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MANAGING A PRESS EVENT

Sometimes, you may want to invite a group of journalists to an event which you are planning . This could be a product demonstration, press announcement or corporate hospitality event. In general, it is not advisable to stage a press conference, but better to rely on individual press briefings. This is because a press conference generally requires hard news in order to work well, can be difficult to manage and even expose the company to sometimes unwelcome lines of questioning.

Whilst they are generally busy people working to tight deadlines, journalists do like to get out and meet contacts and companies face to face. Organising an event which combines a news or feature opportunity with a chance to meet key people, socialise and see new products or initiatives close up can be very successful, both in making productive contacts and generating coverage.

Before you plan a press event, be very clear about your goals. They might include: getting publicity for a new product, service or development; extending your press contacts; showing your organisation's strength; or developing you key staff's communication skills.

10 Steps to a successful press event

- Plan ahead. At least two weeks before the event, talk internally about what you want to do and how you want to do it
- Talk as a group about what messages you want to communicate and what material you have to use as a hook;
- Prepare background information and a press release to hand over
- Decide how many journalists the event will comfortably accommodate
- Prepare an invitation list of target media
- Draft invitation letter and include response facility, either via post, faxback or e-mail
- Follow-up invitations by telephone to confirm attendance and any special requirements
- Allocate a 'Chair' or moderator to make welcoming statement and introductions to the event
- Engage journalists from the point of view of their interests and specialisations
- Follow up the event with requested information or further contact