



# Public Relations Handbook

A Resource Manual for the  
PR Chairperson

PZC John Budzak Jr  
MD19 Public Relations Chairperson

[Warbuff60@comcast.net](mailto:Warbuff60@comcast.net)  
(253) 848-2353

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# **Introduction**

Public Relations or (PR) is a vital part of the modern Lions Club. Public Relations is not limited to getting information into the local newspaper but includes items like web pages, club recruitment flyers, club information handouts, sandwich boards at projects and your Lions emblem.

A successful public relations campaign can be what makes a club viable in its community. Lions have always been known as the best kept secret and a successful PR campaign can change this and make the local Lions Club the cornerstone of your community.

Public relations is an important part of the club, zone, district and multiple district. There should be a person that acts as the focal point in each of these entities who assists in the advertising of what a particular group is doing. This is not always easy but a little work can go a long way in helping your club meet its public relations goals.

Public relations is also important within the club. Advertising what you are doing to your members helps to keep them involved. It informs members who can't make all the meetings what your upcoming projects and events will be.

In this manual we will look at the resources that are available from the Lions Clubs International Website to help with PR. We will explore how to develop a simple PR Plan to assist your club and give basic instruction on developing a recruitment brochure. In addition we will look at what makes a successful newsletter.

## **International Resources**

Lions International has numerous items to assist a club, zone and district in Public Relations. The LCI web site, [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org) is a great place to look for items to help publicize your club. Items mentioned below can be located by clicking on 'Resources' (top of main page), then 'PR Tools' on following page.

**Guide Books:** The LCI web site has two guide books available to download. It is suggested that before starting a PR program in your club you review these two guides and utilize the information to begin a PR program for your club. The Guides are: Club Public Relations Chairpersons Guide (PR710) and District Public Relations Chairpersons Guide (PR730). Both of these are excellent resources to get started on a PR program.

**Lions Learning Center:** Visit the Lions Learning Center and take the Public Relations Course. It is a great program that will allow someone to receive a basic understanding of how to set up a PR program at any level of Lions.

In addition to the Public Relations Course, there are numerous other on-line classes that are available. An informed Lion is the best Public Relations for your club. Information is an important part of promoting your club.

**PR Tools and Resources:** On the LCI public relations page there is an item called PR Tools and Resources. These items include how to create your own club fact sheet. It gives basic information on creating a club web site, distributing public service announcements as well as having a link to audiovisual presentations for both Lions and Non-Lions that can be shown for either orientation or recruitment purposes. The LCI web site is a great tool for getting your PR message out.

**Sample News Releases:** LCI can give your club the recognition it deserves. There are “fill in the blank” press releases that you can utilize and send in to your local newspaper. It is easy to utilize these press releases as they are all formatted in WORD. All you need to do is fill in the blanks and prepare it to be sent to your local newspaper. Make sure that you include a local contact person both for the news release and in the body of the story. Listed below are a few of the sample press releases that are available on the LCI web site:

- Club Milestone Anniversary
- Lions Support Eye Bank
- Fundraiser
- Lions Recycle for Sight
- Newly Elected Club Officers
- Club Project

## **Creating a Recruitment Flyer**

A recruitment (or membership) flyer is a way to get your message out to the community. It should have enough information to gain interest in your club, but not so much as to become overwhelming. These flyers can be made in many different formats. Recruitment flyers can be created in WORD, Publisher, ADOBE or with any other program that the person making the flyer is comfortable. Flyers can be printed on your own PC, or if you are going to do a mass distribution, then you should get them printed professionally. Printing them out in smaller batches on a computer allows for changes to be made as they occur. Both methods are great and, depending on your situation, will work.

**Information for the Flyer:** Before starting on the flyer, you need to gather the information that you want included. Be specific. Include a brief history of your group, what you are doing in your community, fund raisers and a little bit about what Lions International is. A contact person as well as where you meet should also be included in the flyer.

**Putting the Flyer Together:** Once you have gathered all the information that you want included in the flyer, then you are ready to put it all together. The front page of the flyer needs to be eye-catching and state who you are. On the back of the flyer you print the second most important piece of information – your contact information. These two pages are the most important part of the flyer, because people will look at them first. The front cover may be the only section that is looked at, so reach out and grab the person’s attention. The rest of the flyer is for the “meat” of what you want to say. Once you have put a draft together, have several people proof-read the product. Items that go out to the public should be spelled correctly and proper grammar should also be utilized.

**Using the Flyer:** Copies of the flyer should be available at each of your club projects. In addition, you should talk to the manager or owner of your meeting place and find out if you can leave a few flyers at that location. Another idea is to give each member a few of the flyers to hand out to associates that may be interested in joining your group.

**Business Cards:** These items go hand in hand with a recruitment flyer. They are easy to make on a home PC and are easy to carry and distribute. A business card should have who you are as well as where you meet on the front of the card. On the back of the card is a great place to put a little information about what your club does. It is a quick and easy recruitment flyer in miniature.

**Book Mark:** This is yet another version of the recruitment flyer and should again include what you do and who you are. It should also have a place for contact information on the book mark. This is usually printed professionally on heavier card stock.

## Creating a Club Newsletter

A club newsletter is a very important part of public relations in your group. It is important to let your members as well as other clubs in your area know what is going on. Not all club members attend your regular meetings. Having a good newsletter that informs members of what has occurred and what will be occurring is an important retention tool.

**Newsletter Format:** The format of the newsletter can be as simple as a sheet of paper with upcoming projects and contact information on it, or it can be a professionally prepared magazine type letter. Both are effective methods of getting information out to your members. It doesn't matter how fancy it is. The important part is that the information is getting out to those concerned.

**Information in a Newsletter:** Your bulletin or newsletter should have several parts to it. It should have an area that talks about upcoming projects with a contact point for the chairperson. This tells members who don't attend meetings who to contact to work on the project. The next section of the bulletin should be areas where you celebrate your club's successes. Completed projects with pictures work great for this celebration. Contact information of all members is a good idea also. It allows members to be able to contact others and work together to ensure our success. Finally a calendar of upcoming events is a great add on.

**Newsletter Distribution:** Distribution of your newsletter can be a mixture of electronic and regular mail. In addition to each of your members, you should send a copy to each club in your zone, as well as the District Governor, Vice District Governor and the MD19 Office. Distributing your newsletter on a wide basis allows for other clubs to know what is going on in your club and shares good ideas.

## **Miscellaneous Public Relations**

**Web Site:** A web site is an important part of the modern organization. The web site can be as simple as where you meet and contact information to an elaborate multi-paged web site, if at all possible, someone in your club, zone, district or multiple district should put together a web site for fresh information. It is extremely important to have a person in charge of keeping the site updated. Stale information is worse than no information at all.

**Sandwich Boards:** When a Lions Club is working on a project a simple sandwich board announcing what is going on is a simple method of drawing attention to Lions Service. On the board should be something like “Another Lions Club Project by the Happy Town Lions” You would be surprised at how many people will stop and ask what the Lions are about if they see a sign like this.

**Club Pin:** Wearing your club pin with pride is a fantastic PR tool. People ask all the time what the pin signifies so wear it often and be prepared to answer the questions about what it means.

## **Development of a PR Plan**

Now it's time to develop a Public Relations Plan. This planning will work at the club, zone, district and Multiple District level. The plan includes both internal public relations as well as getting information into the local papers and other media.

**News Media Coverage:** Utilize the Lions International press releases as well as the PSA's that they have available. Customize what they have prepared and use it for your club. Getting information into a larger newspaper is difficult but not impossible. Smaller local papers are looking for information and will be more likely to publish your story.

News outlets are looking for **action** pictures of the event along with a press release that tells what is going on, who is doing it and why it is being done. Make sure to include contact information in all of your press releases as a possible recruitment tool. In all news papers, there is contact information of where to send press releases to the editor. They can forward the information to the appropriate person who will be placing it into the paper. Develop your own contact people in the local community so you have a working relationship with your news papers.

**Project Advertisement:** Place a sandwich board at all of your club projects. Have a simple board identifying the project as another Lions Club Project.

**Recruitment Flyers:** Have flyers and or information sheets available at your projects. You may get new members by doing this.

**Lions Pins and Clothing:** Wear your pin proudly at all times and have Lions Clothing on while working on projects. Club shirts, vests or even a ball cap with a Lions Emblem on it shows who you are and who is accomplishing the project.

## **Wrap Up**

Public Relations are an important part of the modern Lions Club. We need to ensure that our message gets out into the public, so that we are no longer the best kept secret in our communities. PR can be as simple as wearing a club pin or as advanced as a paid campaign in print and electronic media. The important thing is to have a plan in place and execute it consistently and tirelessly.