



CIOB

CIOB Media Toolkit (UK)



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Raising the Institute's profile effectively is a combined effort across all facets of the organisation, and just like any successful business the CIOB must ensure that messages are consistent with corporate beliefs, values and style.

This toolkit aims to provide some useful guidance on how the CIOB media relations system supports the regional framework, as well as hints and tips on producing effective communications.

Regional events and awards

Many CIOB regions produce annual events and industry awards to raise their profile locally and network with members. These events can often result in good media opportunities. If you are planning an event and want to receive some media coverage then writing a press release can get your event noticed in the regional press.

When it comes to promoting events or awards timing is crucial. If you're looking to increase awareness and attendance levels then you should promote your event (through press releases) well in advance of it taking place, ideally two or three weeks before it happens.

For events that include awards you should think about two press releases. The first needs to be communicated a couple of weeks before the event occurs to alert the media and potential attendees. The second release should tell the media the day after the event who won or received awards. For 'award' type releases you should try and include quotes from the winners as well as key regional staff (Branch Managers / Chairs). This way you get two chances at receiving coverage and create a cycle of local news. Remember if you want your release to stand a chance of getting published you need to release the information as soon after the event (ideally the next day) as possible. Old news is no news at all.

How to write a press release

A well-crafted press release captures the attention of journalists; here are some useful points to keep in mind when writing your press release.

Is your news "newsworthy"?

The purpose of a press release is to inform the media of your news item. Do not use your press release to try and make a sale. A good press release answers all of the "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why), providing the media with useful information about the CIOB, its product, services or event. If you read your press release and it reads like an advertisement, rewrite it.

Start strong.

Your headline and first paragraph should tell the story. The rest of your press release should provide the detail. You have a matter of seconds to grab your reader's attention. Do not blow it with a weak opening.

Write for the media.

On occasion media outlets, especially online media, will pick up your press release and run it in their publications with little or no modification to what you send. More commonly, journalists will use your press release as a springboard for a larger feature story. In either case, try to develop a story as you would like to have it told. Even if your news is not reprinted verbatim, it may provide an acceptable amount of exposure.

Not everything is news.

Your excitement about something does not necessarily mean that you have a newsworthy story. Think about your audience. Will someone else find your story interesting? Focus on the aspects of your news item that truly set you apart from everyone else.

Stick to the facts.

Tell the truth. Avoid fluff, embellishments and exaggerations. If you feel that your press release contains embellishments perhaps it would be a good idea to set your press release aside until you have more exciting news to share. Journalists are naturally skeptical. If your story sounds too good to be true, you are probably hurting your own credibility. Even if it is true, you may want to tone it down a bit.

Pick an angle.

Try to make your press release timely. Tie your news to current events or social issues if possible. Make sure that your story has a good hook.

Use active, not passive, voice.

Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Rather than writing "entered into a partnership" use "partnered" instead. Do not be afraid to use strong verbs as well. For example, "The committee exhibited severe hostility over the incident." reads better if changed to "The committee was enraged over the incident." Writing in this manner increases the chances that your press releases will be read.

Economy of words.

Use only enough words to tell your story. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language, or redundant expressions such as "added bonus" or "first time ever". If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it. Wordiness detracts from your story. Keep it concise. Make each word count.

Beware of jargon.

While a limited amount of jargon will be required if your goal is to optimize your news release for online search engines, the best way to communicate your news is to speak plainly, using ordinary language. Jargon is language specific to certain professions or groups and is not appropriate for general readership. Avoid such terms as "capacity planning techniques" "extrapolate" and "prioritised evaluative procedures".

Acronyms.

It's easy to take for granted that the reader will understand an acronym that you commonly use. In the first instance always spell out the full title. For example Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB); Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE); Regional Development Agency (RDA).

Avoid the hype.

The exclamation point (!) is your enemy. There is no better way to destroy your credibility than to include a bunch of hype. If you must use an exclamation point, use one. Never do this!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Get Permission.

Companies are very protective about their reputation. Be sure that you have permission before including information or quotes from employees or affiliates of other companies or organisations. Any dispute resolution will favour the other company, meaning that your press release may get pulled.

Mixed case.

NEVER SUBMIT A PRESS RELEASE IN ALL UPPER CASE LETTERS. This is very bad form. Use mixed case.

Correct grammar usage.

Always follow rules of grammar and style. Errors in grammar and style affect your credibility.

No HTML.

Never embed HTML or other markup languages in your press release. Your press release will be distributed over a wide array of networks. Including such formatting will negatively impact the readability of your press release.

More than one paragraph.

It is nearly impossible to tell your story in a few sentences. If you do not have more than a few sentences chances are you do not have a newsworthy item.

Communicating your press release

All press releases are distributed through the CIOB Press Office only. Once you've written your press release please detail where and to which type of media you wish it to be distributed to (i.e. which regional press, local business press etc).

After detailing which publications you want your release to go to, send it directly to pressoffice@ciob.org.uk or contact Saul Townsend on telephone 01344 630 766 along with the best imagery you have.

The press office has established a comprehensive distribution list of some 40,000 regional, trade, national and broadcast media contacts throughout the UK, giving your release the maximum amount of potential coverage.

In addition the press office will handle any media responses and where possible add further comment and value to create greater levels of coverage.

Photography

Think about photography early - what you want to show and how many photos you may need. If you are promoting your event to the media and photos are an afterthought you could be missing a really good opportunity. Steer clear of 'grip and grin' shots and aim to make the imagery the selling point of the story.

Journalists say a good photo can move an article from the back of a magazine to the front. Photos can be the deciding factor when attempting to get coverage. An editor who knows that you can provide photos, or that their own photographer can take photos of something interesting, might be encouraged to say "yes" to your story idea.

It is worth walking the photographer through the event before it takes place. Establish what will happen during the event and when it happens, giving a photographer a better understanding of what you're after will show in the quality of the photos that come back.

There are two main ways photographers charge for their work; either on commission, or through reproduction fees. Photographers are entitled to extra money from companies and individuals that photocopy their published work.

Only accept high resolution digital imagery (300 dpi in JPEG, TIFF or EPS format) on CD-ROM and request it is delivered to you within 48 hours.

Being interviewed by the broadcast media

Being interviewed by the broadcast media can be a hazardous exercise. Unlike regional publications the broadcast media has the potential to reach national levels of coverage. To make sure all messaging is consistent with CIOB policy, broadcast interviews are to be facilitated only through the Press Office.

Radio

A radio reporter or producer will often call and want to conduct the interview right there and then. However, there will be a few minutes of preliminary talk between you and the reporter before he/she actually begins to record your comments (the reporter will let you know when they turn on the recorder). These preliminary few minutes are your pre-interview; they're your opportunity to find out from the reporter what the questions will be and for you to think about your answers. If you still feel you need time to prepare, take it. Set up a mutually convenient time for the reporter to call you back and record the interview.

Before the interview

These are a few prepared questions to ask before the interview.

- Will it be live or recorded? If it's recorded, be aware of it possibly being edited before broadcasting. The editors will be looking for 'sound bites' – clear, succinct statements about what you're on about.
- Ask how long it will be so you know how much detail to go into with your answers.
- What is the topic of the interview? If the interviewer wanders off the topic, there's nothing wrong with bringing it back on track – you've got the knowledge – you're in control!
- Who listens to the show – what is your audience? Think about how you can direct your answers to them.
- Ask if anyone else will be interviewed alongside you to argue the opposing view.

During the interview

Local radio interviews generally aren't there to hugely challenge or trip you up on what you have to say, so don't feel unnecessarily nervous or defensive. Chances are the interviewer just wants to encourage you to tell your story in a clear succinct way.

Most interviews are short and snappy, so think of one or two things you want to get across in the interview and try to repeat them a few times clearly. Don't let yourself wander off on a tangent – you'll lose people's interest, and there's probably not enough time.

If you're asked a question you can't answer, it's fine to turn to another subject. *"That's interesting but what I feel is really important to mention is..."*

Be confident – you are being interviewed because you've got something worth hearing about. Believe in what you're saying and speak with confidence.

After the interview

Ask the reporter to identify you as being affiliated with Chartered Institute of Building. In most instances you will not have the opportunity to check over the reporter's story before it is aired. However, you can ask questions at the end of an interview to test for comprehension. For example, you might inquire, "What do you think is the main story angle here?" You should also ask when the story will air so the CIOB press office can arrange for a tape of the interview.

Television

Before the interview

For television interviews, plan to wear solid-colour clothing. Stripes, plaids, other designs can cause problems with colour TV pictures. Avoid large, jangling or reflective jewelry.

Look in a mirror, if possible, just before going on camera. The reporter may not tell you that your collar is folded over or your hair is out of place.

Choose a location where you can screen out extraneous noises. Hold your calls and turn off your computer, if possible. Avoid rooms with loud background hums from air conditioning or heating units.

Find out in advance whether the interview is edited or "live." If you agree to a live interview, be sure you are comfortable thinking on your feet and responding off the cuff.

During the interview

In edited interviews, it's ok to stop and start over again if you don't like the way you worded your answer. In edited interviews, do not answer questions too quickly, pause briefly before answering. This helps the reporter get a "clean" sound bite and also has the added benefit of allowing you time to think out your answer.

In a TV interview, look at the reporter not the cameras. The only exception is in a satellite interview, when the reporter or anchor may not be on location. If you're uncertain where to look, ask.

Stay stationary in front of radio or TV microphones and avoid sitting in a chair that rocks or spins. Wandering around or rocking your chair can cause the recorded volume to rise and fall. Be aware of and avoid nervous habits, such as pen tapping that can interfere with the interview.

Be on your guard. Don't assume the interview is over until you have left the TV studio. Many reporters specialise in getting the really good stuff in a friendly chat after the "formal" questions. If this interview is being edited for later broadcast, they may add their own summary of your comments.

After the interview

Ask the reporter to identify you as being affiliated with Chartered Institute of Building. In most instances you will not have the opportunity to check over the reporter's story before it appears. However, you can ask questions at the end of an interview to test for comprehension. For example, you might inquire, "What do you think is the main story angle here?" You should also ask when the story will appear so the CIOB press office can arrange for a tape of the interview.