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How to Use This Guide

Getting media coverage is a lot like racing. Many will enter the race, but only one will cross the finish line. Just as racers compete, the competition to get news coverage is fierce. The Sports Car Club of America is all about competition. Take that competitive spirit to a new arena: the media arena. But before you start scheduling interviews, you'll want to take a look through this guide. There are some things you may not realize about the media; how they work, what they need, how they get information. This kit will give you the competitive edge.

One of your first tasks will be creating a media list. This will become your "bible" of the local media, and you will find yourself constantly referring to it. We've developed a step-by-step guide that is easy to follow and will prove invaluable as you get the word out about your region's events.

It's also important for you to be able to identify news. That sounds much easier than it is. We've outlined all the different types of stories that reporters cover and why. Once you understand that, you will be able to discern whether the story you pitch is a story that reporters will find interesting. Just as all the details must be in order to achieve high performance in a race, the same is true in pitching a story. You must know the facts of your story; you have to identify the right reporter and contact him or her at the most opportune time; and you have to be certain that the reporter has the sources and background information necessary to write or produce the story on deadline.

We'll walk you through the process of developing a story pitch, and we've included a sample pitch letter to make it easier. There's also a Top 10 list of winning pitches that should put you in the driver's seat when it comes to getting media coverage.

If you've never given an interview, it can be a bit daunting. Relax into it by taking a look at our mini-media training seminar. We'll let you know what to expect when a reporter calls, how to organize your thoughts and how to successfully give an interview.

It's also important to remember that developing relationships with the media is a long race. If you recall your first event, you probably made a number of "rookie" mistakes, but you didn't quit and over time your performance improved. It's the same working with the media. As relationships develop, you'll be more comfortable and more successful.

So, buckle yourself in for this crash course on getting media coverage. You have to be familiar with the course before you can cross the finish line.



Different Types of Media

Part of your race preparation may include evaluating the field and determining a strategy that will be appropriate for the track and the competition. We encourage you to view the media the same way. Knowledge is power, and the more you know about your local media outlets, the more powerful you will be as a media source. Look at the different types of media in your area:

Print – This includes your main daily newspaper, community papers, alternative press (which may publish weekly or bi-weekly), magazines, business publications and sports publications.

Electronic – Similar to print media but offers higher frequency and is expanding due to its ability to be accessed instantly and from a variety of sources (computers, smart phones, etc.)

Television – There may be four television affiliates (ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox), and you may have a public television station. Be sure to check out any cable outlets, because some devote many hours to covering local sports.

Radio – One or more stations devoted to sports talk are now part of many major markets. If a sports talk station exists in your area, you have an opportunity for ongoing coverage. These stations have large blocks of time to fill, so developing a relationship with station producers could yield media relations. Other commercial radio formats do little local news or sports. Consider pitching public radio on a lifestyle story.

How to Find Them

Now that you have your list of local media drawn up, what do you do with it? You will need to have all contact information readily available for that list to be of any use. Your best resource is your computer. Go to an Internet search engine, such as Google, type in the name of the publication or the station call letters, and you will be able to access sufficient background information.

Look at the form on the following page. Each media outlet you have targeted should have one of these sheets in your system. Just fill in the blanks from the information you get on the Internet. If you draw a blank or cannot locate some of the information, get on the phone and call the media outlet. Usually the receptionist will be able to answer the basic information for this form.

EVALUATING MEDIA



These blanks **MUST** be filled in:

Publication: The name of the newspaper or the call letters of the station.

First and last name: This is the person you would contact if you called the station. It could be the name of a specific reporter, or it could be the editor or assignment editor.

Title: Reporter, editor, etc.

Street address: Don't forget the zip code.

Phone number: The contact's direct line, if possible. It will save you time later.

Fax and e-mail information:

1st preference: As you are building the list, call the contact and ask how they prefer to be contacted. Some reporters prefer e-mail, others prefer a phone call or a fax. Jot this information down.

Pitching/follow up tips: Anything you learn about how the reporter works, such as "Don't call at 3 p.m., that is deadline" or "Never works on Mondays."

Profile: What type of outlet is it? Who are they targeting? For example, "Sports magazine."

Frequency: How often do they publish? Daily? Bi-weekly?

Deadline: Most magazines publish further in advance than you might think. Find out when the deadline is for each issue (i.e., 6 weeks out).

Filling out the information in the other categories is not imperative. It only provides you with a larger snapshot of the media you are targeting. The most important information is who to call, how to reach them and when. Be sure to fill out the "Contact Notes" so you will be able to easily reference the legwork you've already completed. It's very easy to let those calls slip through the cracks. Keeping good notes will help you work more quickly and efficiently.

EVALUATING MEDIA



MEDIA LIST

Publication: Kansas City Star

First Name: Mike **Last Name:** Fannin

Title: Sports Reporter

Street Address: 1729 Grand Ave. **City:** Kansas City

State: MO **Zip:** 64108

Phone: (816) 555-4636 **Fax:** (816) 555-4637

E-mail (1st Preference): mfannin@kcstar.com

E-mail (2nd Preference): _____

Home Page: www.kansascity.com

Main Phone: (816) 555-1234

Pitching/Follow-Up Tips: Don't call after 4pm. Prefers e-mail pitch

Circulation Reach: 450,000

Market Area: Regional, KCMO, KCK

Frequency: Daily **Deadline:** _____

Media Type: Print/Newspaper

Media Category: Local

Project Category: Sporting Events

Media Contact: Mike Fannin

Contact Notes: Called 2/3/09. Left VM

Spoke 2/4/09. Said he may come out Saturday.

EVALUATING MEDIA



News releases, media advisories and pitch letters are all powerful tools for letting the media know what's happening in your region. But how do you decide if a pitch letter will be more effective than a media advisory? Notifying the media is key, but how you notify the media is just as important. Use these guidelines:

Media Advisory: Write a media advisory when you are letting the media know about an event that happens every month or at regular intervals. There might not be anything inherently newsworthy in the event, but you want to be sure the media knows it's happening. It will give them the basic facts: who, what, when, where and why. If they choose to cover the event, they will call you for more information. This is the simplest and quickest way to alert the media about an event. A media advisory also keeps you in the mind of the media.

News Release: Consider writing an entire news release (it should be double spaced and not longer than two pages) if there is a regional event that will attract a larger crowd and greater interest. This longer form notification supplies the media with more information than a media advisory and alerts them that this is an "important" event.

Pitch Letter: When you write a pitch letter, you have a specific story in mind for a specific reporter. For example, a pitch letter would be sent if you want the local sports columnist to feature one of your drivers who is fighting cancer and is also driving in your charity event for cancer. News releases and media advisories can be faxed or e-mailed "as is" to a variety of media outlets. Pitch letters are always tailored to individuals and individual publications or broadcast outlets. They are much more specific and personal.

Media Relations Materials	When to Send	Follow Up
Media Advisory	3-5 days prior to event	1 day before event
News Release	1 week prior to event*	4 days before event
Story Pitch	2-3 weeks prior to event	1-2 weeks after pitch

* Monthly publications can have lead times up to 3 months before their publication date. Adjust your schedule accordingly.

IDENTIFYING REPORTERS AND EDITORS



The key to success with the media is establishing a relationship. A good relationship helps to foster good publicity and can soften the blow when the media come knocking on your door to ask the uncomfortable questions.

Positive publicity is one of the significant objectives in a media relations program.

Developing Background on Reporters

- This is not the part where we say, "Know the enemy." Do not consider reporters the enemy. That begins the relationship in an unnecessarily negative way. Read the stories different reporters write and watch television reporters to see what types of stories they cover. By understanding the reporter's interests and depth of knowledge, you will be better able to pitch stories successfully.
- Understand the basics of a newsroom: news director, editor, assignment editor, city desk, reporter, etc. Know who works where and what jobs they do.
- Reporters are under constant stress, meeting deadlines every day ... or in the case of television and radio, every hour. Respect the working conditions in a newsroom, and you will have a better chance of establishing a relationship with reporters.

How the Media Works

- Every news organization receives hundreds of news releases each week. Be sure to send news releases only when an important event is coming up. Do not waste the media's time. Reporters and editors have very long memories.
- You will get better results if you notify both an editor and a reporter at a print outlet and an assignment editor and reporter or anchor at a television outlet. Sometimes news releases are lost in the shuffle, and your goal is to have someone who is able to cover a story actually read your release.
- Don't send a release two weeks before an event is scheduled. The best time to submit a release is three days before the event. After the release is sent, call all the outlets you sent it to the following

day to make sure they received it and to answer any questions. Daily media outlets rarely plan months in advance.

Altering Story Pitches to Different Media

Let's say, for example, there is a Rally coming up in your Region. You want to notify all local media, but for best results, the story pitch should be altered slightly to highlight what will interest each particular media.

Print: Most print stories are significantly longer than broadcast stories, so you are safer giving more specific information. Look for a statistic that will hook their attention. Is it the largest event ever held in the region? Is it the first time such an event has been held? If so, let the media know that Rally is becoming an extremely popular sport, and this would be of great interest to their readers. Is there a possibility of breaking all attendance records? Let print media know that there will be several different people available for interviews. The photo desk will most likely send a photographer. Secure a time and place for photos. Remember that if a minor is being photographed, release forms will be needed.

Broadcast: Television is all about pictures. Paint the picture in the news release. "Engines will be roaring this Saturday afternoon as the green flag drops on the new SCCA season" Establish an area for television photographers who will want to be close enough to the action to capture the sound as well as the video. Be sure to let the reporters know that interviews are available. Radio reporters will be most interested in capturing ambient sound as well as interviews.

Don't Forget Your Newsletter

Your newsletter can be an important tool to keep your region front and center with the media. Add all local and regional media outlets to your newsletter distribution list. This is a perfect opportunity to let the media know about upcoming events in your region. This will also position you as an expert when reporters want to cover stories in your area that deal with motorsports.

Be aware, however, that if the newsletter contains sensitive or controversial information, don't send it to non-members who are in the media. If those outlets receive a newsletter such as this, a negative story could result. And that is exactly what you want to avoid.

DEVELOPING STORY IDEAS



When building relationships with the media, it's important to know what your "news" product is and how to talk with media about it. Before you start a race or a Solo, you've prepped by checking air pressure in tires or perhaps walking the course. Developing a story pitch isn't much different. You're checking items off the "newsworthy" list in your head. What is my story? Does it have news value? Find out. Ask yourself these questions:

Is your story ...

Crisis News? Fires, severe weather, significant traffic accidents or other disasters. These news stories are typically found on radio, television and online news sites. From your region's perspective, breaking news would probably be a negative story, such as a serious incident. No one wants to think about a crisis, but your region should have a communications plan for one. Regional executives should have a crisis plan that, at minimum, includes:

- Who is authorized to speak with the media.
- What key messages are appropriate for the particular story.
- Where and when you will grant access to reporters.
- What you can or can't say about an individual's condition or other health issues.
-

Following News? Reporters frequently follow an incident to its conclusion. For example, a man commits a crime, is caught, arraigned, tried and if convicted, sentenced. A reporter could write a story on each stage of this man's confrontation with the law. In your region, you could pitch a story from a similar story that has already run.

Media would follow a driver who was previously profiled and who now qualifies for the Runoffs, for example.

First/Last/Most/Least/Best/Worst? The media covered Cal Ripken's last game, the first time the New York Stock Exchange topped 10,000 points and the best finish by the U.S. Soccer Team in 72 years at the World Cup.

The SCCA is celebrating its 65th anniversary in 2009, which is newsworthy in itself. How about your region? Are there any milestone anniversaries coming up, such as how long you've been around, how many members you have, the number or type of events you hold each year, etc.

A Trend? Does your region share common traits with other similar groups around the country? Is your group seeing new, common issues among the people you serve? Are there perhaps more female drivers now than at any time in your region's history? Has a recent movie attracted young people's interest in amateur racing? Is drifting something your region is looking into? These are examples of trends that are created by economic or societal conditions. The creative ways that you handle these trends may be newsworthy.

Timely or Seasonal? The SCCA, and each region, schedules certain events at particular times of the year. Look at what's happening on your calendar and try to tie in your regional event with a season or time of year. For example, if your region hosts a unique event each year and your members get into the spirit of the race, pitch the story based on its unique appeal.

National News? Does a national story about adrenaline-charged hobbies highlight your region in any way? Your group could be a local example of a national story. Make reporters and editors aware that you can provide local insight to national news.

Member Profiles? Look at your members and think about them for profiles in local magazines. Is your chapter holding a special charity event for diabetes? Is one of your members a cancer survivor? That's a natural news hook that would most likely interest local publications.

DEVELOPING STORY IDEAS



Members as News Sources? One of your most valuable resources is your membership. Each one of them could probably come up with a story idea if they gave it some thought. Craft a brief call to arms in your newsletter, asking members to notify you if they have a story that the media might want to follow up on. Also put that request on your Web site and mention it at your monthly meetings. You might be surprised at the response you get.

Elements of News

News stories, beyond filler pieces of three or four paragraphs, really perform on two levels: The big picture that involves one of the news pegs above and the basic, factual level; the “DNA” of a news story involves who, what, when, where, why and how.

Those facts, which any good reporter will confirm with other sources, are the foundation of a good news story. And both on the “big picture” and “ground” levels, it is the reporter’s job to answer all the anticipated questions that will cross readers’ minds as they read the article.

Good reporting includes presenting all sides of a story. Organizations typically are frustrated by any type of criticism. Balance is a way for a news organization to attempt fairness in coverage that spans 16 paragraphs or two minutes of airtime.



How, When and Why to Pitch Stories

Now let's focus on how to approach the media. By following basic guidelines, you can develop a positive relationship with the media. They are best illustrated in the following scenario.

Let's say you want *The Kansas City Star* to consider doing a feature on an upcoming Club Racing event. Here's a step-by-step process for contacting the reporter:

1. Study the media outlet you're targeting. If *The Kansas City Star* is on your "wish list," then read it daily. Make a note of who covers sports and also sports feature stories. Jot down contact information (phone number and e-mail address) normally located at the bottom of an article. Watch for the frequency of the reporter's articles. Does he or she write a weekly sports column? Does it normally feature a photo? Notice his or her writing style and the story angles that seem to attract the reporter's interest. Once you discover this kind of information, you'll be able to develop your story angle.

2. Craft the pitch. Using what you've learned about the reporter and what qualifies as news, draft your pitch — a written summary of your story idea. Remember that a news release pitch should **never be longer than two pages**. Begin with a headline that succinctly describes the event, with a subhead that highlights your secondary message. Write a **strong lead** that covers the most important aspect of the event and creates context of what, when and where. Next comes the "**nut graf**" (short for paragraph), which is the meat of the release. It should answer the query, "Why is this important?" and "How will it be done?" Follow the nut graf with a **strong quote**, making sure you correctly identify the name and title of the person quoted. This also sets the perspective for the reporter. Finish with your **secondary message, which will provide balance for the lead paragraph**. A news release template is included in this tool kit for your convenience.

Never forget the basics. Every pitch must include the five Ws:

- What is your event?
- Who will participate?
- Why was your organization founded?
- When was your region founded?
- Where is your region located?
- How can people in your region get involved?

But remember, there are many other organizations that may be vying for the same reporter's attention with stories of their own. So how do you set the SCCA apart? Simply providing race results won't cut it. To get your story covered, think like a reporter and add these elements to your pitch:

- Explain why readers should care about your event. How do you affect their daily lives? How have you improved their community?
- Tell the reporter a story. Give an example of how your organization has changed the life of one person or brought another dimension to their lives. Offer the reporter an interview with that person — but first make sure you have obtained that person's permission.
- Put your story in simple terms so that anyone could understand it. Don't use jargon. Explain it like you were talking to a family member.
- List potential photo opportunities in your pitch. Make sure the shots evoke emotion and are visually appealing.
- Include your phone number, fax and e-mail address so the reporter can reach you.
- Edit what you've written. Try to fit it on one page.
- Ask a co-worker to proofread the final version before you send it.
- Send the pitch.

DEVELOPING STORY IDEAS



3. Follow up. If you haven't heard from the reporter in one week, follow up with him or her to gauge interest or offer new information.

- When you place the call, quickly identify yourself and the reason you are calling.
- ALWAYS ask if it's a good time for the reporter to talk. Reporters work on deadline. He or she may be trying to hammer out the last few paragraphs of a story. Put yourself in the reporter's shoes; working under deadline pressure and fielding hundreds of phone calls and e-mails a day can be stressful.
- If he or she can talk, briefly summarize your story, gauge the interest, hopefully schedule an interview and offer to forward more information about your organization. Find out who the reporter is interested in interviewing, his schedule and deadline. Other questions to ask: Will the interview be done by phone or in person? (If in person, send directions if your location isn't widely known.) Before hanging up, thank the reporter for his interest and tell him you will call him back to confirm interview dates and times.
- If the reporter is too busy to talk, find out a better time to call and thank him for his time. Call back at the more convenient time and follow the instructions above.

4. Prepare for the interview. Identify the key messages you want to get across in the interview. In other words, what are the three or four succinct things you want to say about the SCCA, your region and your event? List what makes your group unique. Summarize the types of members the SCCA attracts and how it has enriched their lives. Back up your claims with statistical information (if possible) or vivid anecdotes about SCCA members. Those three or four statements are your key messages. Weave them into your answers.

5. Be realistic. Sending out a news release will never guarantee coverage. News outlets receive literally hundreds of news releases every day, and there is no way to be sure your event will be covered. There are a variety of reasons the media don't show up: breaking news occurred, which always takes precedence, there were not enough staff people at work that day to cover every event, or perhaps the assignment editor decided the newscast was already "sports heavy" and chose to cover a parade instead. You will probably never know why an event is not covered, but it's important to keep notifying the media. When you send the release, and follow it with a phone call, you are establishing a relationship with that media outlet, that assignment editor, that reporter. And as you now know, we call this "media relations" for a reason. Maintaining that relationship is the first step toward getting media coverage. It is a process, and at some point you will hit pay dirt. Don't be discouraged. Keep sending the releases and pitching the stories.

PRE-INTERVIEW PROCESS



Relax

Gallup once conducted a survey asking people, “What do you fear most?” Death came in second. Public speaking came in first. And, interviews are definitely public speaking.

- Take a deep breath before the interview begins.
- Smile.
- Keep your posture open and approachable, and watch your other body language (such as crossing your arms).

Review

Your key messages are the single most important thing to keep in mind during an interview. The integration of these key messages into every interview you give enables your region to create a more focused, consistent marketing program. Determination of messages and audience is critical.

Key message one: The SCCA scratches your sports itch. The SCCA is the place where those who love competitive motorsports come together and share their passion. This is what sustains and attracts new members every year.

Key message two: The SCCA lets you be in charge. The SCCA offers a variety of opportunities for participation, including driving, watching, cheering, working on the crew, officiating. You choose your level of participation.

Key message three: The SCCA makes motorsports a part of your life. Membership in the SCCA crosses every demographic line — yet those lines melt away when members come together to share the experience.

Jot down your key messages and be sure to weave them into your responses during an interview. Know them as well as you know the back of your hand, and your responses to questions will automatically include them. Learn to bridge to a key message; if a reporter is not asking questions that can be answered with a key message, answer the question and then continue with “And there’s another point to consider as well ... ” or “You may also be wondering how ” Look for opportunities to insert key messages.

Remember

You’re in control. No, you don’t control the final story in the newspaper or on the air, but you do control the information you give out and the manner in which that information is delivered.

- Always tell the truth. If you don’t know an answer, don’t guess. Tell the reporter you’ll check and get back with the reporter. If it’s an answer you can’t reveal (e.g., confidential information), tell them that.
- Use your region’s name — not “I” or “we” whenever possible when you answer a question
- Don’t repeat a negative question.
- You can ask the reporter if other sources are being interviewed for the story — and you can make suggestions for other angles of the story the reporter may not have considered. Keep in mind the reporter may not take these suggestions.
- Encourage the reporter to contact you later if other questions arise, but NEVER ask to see the story before it is printed or aired.
-

Respond

Interviews can easily be a win/win situation. Reporters need good stories to write. You have a good story to tell. Make it easy for them to do their job and you’ll both be happy.

- Ask about the reporter’s deadline and respect that deadline. If you’re not going to be able to get the information to the reporter in time to meet the deadline, let the reporter know.

PRE-INTERVIEW PROCESS



Rethink

- Know your key messages. Don't be afraid to repeat them, and repeat them, and repeat them. Doing so insures that they will rise to the surface as the reporter reviews his or her notes.
- It's called media "relations" for a reason. Use these interviews as an opportunity to continue building relationships with key reporters and editors that will be beneficial to your region.
- Don't assume the reporter is familiar with the SCCA, your region or your events — this toolkit includes background information to offer reporters.
- Don't use jargon (except with industry trade publications).
- Don't joke.
- Don't say "No comment." If you can't answer — or aren't ready to answer— a much better response is, "I'm not the one to answer that question, but let me try to find someone who can ..." or, "It's just not our policy to discuss personnel issues. What I can tell you is"
- Listen to the questions; think about your answers.
- Always tell the truth. When you've lost your credibility, you've lost everything.
- The interview begins when the reporter arrives and is not over until the reporter is gone. The off-the-cuff comment you make on the way to the door could be the next morning's headline.
- Never, never, never, never, never go off the record. Never.



Tips and Tactics the Pros Use

Let's face it, interviewing can be stressful. That's why we've compiled tips and tactics the pros use to conduct a successful and effective interview. These have been crafted for specifically working with the media, but you'll find most of them to be applicable in virtually any communications or interview setting.

Stay Focused

- Take a deep breath before the interview begins.
- If the interview is to take place in your office, clear your desk of all important papers. You will present a more professional image, and the reporter won't have a chance to see something he's not meant to see.
- Review your key messages. Write them down if necessary. If you can get nothing else across in this interview, what are the two or three things you want the reporter to remember?
- Role play in advance with a colleague.
- Maintain eye contact with the reporter.
- Never get angry or confrontational.
- Avoid clichés.
- Ask yourself, "Who cares?" What does this story really mean to the people who will read it or see it? How does it affect them?
- Use interviews as relationship-building opportunities.
- Don't assume the reporter is familiar with the SCCA. Offer background information.
-

Answer the Questions Asked

- Listen to the questions.
- Think before you answer.
- Bridge to your key messages by answering the unasked question. We'll cover bridging techniques in more detail later in this handbook.
- Always tell the truth. If you don't know the answer, tell the reporter you'll check and get back to him or her. If it's confidential information that you can't reveal, tell the reporter that.
- Don't feel obligated to answer every question. This is not a legal proceeding. If you are not able to provide the reporter with specific information, say, "That's a good question, but I'm not the right person to answer it."
- Use the reporter's name occasionally.
- Be sure analogies are appropriate.
- Don't be afraid of silence. Don't feel pressured to fill dead air during a broadcast interview. Wait for the next question.
-

How to Follow Up

- Ask when the story will appear.
- If the story is good and correct, send a note thanking the reporter for a fair story.
- Make yourself available as an expert.
- Don't criticize the reporter for quoting your competitor.

TRACKING & EVALUATING COVERAGE



Now you can breathe a big sigh of relief. The interview is over, you managed to remember your key messages, and you are now actively building a relationship with a local reporter. Good for you! But the process is not over yet. An interview must be tracked in order for you to realize its benefits. Fortunately, tracking is fairly painless.

Assign someone (or you can do it yourself) to watch or listen to the newscast or to look through the newspaper when the interview is scheduled to run. The reporter told you (after you asked, of course) when to expect it when you did the interview. Jot that down on the calendar so you don't forget.

Use your DVR or VCR to record the story or clip it from the publication. Take a hard look at it and ask yourself these questions. Does it repeat your key messages? Where was the story placed in the newscast, and how long did it run? How many times was your region or your event mentioned in the story? Was "SCCA" in the headline? If it is a newspaper story, where was it placed? Did it appear above the fold or below it? Was it on the front section or the back?

You will learn much about the media and about the art of giving a successful interview by paying attention to the stories that appear after you have given an interview. A successful interview contains at least one key message and mentions "SCCA" or your region several times. You certainly do not have control over the media, but you do have control over weaving key messages into interviews and mentioning the SCCA numerous times.

Be sure to keep good records of your media tracking. It works best if you have a file system. That way, someone who volunteers next year will be able to go to that file and read all the past newspaper and magazine clips. It will also help someone become more familiar with the different reporters in your region.

TRACKING & EVALUATING COVERAGE



As media relations liaison, you are pitching three stories for the June Sprints in Elkhart Lake, Wis., an hour north of Milwaukee. After reviewing the local and regional media, you decide your three strongest pitches are:

- **A day in the life of a racing team**, which you pitch to a Milwaukee TV station's sports director. The pitch encourages a crew to tape a racing team over several days as it prepares for the June Sprints event. The segment would air before the June Sprints, which could generate additional attendance for the event.
- **How amateur racing helps the local economy**, which you would pitch to *The Business Journal* in Milwaukee or a business editor at *The Milwaukee Sentinel*. The business story would show that NASCAR isn't the only racing circuit to benefit hotels, restaurants and shop owners. A positive story could lead to additional sponsorships and increase attendance.
- **Don't try this at home**, which would offer a successful amateur driver discussing key driving tips and ways to avoid risks on the highway. You would pitch this story to a news reporter at a Milwaukee TV station. Now let's see how you would track the coverage.

TRACKING & EVALUATING COVERAGE



MEDIA TRACKING

Date: May 17, 2004

Event: June Sprints

Pitch: A day in the life of a racing team

- Key Messages:**
1. Amateur racing cures the motorsports itch
 2. Racers hold down day jobs but participate for the fun of the run
 3. Amateur racing involves a great deal of preparation, dedication and stamina

News Organization: WDJT – TV

Contact: Rock Rote, sports director

Follow Up: He is unable to do a story at this time

Coverage Generated: None

News Organization: WISN – TV

Contact: Dan Needles, Sports Director

Follow Up: He will send a crew on June 3 for three hours

Coverage Generated: Coverage expected on the Sunday night sports

News Organization: The Business Journal

Contact: Mark Kass

Follow Up: Reporter agreed to do a story on the Journal's online edition

Coverage Generated: Coverage expected to be online June 3

News Organization: Milwaukee Sentinel

Contact: Gary Howard, Sports Assignment desk

Follow Up: Will send reporter Bob Smith to event on Sunday

Coverage Generated: Monday recap

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION LETTER



February 1, 2009

Mr. Mike Fannin
Sports Reporter
The Kansas City Star
1729 Grand Blvd.
Kansas City, MO 64108

Dear Mike,

As a member of the Sports Car Club of America, I understand first hand the passion involved in the organization. It truly scratches the competitive itch and need for speed that so many people feel, yet don't know what to do about. That is the reason I'm writing to you today.

There are millions of race fans across the country and the area, but very few of them know that there is a way to get off their couch or from the spectator side of the fence and get involved—whether its as a race driver, crew member, race official or corner worker. SCCA has hundreds of ways to scratch that itch and satisfy the need for speed in a legal and fun atmosphere.

I've personally been competing for the last six years, starting first with my car as I drove it on the street. Slowly, I've added performance parts, but the beauty of SCCA competition is that you don't have to have a purpose built race car to go out on the weekends and have fun.

I am available every weekday at 816-555-7222 and can be reached any time at esmith@yahoo.com. I have a wealth of information about SCCA and I would be happy to answer any of your questions, set up an interview or get you out to participate in an event. I'm enclosing my business card for your Rolodex.

Thanks for your time. I hope to talk to you soon.

Sincerely,

Ed Smith
Director of Publicity
Kansas Region, Sports Car Club of America
www.ksregionscca.org

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE TEMPLATE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Edward Smith, Finger Lakes Region SCCA, (816) 555-7222

e-mail: esmith@scca.com

Finger Lakes Car Club Races to Beat Diabetes

SCCA Region Looks to Surpass \$80,000 in Donations in 2003

ROCHESTER, NY (Sept. 1, 2004) — The Finger Lakes Region of the Sports Car Club of America will hold its 16th annual benefit sports car race for juvenile diabetes Saturday, Sept. 8, at Watkins Glen International Race Track in Watkins Glen, N.Y.

The amateur racing association has embraced the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation as one of its top charities for the past 20 years. More than 40 drivers have registered for the race, and seven local major corporations, including Kodak and Pepsi, serve as sponsors.

“This event has grown tremendously since it first began,” said Bob Jones, regional executive of the SCCA’s Finger Lakes Region. “Finger Lakes raised more than \$80,000 last year, and we plan to exceed that amount in 2004.”

— more —

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE TEMPLATE



Race to Beat Diabetes/Page 2 of 2

The race begins at noon and the awards ceremony will be held at 4 p.m. Racers gathered pledges, with commitment levels that can fluctuate based on each driver's finish. In addition, race sponsors are expected to contribute. Corporate sponsors accounted for nearly \$40,000 in 2003 donations.

"This is only one of the more than 2,000 events SCCA sanctions nation-wide every year," Croucher said.

"The SCCA is committed to the thrill of motorsports, but we are also committed to being good members of the community. This event brings together people with a passion for racing, so they may enjoy that passion for a good cause."

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Founded in 1944, the Sports Car Club of America currently has more than 50,000 members and 114 regions across the United States. Amateur racers participate in events ranging from parking lot courses in Solo competition to RoadRallies. For more information, log on to www.scca.com.

Information in this release is for example only.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE



Media Advisory

Who: Sports Car Club of America, Finger Lakes Region

What: 16th Annual Race to Beat Diabetes

When: Noon, Saturday, Sept. 8, 2009

Where: Watkins Glen International Raceway

Why: To raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Juvenile diabetes affects more than 4,500 young people in our area. The Finger Lakes Region of SCCA holds an annual benefit race to help research a cure.

Photo locations are set up throughout the track for photo opportunities of the race. Other photo opportunities will occur one hour before the race when children affected with diabetes will be invited to sit in the cars and meet the drivers.

For more information, contact Edward Smith, (816) 555-7222 or esmith@yahoo.com.

SAMPLE PITCH LETTER



Feb. 6, 2009

Mike Fannin
Sports Reporter
The Kansas City Star
1729 Grand Blvd.
Kansas City, MO 64108

Dear Mike:

Like any other recreational organization, the Sports Car Club of America is made up of many different types of individuals, all of whom have one thing in common: to indulge their passion for racing. Taking a closer look at one of the individuals who is a member of the SCCA would make an interesting feature story for your readers.

Early next month, the St. Louis Region SCCA is holding the 16th annual Race For the Cure, which benefits juvenile diabetes. One of our local members, John Doe of Smithtown, was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes when he was just five years old. John struggled for many years to cope with his illness, and today enjoys a full and happy life. His personal story would put a face on this illness, while educating the public about it.

I will follow up with you in a few days to gauge your interest in writing a feature story about John and will set up an interview with John and his doctor, if you would like. In the meantime, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to call me at 816-942-7222. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward Smith,
Director of Publicity
St. Louis Region
SCCA



Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) is a 50,000- plus-member, not-for-profit organization, founded in 1944, which holds more than 2,000 amateur and professional motorsports events each year.

114 regions make up the SCCA, which is headquartered in Topeka, Kan.

There are four main areas of concentration for SCCA: Club Racing, Rally, Solo and Pro Racing:

Club Racing

Club Racing is the backbone of the SCCA, holding more some 300 high-speed racing events annually. Of the Club's members, more than 49 percent are involved on the amateur level either as drivers, crew, workers or officials. More than 8,000 SCCA members are eligible to compete within SCCA's Club Racing programs.

SCCA Club Racing has three levels of events—Time Trials, which range from driving your street car on a track for fun to competing against the clock; Regionals, for entry level wheel-to-wheel action; and Nationals, for the top level of competition culminating with the SCCA National Championship Runoffs.

Solo

Solo is the SCCA brand name for autocross competition, and the place where many members scratch their motorsports itch. Solo competition doesn't involve the high cost or elevated risk associated with club racing. Participants often use their own vehicles to navigate the Solo course.

These events are driving skill contests that emphasize the driver's ability and the car's handling characteristics by driving a course designated by traffic cones on a low hazard location, such as a parking lot.

Solo makes up the majority of SCCA's events, with approximately 1,200 competitions held each year. The pinnacle of SCCA Solo competition is the Tire Rack SCCA National Solo program, made up of the Tire Rack ProSolo National Series, the

Tire Rack Solo National Tour and the Tire Rack SCCA Solo National Championships.

Rally

There are two main types of Rally competition in SCCA,— RallyCross and RoadRally.

RallyCross, the more popular of the two and one of the fastest-growing types of grassroots motorsports competition in America, is like a Solo competition on a low-grip surface. Events are often held on dirt, gravel and even ice.

RoadRally involves two or more people, in ordinary cars, on regular roads, traveling within the legal speed limit. This race is about accuracy, not speed.

Pro Racing

One of the most revered names in professional motorsports, SCCA Pro Racing is a subsidiary of Sports Car Club of America, operating and organizing road racing events across the country with series such as the SCCA SPEED World Challenge Championships, Playboy Mazda MX-5 Cup, Volkswagen Jetta TDI Cup and Formula Ford 2000 Championship.

In a joint effort with SCCA Club Racing, Pro Racing has rejuvenated its famed Trans-Am Series in 2009.

Other

SCCA is also involved in a number of other activities through its Foundation, including a partnership with the BMW Car Club of America Foundation with the Tire Rack Street Survival Program. This is a teen driving program that helps new drivers learn the basics on how to stay safe on the streets.

TOP-10 WINNING NEWS PITCHES



From the previous pages in this tool kit, you have learned how to spot news and how to pitch news stories; now it's time to take those concepts to the next level. Following are 10 ideas for news stories that could be pitched anywhere in the country. These ideas can be tailored to your region by using local examples very easily, or even used as they are written.

Once you've tried this and gone through the process of pitching a news story, you will feel more confident approaching reporters. You will begin to develop important relationships with members of the media, and these relationships will be used by volunteers in your region for years to come.

1. The Solo Challenge

Present this idea to a local television sports anchor or reporter, because it is highly visual and lends itself best to television. Challenge the reporter to drive the Solo course while videotaping and see how well he or she does. You might pit the reporter against another driver, or another person who is well known in your region. That will lend an air of drama to the story and heighten viewer interest. It is a "highly teasable" story as well, which means there are great possibilities for the station to run ten-second promotions of the story before it runs. This makes the story more attractive to stations.

2. Real Life Cannonball Run

Remember the film "Cannonball Run?" So will viewers in your region. Pitch the story of a regularly scheduled RoadRally to a television station as a "real-life Cannonball Run." Offer access into one of the vehicles for camera and photographer. Remember that great pictures and sound are the key ingredients to a television news story. Remind the news station in your pitch that the film could always be rented and clips could be interspersed throughout the story.

3. A Day in the Life

Another story with superb visuals and high viewer interest, this story would best be pitched to a television news anchor. Offer to take the anchor into the pit during a race and teach him what he would have to do to be a member of the pit crew. This offers a lot of on-camera interaction between the pit crew and the anchor, great natural sound opportunities and a way to tell your story to the region that is both interesting and informative.

4. A Great Buy is Hard to Find

Have you talked with any drivers who have found their equipment in unique ways? You probably have, so translate that into a news story. Did one of your regional members buy a car on e-Bay or a transmission in the middle of the weekend off of Craigslist? Are garage sales the place to find hidden track treasures? Are there online clubs that trade information on equipment? This is an unusual story that would interest readers and viewers.

5. He's A Surgeon During The Week ...

Every region has many of these stories. Take a look at your members and the variety of professions and careers they have — and then take a look at how they choose to spend their weekends. This is a terrific human interest story that will put a face on your region while getting the word out about the many activities you offer.

6. Happy Anniversary!

The SCCA celebrates its 65th anniversary in 2009; what about your region? How long has it been in existence? If it is a milestone year such as 10, 20, 25 or 30, there is a story there. What changes has your region experienced in that time? How has your membership evolved? What do you offer racing enthusiasts now that you didn't offer when you began? Has your volunteer base

TOP-10 WINNING NEWS PITCHES



grown? Are you doing something special on the actual day of your anniversary that could be covered by the media? Will there be a special presentation during an event?

7. Look for the Unusual

Take another look at your own members. Is there someone who dispels all the preconceptions that the public might have about racing? Most people imagine your membership to be made up of men in a certain age bracket. Do you have a member who is a grandmother and has been passionate about racing her whole life? Find someone who breaks the mold, and you'll have yourself a news story.

8. Fan-tastic

There are surely diehard racing fans who faithfully cheer at every event throughout the year. Find out more about these fans. Where are they from? What is their background? When did they develop a passion for racing? How do they motivate themselves for total fan involvement? You'll meet some interesting people who could well be featured in a news story.

9. Driver Training 101

This could be a seasonal story. If bad weather is forecast, offer one of your drivers as a source of information on driving tips. Bring the reporter to the track, for television, and let the photographer shoot video of the driver as he runs through common maneuvers encountered in rough weather (which way should you turn into a skid?) and gives tips on avoiding accidents. This could also be a news release; list the tips, and you may have a publication interested as well. Be careful, though, not to position your drivers as experts. They should be presented as another source for information about driving. Great tie-in to a Street Survival program if your Region is doing one.

10. Make it Official

Your region doesn't have just drivers and pit personnel. Officials and workers often get training at SCCA events and then move up to work, manage and run big-time professional races from the likes of NASCAR, IndyCar, Grand Am, American Le Mans or other racing events. Has any official or worker in your region done that? It's a great story to pitch shortly before the professional race to show how it all started.

CHECK POINT



This is a step by step process of getting and tracking a media story. Move from point one to point two to point three, checking them off as you go. This list serves as a reminder, a refresher, of what you have accomplished, and what work remains. It's an easy way of tracking your efforts to attract publicity.

1. An idea is born

This is the germ of whatever coverage you garner.

2. Decide whom to contact

Is this a print story or better suited to television?

3. Craft the pitch

Use the templates we've provided.

4. Make the pitch

Contact the media by phone, e-mail or fax.

5. Follow up

Find out if they're interested.

6. Do the interview

Remember your key messages.

7. Clip or videotape the coverage

Keep it in your files.