



MEDIA RELATIONS
WE ARE
STORYTELLERS

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INTRODUCTION

Travellers are overwhelmed with information, whether it's from traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television or new media including the internet and social media like Facebook and Twitter. The trick is to find ways to stand out from the noise.

The days of general destination stories are over. Editors no longer want travel stories that read like a list of must see attractions that could be taken from the pages of a guidebook. Media outlets want stories that are focused and have a theme. We naturally find it easier to remember stories than a hodgepodge of facts. Good stories are appreciated and shared, whether through word of mouth, over dinner with friends or via social networking platforms.

This travel media relations workbook will look at how to find and package stories about your operation or destination. It includes tips on how to pitch stories, build relationships with travel journalists and sample checklists to help you build your media relations toolbox.

How Travel Alberta Can Support Your Business

Travel Alberta is here to support media relations efforts for regional operators and DMOs throughout the province. We are available to assist in the marketing of your region, destination or tourism product; by leveraging the power of media in order to get your name out there.

Working with journalists has the ability to increase awareness of your business and the unique experiences your operation provides to visitors. Media coverage offers third-party endorsement of your tourism experiences, while also allowing you to tell the stories you want to tell consumers, providing a stronger return on investment.

We can assist as a resource to support your media outreach efforts in a number of ways.

- creating interesting and relevant story ideas
- pitching key journalists your stories
- media recruitment for special events, experiences or press trips
- development of press trip themes / itineraries
- social media outreach, support and direction
- media material distribution
- writing, editing, critiquing and distribution of press materials (press release, media advisory, media kit, images, online media materials)

Please contact your Travel Alberta Industry Relations Representative directly with your news, story ideas or media related suggestions.

Why Should I Work With Travel Media?

1. Raises public awareness

People won't come to visit your community or operation if they don't know it exists, why it is special or what activities they can do once they get there. One way to tell them is by sharing your story with travel media, who can then disseminate it through traditional and social media. Working with travel media will help raise the public awareness about your operation or destination.

2. Offers third party endorsement

Readers spend more time looking at a magazine or newspaper article than they do an advertisement. Editorial also carries with it the credibility of what readers perceive to be the third party endorsement of a community or tourism operation that paid advertising lacks.

3. Builds relationships

As you continue to develop and maintain a relationship with travel media, you will develop and strengthen your relationships with the public to whom the media convey information and that you are ultimately trying to reach.

4. Gives you some control over the message

Sometimes journalists find out about your destination or operation even though you haven't publicized it. A pleasant surprise, that may not give you time to think about how you want to present your business to make the most of the opportunity. Being proactive by preparing yourself to work with travel media before they contact you gives you a chance to drive the bus instead of chasing after it. It's easier to influence a situation by putting in your two cents before a decision is made – or a story appears in the media – than it is to react to it afterwards. This way you have more control over the message.

5. Return on investment

For every dollar that is invested in hosting a journalist, the destination receives at least \$30 back in terms of unpaid editorial media coverage.

Developing and maintaining relationships with travel media is a bit like making friends – you can rarely have too many.

There are two reasons why you need to be able to summarize an angle in one or two sentences.

1. Journalists are pressed for time and there's lots of competition for their attention. If you can't get to the point quickly, they'll lose interest.
2. If you're having trouble getting to the point quickly, chances are it's because you aren't being sufficiently focused on what the story is that you want to tell.

You need to focus on how to package and present stories in a way that meets the needs of journalists – not on what you want them to say. You are not advertising. You're selling stories. A well packaged idea has three elements.

1. Focus on telling stories that transport readers to a place by reeling them in using a good hook, characters and vivid descriptions.
2. Know the kind of person to whom your product or service would appeal.
3. Know what your target audience reads, listens to, watches and what online appeals to them.

Building Blocks For Good Media Relations

It's important to create interesting stories that will grab media's attention. These stories will form the centrepiece of your pitch to journalists. A good pitch has three key elements.

1. An interesting and relevant idea.
2. A specific angle that can be summarized in one or two sentences.
3. Is well targeted to an appropriate market and audience demographic.

Having all three doesn't guarantee that you'll get media coverage but it will increase your chances significantly. Good travel media relations rests upon the following elements.

- **It's not about you.** Focus on how to package and present stories in a way that meets the needs of journalists. That means learning what makes them tick and how to get them as fired up as you. Each journalist has particular areas of interest, find out what they are and use that information to your advantage. Working with journalists who possess the interest and knowledge about the story you want to tell will increase your chances of them wanting to tell it. They will have a better awareness of why that story is important.
- **Be a storyteller.** Focus on telling stories that transport readers to a place by reeling them in using a good story hook, characters and vivid descriptions.
- **Identify and pitch good stories that are well targeted to the media outlet and their audience.** Good media relations is like dating; the trick is to figure out how to create good matches between stories and journalists.
- **Be prepared.** Collect information that you and the media will need to tell the story. Prepare, package and deliver a solid pitch. Once you have identified a good story, what information will you need to get a journalist excited about it? What information will the journalist need to tell it to readers, viewers or listeners?

- **Build relationships for the long haul.** Learning what piques the interest of different journalists and which stories the media covers will help you develop and maintain those partnerships.

ELEMENTS OF A GOOD STORY

There's plenty of competition for the attention of journalists and the general public. A good story draws readers in and makes them feel connected to it. It gets their attention and keeps it by making them feel engaged. Editors want stories that draw in readers using a clear angle, interesting characters and you-are-there descriptions. Your challenge, is to get the media's attention by telling an engaging story. Packaging a story is important because you can do everything right but media won't pick up your story if it isn't packaged to meet their needs.

A good story

- **Elicits emotion.** They make people laugh, cry, feel angry or feel frustrated. Don't tell them why they should care – show them. Help them make a connection with you, your organization and message. Powerful stories can touch readers / viewers / listeners by finding something to which they can relate. Drawing out an emotion helps to engage an audience and remember a story long after they've been exposed to it.
- **Has a good hook.** What is the angle of the story? The Calgary Stampede would be the overall topic; whereas, an angle zeros in on a particular aspect of the Stampede that could be of interest to journalists. For example, a story on how to dress for the occasion could include a trip to Smithville Hats and the Alberta Boot Company to find the right attire. A focus on eating your way around the Stampede could include tastings of deep-fried Oreos, jelly beans and pickles, as well as onsite restaurants. An angle is a piece of a topic.
- **Introduces interesting characters that are good storytellers, articulate, passionate and engaging.** Good stories are told through articulate, passionate and engaging people. A passionate interviewee can help get a journalist fired up about the story and make it more powerful. Good interviewees are not necessarily people who talk a lot, they can be someone who conveys a lot of information in just a few words. For example, a man was looking at a four month old Great Pyrenees livestock dog that weighed 45 pounds. "How old?" he asked. When told that Sadie was just four months old, his two word comment was, "That big?"; in just four words, he managed to convey that he was impressed with the dog's size.
- **Takes readers from the abstract to the concrete by bringing them to the scene of the action.** A good travel story uses vivid descriptions to make people feel like they're there.
- **Is timely.** It answers the question – Why are you telling me this now?
- **Has some drama.** Was there a problem that needed to be addressed or a challenge overcome along the way? Perhaps a major change occurred? Is this a success story? For example, an abandoned building with an interesting history is saved from demolition and turned into a bed & breakfast. A dying town, whose residents work together to reinvent it as a tourist destination. City slickers whose closest encounter with farming is planting tomatoes in their backyard but buy and learn to run a working ranch.
- **Has a theme or message.** What do you want readers to learn and remember about your story? Be able to summarize it in two or three sentences. Good stories provide information that readers find both interesting and useful.

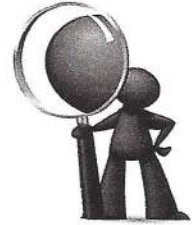
How To Tell A Good Story

Collecting story ideas is a bit like berry picking, you should carry a container in which to hold your berries; then sort through them afterwards to see which berries are edible and which ones aren't. It's important to be open to ideas and also understand that not every one will turn into a prize winning gem. Always keep a notebook and pen handy to jot down potential story ideas as they occur to you; don't worry about fine tuning them immediately, set aside time to do that later.

While some good ideas may only involve your operation, others can be the product of teamwork. Find out what is happening in your community or region with festivals, events and other operators. Work with others in your community to develop stronger stories that will benefit you and them. Learn a bit about the area's history to see if you can incorporate elements of it into your own story.

CASE STUDY - Rosebud School of the Arts and Rosebud Theatre

Part of their uniqueness stems from the pivotal role they have played in revitalizing what had become a virtual ghost town. In this sense, they have become part of a larger story that includes other attractions and activities such as the Mercantile Dining Room, Rosebud Centennial Museum and walking tour, Akokiniskway Gallery and Rosebud Creek Recording Studio inside a former United Church, the Akokiniskway Golf Course, various shops and local accommodations.



What's the story?

- Dying town that reinvented itself into a major rural theatre town with 40,000 visitors a year.
- Repurposed buildings. For example, the Mercantile Dining Room was once a store, the museum is in a former Chinese laundry and the art gallery began as a Presbyterian Church.
- Rural theatres exist across the country, but Rosebud has successfully woven a story around the fact that it started out as an arts camp in a virtual ghost town and evolved into a full-fledged theatre.

12 Ways To Spin A Good Yarn For Journalists

1. **An Anniversary or Special Event.** Why tell this story now? It's important to note that anniversaries and special events offer potential for two types of media coverage. If information is available far enough in advance, media outlets can help you promote it; this in turn, will encourage people to come out to the event. A second type of coverage is of the event itself; while this won't help you draw crowds, it could still promote your operation or destination as a place to visit in the future.

If you want to use media coverage to attract visitors to your event, remember that having the information available far in advance is essential. Magazines have long lead times – some as much as six months. One of the biggest complaints travel writers have about anniversaries is that information isn't available far enough in advance for them to write about it. For example, information about Banff's 125th anniversary wasn't available until a few months before the celebrations began. If a journalist is writing for a magazine, that's too late. You really need to start planning a year ahead.

2. **Experiential / Learning Travel or a Hands On Activity.** A group of travel writers were taken to Nitehawk Recreation Area in Grande Prairie, where a member of Canada's national natural luge team gave them a lesson in how to practice this sport. They learned to slide down a hill; which doesn't have the banked curves of an Olympic luge course and how to use their bodies to control a sled's speed and direction. These types of stories lend themselves well to colourful *you-are-there* details that draw readers in and maintain their attention.
3. **Quirky or Unusual Experiences.** The town of Vulcan has used a Star Trek theme to turn itself into a tourist destination. Attractions include a Tourism and Trek Station that has been designed to look like a spacecraft, a Star Trek themed walking tour that features a replica starship and murals, the option for visitors to get a special stamp at the post office and a space themed waterpark. Taking the quirky theme a step further, they hosted Star Trek actor Leonard "Spock" Nimoy on April 23, 2010. Their annual Star Trek convention in June 2010 attracted actor Tim "Tuvok" Russ.
4. **Tie in with Current News Event or Announcement.** Keep an eye out for current events that are related to what you're trying to promote, especially if the story is breaking news. For example, Atlas Coal Mine National Historic Site received \$278,000 from the federal government's Economic Action Plan stimulus program to carry out restoration work at the site. The announcement may give the mine a timely hook to tell the story about the Atlas Coal Mine Historical Society, the restoration work they're doing, future plans and the importance of the mine.
5. **Tie in with a Current Trend.** The Brazeau 100 K Kitchen Party project encourages people to buy from producers within 100 kilometres of Brazeau County and then go to Brazeau for a cooking, canning or pickling class.
6. **Interesting Character(s).** A cowboy poet could be the centrepiece of a story about cowboy poetry or culture and how visitors can best appreciate it. These types of stories offer journalists a human interest angle on a destination or operation.

7. **Culture.** *The Hills are Alive* is a four day festival that celebrates Métis music, dance and culture in the Medicine Hat area. It includes cultural workshops in such skills as fiddling, jigging/square dancing, sash finger weaving, Métis flower beadwork and moccasin making. This gives journalists an insight into local cultures.
8. **Theme or Trail.** Alberta locations, where popular Hollywood movies such as *Brokeback Mountain* have been filmed, could be the focus of a story. Another example, is the Edmonton Regional Tourism Group's annual Country Soul Stroll that runs for six weeks each summer. Visitors can take self guided tours to more than 20 places to enjoy local food, farming and artisans. To kick off the event, one year they had the "Farmer's Olympics" where politicians had to compete in bale stacking, goat racing, horse grooming, loading a wheelbarrow and kissing a llama. The Olympics would have made a good story as an opening to talk about the Country Soul Stroll.
9. **Behind the Scenes.** Buffalo Adventures offers a visit to Bodo, one of the richest Great Plains archaeological sites in Western Canada. Visitors can work alongside an archaeologist to learn basic excavation skills and how to identify artifacts.
10. **Celebrity Connection.** Was a Hollywood movie filmed here? Perhaps a famous actor slept there? Or maybe you have a celebrity spokesman who played for the Edmonton Oilers. These details give journalists a chance to tell readers how they, too, can have a brush with fame.
11. **Oldest, Biggest, Smallest or the First.** The Little Church in Drumheller "seats 10,000 people - six at a time." It was built in 1968 but reconstructed by inmates of the Drumheller Institution in 1991.
12. **Promote your Publicity and Awards.** Was your site named a UNESCO World Heritage Site? Did you just win a tourism award for innovation? Was your festival ranked among the top 10 in North America by a prestigious publication? This is your chance to brag about it and garner some publicity for your operation or destination.

When creating stories around your operation or destination, beware of a *travel writer's special* – an activity that only travel media can do and that isn't available to the public.

EXERCISE I – How To Find Stories In Your Operation

Part 1

The first step to finding ways to tell your story is to look at your operation or destination from different angles. Each of your answers to the following questions may be a story angle that you could highlight with journalists to get them to write about your operation.



- Name something that is different, quirky or unusual about your operation or destination that sets it apart from others.

- Name someone in your operation or destination that you think is a real character and has good stories to tell. It can be an owner, manager or employee.

- When people come to visit you what interests them or excites them about your destination?

- Is there an anniversary or special event coming up in the next two or three years that connects in some way to your operation or area?

- Is there something about your operation that can tie in with a current news event, announcement or trend?

- Do you offer a hands on activity that visitors can do?

- Do visitors have a chance to go behind the scenes at your operation or destination?

- Have you introduced a new program or service at your operation or destination in the past six months?

- Do you have any interesting special event(s), what if you worked with other local operators?

- Is your operation part of a local trail or theme, could it be?

- Have you recently won an award or honour that you could brag about?

- What do you want readers to learn and remember about your operation after they leave?

Part 2

Pick the five best answers from your list and write a paragraph of no more than 100 words for each one. Write it in such a way that you get people's attention. Don't be afraid to use a bit of humour if you think it's appropriate. These paragraphs can be used to promote your operation or destination.

PACKAGING A GOOD STORY

Packaging a story is important. You can do everything else right, but the media will not pick up your story if it's not packaged to meet their needs. Packaging a story for media means being aware of what types of story angles pique their interest and trying to provide them with these ideas that are a good fit for each individual writer.

For example, two journalists want to visit a ranch. The first, is intrigued by the human interest angle of how three generations of the same family work together to keep the operation going. The other, is more interested in the hands on experience of learning how to round up cattle.

The common thread is the ranch but the story has been packaged differently depending on the needs and the interests of each journalist.

Anatomy Of A Story – from media trip to pitch

A media trip brings together four – six journalists to pursue stories, although they are seeing and doing the same things, you can see from above how they will likely produce very different stories.

A media trip might include the following activities.

Ice road from Fort McMurray to Fort Smith

Day 1 – Fort McMurray

- Driving tour of Fort McMurray.
- Visit to Syncrude bison paddock.
- Visit the Oil Sands Discovery Centre: watch a video, demonstration and take a viewing tour to learn more about the oil sands.
- Drive to an oil sand mining site and view large equipment used in the mining process.
- Aurora viewing experience.

Day 2 – Fort Chipewyan

- Dogsledding with local musher.
- Tour of Bicentennial Museum.
- Visit a replica of a Hudson's Bay store.

Day 3 – Fort Smith, NWT

- Lunch and tour at an alpaca farm.
- Town tour.
- Meet a local storyteller at North of 60 Books.
- Visit Northern Life Museum and Cultural Centre.
- Visit with local Aboriginal carver Sonny MacDonald at his studio.
- Visit Wood Buffalo National Park and their visitor reception centre.

Potential Story Angles – from this trip

- Peek inside Alberta's oil sands in Fort McMurray.
- Aurora viewing in northern Alberta.
- Fort Chipewyan, Alberta's oldest Aboriginal community.
- Travelling the ice road from Fort McMurray to Fort Smith via Wood Buffalo National Park.
- The NWT's only alpaca farm.
- Profile of carver Sonny MacDonald.

MEDIA KIT CHECKLIST

A media kit provides journalists with basic information about your operation or destination to help them create a story about you. The information should be designed with the needs of journalists in mind. The idea is to make their job easier by providing information at their fingertips when they are putting together their stories. The contents of a kit can vary depending on the type of tourism operation but information should be clear and concise so that journalists don't have to wade through too much paper to find what they need.

A media kit should include the following information.

- A brief history of your destination or operation.
- Descriptions of your products, services, activities, attractions, special events or other programming.
- Fact sheets about the destination with such key information as geographic location, population and other statistics, fun and unusual facts.
- A short biography of any key people in your operation who may be worth a story. For example, an owner, an interesting chef or a ranch owner who had a very different career in, say; high finance.
- Recent news releases.
- How to access royalty free photos.
- A list of key contacts and how to reach them via both phone, e-mail and even social media.

Don't include photocopies of articles written about you because you may be violating someone's copyright. If you want to share what has been written about you, it's best to provide the URL of a website where journalists can read them.

Make sure the information you provide is accurate, particularly telephone numbers and website addresses. If you are promoting an event, include either an agenda or website where journalists can go for more information.

HOW TO WRITE A NEWS RELEASE

A news release makes an announcement to journalists about something you're doing that you think is important and of interest to the public. For example, it can be about an activity or event in which you're involved or an award you've won. As newspaper budgets continue to shrink, cash poor media outlets may publish your news releases instead of sending a reporter to write about your operation or destination.

Structure

- Begin with an attention grabbing headline that features the most exciting news.
- Editors and journalists are inundated with news releases; they often decide within the first paragraph, whether to continue reading and cover your story or toss out the news release. Use the inverted pyramid style, which places the most important information at the start of the news release. **Include the five W's: who, what, when, where and why** in the first two paragraphs. Explain in one sentence who is doing what and why. The opening paragraph shouldn't be more than 50 – 75 words long. What is the main point that you want to get across to news media and the public?
- The following paragraphs should expand on the points made in the opening paragraph. They can include a few quotes from key people but make sure the wording sounds natural – like someone would say it that way if they were speaking. Too often, quotes sound like bureaucratese.
- The final paragraph is a boilerplate paragraph that you use at the end of all of your news releases to explain your organization and what you do.
- Keep the news release to one page.

Tips

- Write in the third person.
- Emphasize your key message, but don't go overboard with promotional content. A news release is not an advertisement.
- Keep sentences short and to the point.
- Avoid technical jargon. Keep language straightforward.
- Make sure the information you provide is accurate.
- Reread your news release to make sure your writing is clear, concise and you haven't made spelling and grammar mistakes. Don't rely on computers to catch your mistakes.

Before sending out your news release, think carefully about the audience you want to reach. Which editors and reporters can help you reach them?

News Release Template

Company Name and logo

Contact:

Telephone:

Cell:

E-mail:

Date:

For immediate release

HEADLINE IN CAPITAL LETTERS

Emulate the headlines you see in the newspaper every day. Before you start writing, remember the reporter is not interested in you making money or getting visitors to your business. He's looking for a story that is going to be interesting to his readers and pleasing to his editor. He does not care about your great selection, superior customer service and commitment to quality. He wants to know that information that will help him craft a good story.

Subheading

This gives you an opportunity to flesh out your angle and further hook the reporter without stepping on the drama of the press release headline.

Lead

City, Province – Gives the five W's: who, what, when, where and why of the story. It should also answer the question; why should people care? Make sure the most essential information is in this paragraph, in case journalists don't read any further. Put your best writing first – don't save the best for last. There is no need for hype or sell, just give the facts.

The Body

In an active voice, provide the back up of any claims that you have made above in the headline or lead. Use enough supporting material to make your case and demonstrate whatever angle you are promoting and that it wasn't something that you slapped together. Avoid using jargon, keep your writing tight and to the point. Emphasis is on economy of words; conveying the most important information in the fewest amount of words.

Boilerplate – Final Paragraph

Provide some brief background information about your organization. It's standard information that you always place at the end of your news releases. Contact information should appear here. At the end, make sure to have something similar to:

**If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with John Doe,
please call Sally Deer at 780-444-2222 or e-mail sdeer@travelalberta.com**

A few other tips

- Remember to check all of your spelling and grammar! You do not want typos or mistakes in your news release.
- Stay away from hype bloated phrases like, breakthrough, unique and state of the art.
- Always write from a journalist's perspective; never use "I" or "we" unless it is a quote.
- Read articles from publications you like to get used to and get the feel of the writing styles used.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Some journalists will take their own photos to accompany a story but many will not. It is important for destinations and operators to have a good photo library that media can use to illustrate their stories. More publications are using photo galleries as a source for photos.

Tips for supplying photography

- High resolution digital images (300 dpi) should be available either on CD or as downloadable images from your website.
- Print media outlets sometimes need photo galleries for their website and will rely on you to supply some of the images.
- Photos should show some action or activity in progress rather than be static shots of scenery. Active shots make people who see them feel like they are there or could be.
- Include people in your photos. Landscape photos can be helpful for wilderness scenes but you still want to show people enjoying the wilderness.
- Think of good background visuals if the photo is of a person; what is the message you want the photo to convey? (e.g. The owner of an alpaca farm might be photographed with some of his animals)
- Ensure you have permission to take a photo of a person to help promote your operation or destination.
- Each photo should include a caption that identifies where the photo was taken and what is happening. (e.g. Digging for dinosaur bones at Dinosaur Provincial Park)
- Ensure that you clearly state how photos are to be credited when they are published. (e.g. Photo Credit: Tommy Smith, Camelot Alpacas)

MEDIA SECTION OF YOUR WEBSITE

Journalists often refer to websites for information when putting together their stories. You can make their jobs easier by having a "Media Centre" tab on your home page; which leads to a section that provides, one stop shopping for journalists looking for information about your organization or destination. Update it regularly - otherwise it loses its usefulness.

What to include in the Media Centre.

- A brief history of your destination or operation including mention of key people and their role.
- A short biography of any key people in your operation who may be worth a story.
- Descriptions of your products or services, activities, attractions, special events or other programming.
- High resolution images (300 dpi) that journalists can use for free to illustrate stories.
- Links to news releases and announcements in reverse chronological order.
- Fact sheets about the destination with such key information as geographic location, population and other statistics, fun and unusual facts.

- A list of any awards you have won.
- A list of story ideas broken down into themes. (e.g. outdoor activities, foodie, arts and entertainment)
- If you're promoting a themed trail, include a map that clearly shows the location of each of the attractions being promoted.
- Links to media coverage you have received and that is available online. It's best not to post the actual stories on your site since this can violate a writer's copyright.
- A list of the main contacts by name, title, e-mail address and telephone number. Having a general e-mail address such as info@ is not appropriate for time strapped journalists.

Creating Your Own Media List

Once you've written a news release, to whom will you send it? It's important to develop and maintain a targeted media list of journalists who can help you get your message out to the public.

Your list should include details on

- travel writers who specialize in your area of expertise or geographic location.
- local reporters with daily and community newspapers, radio and television.
- local magazines or those that specialize in your area of interest.
- bloggers who write about your area.
- freelancers who publish stories about your area of expertise.

Media List Template

Name of journalist:

Telephone:

E-mail address:

Postal address:

Website:

Journalist's areas of interest:

Media outlet(s) to which they contribute:

Date their information was last updated:

Don't forget to update your list at least once a year, or whenever there are staff changes at a media outlet that could affect the coverage you receive.

ART OF THE FITCH

How to Build Relationships with Journalists

The most successful way to garner media coverage is to understand how the media works, pitch them appropriately targeted stories and build relationships with journalists.

Know Thy Audience

It's important to understand the audience of different publications and target ideas accordingly. Each media outlet produces a media kit that they distribute to advertisers. These kits provide key information about an outlet's audience such as gender, age group, income, education, marital status, where they live and types of interests. It's also important to look at the types of stories each media outlet publishes. (e.g. Are they interested in family travel? Is conservation their mandate? Are their readers more interested in stories about hunting and fishing?)

If you want to begin building relationships with individual journalists, read bylines (the name of the journalist who has produced the story) to get to know what types of stories interest them. Avoid pitching ideas that a magazine wouldn't publish because it's completely unsuited to their target audience. This indicates that you haven't taken the time to familiarize yourself with the magazine. It could also hurt your ability to attract their attention when you do have a story that fits their target audience.

Making The Fitch

- Be aware of lead times. When pitching events, there are two types of coverage.
 1. An advancer brings people out to an event.
 2. The coverage of the actual event raises awareness of your destination or operation but it may be too late for visitors to participate in the activity being highlighted. Magazines often have lead times of 6 – 12 months before the event because of their production schedules. Newspapers have shorter lead times, but they aren't kept around the house as long as magazines.
- E-mail – don't call.
- Keep pitches short and sweet. Writers and editors can make up their minds within the first five sentences.
- Think like a reporter. Deliver a story angle, not a promotional piece.
- Don't phone journalists to see if they received your news release. If everyone did that, they wouldn't have time to write any articles for their publication.
- If you do need to phone a reporter, it's best to reach them between 10 a.m. and noon. After that, it gets close to their deadlines and it will be extremely difficult to get their attention. If you're calling someone who is outside of your region, be mindful of time zones.

What To Do When A Journalist Calls

- Respond quickly. Newsrooms seem to work at warp speed and deadlines come and go in the blink of an eye. No opportunity for media coverage is wasted. If you don't take advantage of the opportunity, someone else will.
- Be available for interviews, especially when you send out news releases or receive media inquiries. Journalists will go back to the people who make their job easier.
- Find out what information the journalist needs from you – and deliver.
- Be aware of deadlines and provide information in a timely fashion. If you aren't able to provide the information immediately, find out the journalist's deadline. Then be sure to call them back with the information before their deadline.
- If you are unable to track down the information a journalist needs, let them know that you tried but were unsuccessful. That way you don't leave them hanging and they don't think you dropped the ball. Consider offering them suggestions of other possible sources for the information they need. Perhaps someone at another attraction who may be able to help. This may not translate into media coverage for you this time but it could pay off later. It marks you as a professional who understands that journalists have a job to do.

- Make the experience as seamless as possible for journalists. There's lots of competition for their attention. If you're too difficult to deal with, a journalist won't work with you again.

Hosting Journalists

Some journalists will get your story with just a phone interview; others may come to visit your operation or destination. If the journalist is a travel writer with whom you are not familiar, there are several ways to gather information about their background.

1. Contact the Travel Alberta media relations team.
2. Look them up online using Google.
3. Check with the Travel Media Association of Canada or the Society of American Travel Writers.

Tips

- Find out ahead of time what the journalists are most interested to see, experience and learn about your operation or destination; then plan the visit accordingly. This ensures they are able to gather the information and photos they need for their story.
- Confirm when they will be arriving and be ready for them.
- If you're hosting a group, find out the names of the journalists and the media outlets they represent, as well as their areas of interest. It isn't unusual to have on the same media trip one writer who specializes in family travel, another who focuses on outdoor activities and someone else who focuses on other types of writing and activities. This may help you to suggest angles to each journalist that focus on their area of expertise. (e.g. On a winter road press trip, one writer was interested in a 27 kilometre ski loppet that is held between Fort Smith, NWT and Fort Fitzgerald, Alberta, along an old portage route. Another writer wanted to learn more about an annual paddlefest that is held in the area each summer on the Slave River.)
- Prepare a media kit and other material about your operation or destination that they can take home and use when writing their stories.
- Share interesting trivia about your destination that people likely didn't know or that's unusual.
- Consider photo opportunities that may help them illustrate their stories while they're on site.
- Have key people available with whom you think journalists may want to speak.
- If you plan to feed journalists during their visit, find out ahead of time whether they have any food allergies, food sensitivities or other special dietary needs; it's part of being a good host.
- If you are providing accommodations, ensure that free Internet access is available for visiting journalists. They need to keep in touch with editors while they're on the road.

Clinching the Deal

Build relationships for the long term and don't overlook good freelancers. Journalists change jobs and freelancers may write multiple stories from the same trip. Maintain contact. If you see something of potential interest to a journalist, send it along.

INTERVIEWING

When you send out a news release, media outlets will sometimes use them as they have been written; however, a journalist may also contact you for additional information or to conduct an interview for a story they will be preparing based on your news release. Some interviews are carried out to add a few details to what you have already supplied. If a journalist wants to arrange a longer interview, you will need to know the following information.

- Reporter's name, contact information and name of the media outlet.
- Date and time of interview.
- Whether the interview will be on the telephone or in person. If in person, where will you meet?

- If you aren't familiar with the media outlet, find out about their audience so that you can tailor your answers.
- Subject matter of the interview so that you can prepare any information you may need. Don't ask to see the questions in advance.
- For radio and television interviews, find out the length of the interview so that you can be realistic about how much you can say and how much information you may have time to share. If it is live, there won't be an opportunity for editing. What you say is what will be heard and seen.
- If the interview is for print media, find out if they will be taking photos. If that is the case, ask what kind of photos they will need so that you can prepare.

Preparing For An Interview

It's helpful to take a few moments to prepare for an interview so that you can make the most of the opportunity. Remember that you are competing with other stories for a journalist's and the public's attention. Make your story count.

- Think of the story you want to tell and write down a few key points that you want to make during the interview. What is the main message that you want the journalist to remember?
- Come up with good quotes that you can use during the interview.
- If the interview will be for a television audience or you will be photographed, think about visuals that will help tell your story. (e.g. If you're promoting an alpaca farm, you may want to have alpacas in the background while you're being interviewed for television; or you could be photographed feeding your animals)
- For television interviews, don't wear clothes with patterns that will have viewers focusing on what you're wearing instead of what you're saying. Avoid loud colours, stripes and checkerboard patterns.

Giving An Interview

- Be friendly. The interview may go more smoothly if you try to establish a rapport with a reporter. Make the interview sound like a conversation.
- Speak clearly and not too quickly, particularly if the interview is being broadcast; otherwise, a listener might not be able to keep up with you.
- Never lie to a reporter. This will affect your credibility in the future.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, make a note of it and tell the journalist that you will find out and get back to them with the answer.
- If you don't understand the question, ask for clarification.
- Offer clear and concise answers to questions. Keep your answers short and quotable. Speak in 20 second sound bytes, not paragraphs.
- Use examples, comparisons, anecdotes and personal stories to illustrate your points.
- Use humour if it feels right.
- Keep it simple. Avoid jargon, technical terms, statistics and too many facts to ensure that you are understood. The public will have trouble remembering them.

After The Interview

- Don't ask to read the story before it's printed, this is essential for editorial integrity; however, do offer to review the facts you have provided and make yourself available if the reporter needs clarification.
- Follow up after the interview with any information that you think the journalist may need.

MEDIA CONTACT / COVERAGE TRACKING FORM

It's helpful to keep track of the media coverage you receive so that you can see where your efforts are yielding results. This tracking form can help you. In an effort to see the time lag between when you are in contact with the media and when coverage occurs, it's useful to keep a record of the date they were in touch and when you received coverage. In order to help you quantify the value of the coverage you receive, it's also good to note how much coverage you received. That is, the length of a newspaper or magazine piece and the length of a radio or television broadcast.

MEDIA OUTLET	JOURNALIST	CONTACT INFO	DATE	COVERAGE/STORY	RESPONSE

CALCULATING RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

The cost of hosting journalists should be a part of your marketing budget; but how do you calculate the return on your investment? Print and online media are quantified differently.

Magazines and Newspapers

Add up the number of magazine pages that a published story takes up. Then multiply it by the cost of buying a page of advertising in that publication at the rate that is advertised on its rate card. The result will give you advertising equivalency value of the media coverage you received. For newspapers, advertising is sometimes calculated as a per-line rate, but the method of calculating your return on investment is essentially the same.

#OF MAGAZINE PAGES (LENGTH OF STORY) X COST PER PAGE = ADVERTISING EQUIVALENCY VALUE

Online

Online clips are calculated at \$10 per cost per thousand daily visits to a website.

AD RATE (\$10) X AVERAGE DAILY VISITOR REACH PER THOUSAND = ADVERTISING EQUIVALENCY VALUE

For example, a website that has an average daily visitor reach of 100,000 the advertising value equivalency will be \$10 X 100 = \$1000

For websites where daily visitor value is not available, the circulation value is defaulted to 20,000 and the corresponding advertising value is calculated to be \$500.

REGIONAL MEDIA SUCCESS STORIES

Boomtown Trail App – Getting the word out

Boomtown Trail developed a new iPhone and iPad App called The GeoRoamer in 2011. The app guides travellers through the Boomtown Trail, sharing stories, taking you from one point to the next and audibly alerting you about upcoming attractions and features; additionally, Boomtown launched a second free iPad app called The Vacation Guide. This is a practical tool for exploring the region without the need for a conventional map or brochure. Both are available for free download on iTunes.

Boomtown Trail had a great product for an emerging generation of travellers but in need of assistance to get the word out. Ken Duncan, CEO of Boomtown Trail approached Travel Alberta to help spread the news. By supporting with press release development and distribution on the wire; the GeoRoamer App and Vacation Guide garnered coverage on local radio in Calgary and Red Deer and print coverage regionally in the Rocky View News, Camrose Booster, Rocky View Weekly and Red Deer Advocate. The Apps were downloaded over 1000 times in the first three months of being available through iTunes.

Diamond Valley Media Tour – Adventures Beneath the Arch – Recruiting Media for Rural Experiences

A group of entrepreneurial tourism industry between Black Diamond and Turner Valley in southwestern Alberta had the idea to showcase their unique rural experiences to the media. The only problem was, how could they attract specific media on a three day adventure having never hosted such an event previously? Pat Lothrop, owner of Diamond Willow Artisan Retreat, championed the group and reached out to Travel Alberta for support.

Travel Alberta assisted the project with itinerary development, media recruitment and support on how each partner could best showcase their offering. By developing a theme for the weekend – arts, food and experiences – the itinerary was tailored to flow from day to night while keeping the media engaged and active throughout.

The collective efforts of the group attracted four regional journalists on assignment from Westworld Alberta, WestJet's Up!, WHERE Calgary and Routes Magazine to take part in the range of local experiences. Hospitality and accommodation was provided by Diamond Willow Artisan Retreat including a private house concert with up and coming folk sensations The Travelling Mabels, a water colour painting class with renowned local artist Karin Huehold, a round at WJ Homestead Disc Golf in Millarville and an 'Edible Wilds' walk with Full Circle Adventures. The weekend wrapped up with a day of culinary and arts touring throughout the region with a visit to Chinook Honey / Chinook Arch Meadery, Kayben Farms, Millarville Farmer's Market, Marv's Classic Soda Shop and a gallery tour of Black Diamond. Media were thrilled with the comprehensive nature of the weekend and results are anticipated in all four publications in addition to online and social media coverage.

REMEMBER....it's always about the story!

TRAVEL ALBERTA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Course date: ___ / ___ / _____

Action plan item	How to implement	When
1. _____ _____	_____ _____	___ / ___ / ___ ___ / ___ / ___
2. _____ _____	_____ _____	___ / ___ / ___ ___ / ___ / ___
3. _____ _____	_____ _____	___ / ___ / ___ ___ / ___ / ___
4. _____ _____	_____ _____	___ / ___ / ___ ___ / ___ / ___
5. _____ _____	_____ _____	___ / ___ / ___ ___ / ___ / ___

ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AID

Complete this sheet for each item included on the action plan

1. What is the item of learning you intend to implement?
2. By which objectives/methods will you measure progress?
3. What barriers might impede your implementation?
4. How will you avoid or negate these barriers?
5. **Time:** when do you intend to start implementing the item?
6. **Time:** by when do you intend to complete the implementation of the item?
7. **Resources:** what resources (people, equipment, extra skills) will you need to complete the implementation of the item?
8. **Benefits:** what benefits do you hope will result from your actions (including financials if possible to assess)?
9. **Commitment:** when will you and your manager meet...
 - a. to discuss the implementation of your plan?
 - b. to review the progress of this action?