to apply. Each \$400 tuition fee for the weekend-long camp will fund one girl's scholarship to attend the Girls Rock Philly Summer Day Camp. Applications are currently being accepted [online](#) or via mail.

More about Girls Rock Philly Camp Week

The Girls Rock Philly camp week provides girls with a chance to unleash their inner rock stars and to learn guitar, bass, keyboards, drums, DJ'ing and vocals. No musical experience is necessary and all needed equipment and instruments are provided. Campers form bands and write their own songs over the course of a week, allowing the aspiring young musicians a space in which to figure out what and how they want to play, while working in a team setting.

The female-only environment, a rarity in the music world, provides both campers and volunteers with a comfortable atmosphere, emphasizing artistic independence and creative ownership, as well as copyright to their own songs. The camp also features guided band practice, special guest performers, and diverse workshops including the history of women in music, non-traditional instruments, sound and recording, and band art where participants have the opportunity to create original band t-shirts and buttons. The program culminates in an end-of-camp showcase performance for fellow campers, friends, family and the general public, and a professional recording studio experience to create a compilation CD.

Past camp participants have come from all parts of the Greater Philadelphia area, including South Philly, Mount Airy, Roxborough, Center City, Delaware County, Montgomery County, the Main Line, and from New Jersey and Delaware. Last year, forty percent of campers returned from previous years, and the girls were supported by a diverse groups of 30 onsite adult female volunteers, including local teachers, musicians and nurses.

About Girls Rock Philly: Girls Rock Philly is a music and mentoring 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering girls and women from the greater Philadelphia region through music education and activities that foster self-respect, leadership skills, creativity, self-expression, critical thinking, and collaboration. GRP is a founding member of the Girls Rock Camp Alliance. There are currently over 25 Girls Rock Camps across the U.S.

For the latest updates and information, visit: www.girlsrockphilly.org and connect with the organization on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Girard College: Girard College is a private boarding school for academically capable students, grades 1 through 12, from families with limited financial resources, each headed by a single parent or guardian. All Girard students receive full scholarships to take part in the school's strong academic program and to live safely on its enclosed 43-acre campus in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia. Girard is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. It holds membership in the National Association of Independent Schools, The Association of Boarding Schools, the Coalition for Residential Education, and the Association of Delaware Valley Independent Schools. For information, visit www.girardcollege.com.

Girls Rock Philly is supported by individual and corporate donations as well as foundation grants from the Sara Weaver Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation and Women's Way's Community Women's Fund.

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To request additional information and interviews, please contact:
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camera, contact:**

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**MEDIA ADVISORY: PHOTO OPPORTUNITY
For March 16, 7:00 p.m.**

TONIGHT: Shakespeare's Most Popular Comedy Opens at the Lantern

WHAT: Opening Night of Lantern Theater Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

WHEN: Wednesday, March 16 at 7:00 p.m.
Performances run through April 17

WHERE: Lantern Theater Company is located at St. Stephen's Theater,
10th & Ludlow Streets in Center City Philadelphia.

INFO: Some of Philadelphia's favorite comedic actors star in **Lantern Theater Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream***, opening tonight at 7:00 p.m. and running through April 17. The Lantern's Artistic Director **Charles McMahon** directs a cast of accomplished actors who bring a distinct physical style to this fast-moving Shakespeare comedy.

In a lively production from "the city's most consistent producer of the Bard's work" (*Philadelphia Weekly*), young lovers Hermia and Lysander, kept apart by strict Athenian law, escape to the wood where tyrannical parents can't find them – but mischief can. Elsewhere among the trees, the fairy king and queen are having a marital spat with disastrous consequences for one Nick Bottom.

The four lovers will be played by **Charlotte Ford** (Hermia), **David Sweeny** (Lysander), **Lee Ann Etzold** (Helena), and **Bradley K. Wrenn** (Demetrius) – all known for their performances throughout the Philadelphia region, as well as their experimental and physical theater work.

“We think the lovers in this play should be funny,” says McMahon. “They’re obviously very ebullient characters, but many productions tend to over-romanticize them. So we’ve cast four really strong character comedians in these roles.”

Tickets for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are \$20-\$36 and are available online at www.lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. \$10 student rush tickets are available 10 minutes before curtain with valid ID; cash only. Additional discounts are available for seniors and groups of 10 or more.

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Press Photo Guide

WHY GOOD PRESS PHOTOS MATTER

Press photos play a very significant role in publicity for your work.

- Images provide the media and other viewers with important information about your event or work.
- Good press photos can help you get more publicity and more page space as editors will choose the most compelling shots for their layouts.
- Press photos can also be effective for advance publicity, such as monthly magazines – get the word out about your show early through engaging photos of your work.

WHAT THE MEDIA IS LOOKING FOR

Press outlets are looking for interesting photos that will grab the attention of their readers.

- Eye-catching, thought-provoking, engaging, dramatic and playful photos that visually support your work are suitable for press use.
- Press are generally not interested in abstract images, photos of objects or scenes with no people, photos with added text overlaying the images, or logos (unless these things represent your work as a visual artist).
- Providing press with a few options is ideal – it is a good idea to have multiple images available for press and both horizontal and vertical photos. This will give editors more layout flexibility and increase your chances of having your photos used.

PHOTO QUALITY

All press images must be high-resolution, at least 300dpi and a minimum size of 4x6 inches.

dpi (dots-per-inch) refers to print resolution. Generally, if the image is not at least 300dpi, print press cannot use it. You do not need a fancy digital camera to take high-resolution images. Even a standard 8 megapixel consumer camera can capture high-resolution images. Regarding image size, the image should also be a minimum of 4x6 inches whenever possible.

PHOTO CREDITS & CAPTIONS

Be sure to title your photo files in a way that makes it easy for the press to identify your files by including your name or project in the title. Always submit photos with captions listing who is pictured from left to right and the photographer's name.

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Press Photo Examples

Example 1 – Yes!



This is a playful and engaging action image, suitable for press.

Example 2 – Beautiful, but not great for press...



Though beautiful, this abstract close-up of a dress and partial figure is an example of an image that many traditional print publications would find unsuitable for print. Abstract images usually don't work for press use, but they may be better suited for other types of promotion, such as marketing efforts.

Example 3 – Yes!



This is an intriguing, eye-catching image, suitable for press use.

The main subject of your photo should be easy to see, and the image should look good when printed at any size.

Photo Credits

Example 1

Company: Dada von Bzdülów Theatre's *Factor T*

Pictured left to right: Rafal Dziemidok, Leszek Bzdyl, Katarzyna Chmielewska

Photographer credit: Gabriel Bienczycki

Example 2

Company: Dada von Bzdülów Theatre's *Factor T*

Pictured: Bethany Formica

Photographer credit: Gabriel Bienczycki

Example 3

Company: Lantern Theater Company's *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream

Pictured left to right: Charlie DelMarcelle and Joanna Liao

Photographer credit: Mark Garvin



www.canarypromo.com