# Creating a Successful Public Relations Campaign

Many remodelers join a Remodelers Council to gain exposure and publicity in their communities. The Remodelers Council is an excellent vehicle for educating consumers, promoting council events such as seminars, home shows or consumer programs to the general public and raising awareness of the remodeling industry and your council members. By promoting your council to the public, you will achieve other council goals such as membership, awareness and attendance.

This resource includes information, tactics, samples and ideas to help you with your image-building activities and programs. NAHB Remodelers staff is always here as your consultative resource, and we urge you to take advantage of our staff expertise.

The key to a successful public relations (PR) campaign—whether you are trying to recruit members, inform the general public or act as a consumer expert on remodeling—is to always be truthful, tactful and gracious when working with any media outlet.

The first steps to creating a rewarding PR campaign are to:

* [Identify your audience.](#identify)
* [Develop an overall strategy to guide your activities.](#strategy)
* [Develop a media plan.](#plan)
* [Prepare media relations tools.](#tools)
* [Public relations activities.](#activities)

**A. IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCES**

Think of all the people you and your members work with, talk with and influence on a daily basis in your community. When these people are tied together with a common interest, they are called a public. A public is a group of people who share a specific purpose or who are affected by the same problem or issue.

Publics can have a positive or negative effect on meeting your goals and can greatly affect the general climate toward home building in your community. Each of the goals you establish may have many publics or just one, and over time these publics may change.

Examples of typical publics for local Remodelers Councils include:

* Community opinion leaders, elected and appointed local government officials (such as elected officials, high-profile activists and other well-regarded community members);
* Allied industry organizations (such as realtors, mortgage bankers, lenders, chambers of commerce);
* Current home owners;
* Current and potential members;
* “Antis” (Audiences vocally against remodeling, building, developing, etc.)
* Media (including print, online, and broadcast); and
* Students and local educators.

When you identify your publics, also note how they are linked to your organization. How much do you affect them, or they you? Or, do you work with each other, aligned on issues that affect remodeling and housing in your community? Do you have influence over them? Is there an established dialogue? What holds them together as a group and why do they (or should they) care about what you have to say?

Develop Key Messages

Each of your publics may require a specific message, even when addressing the same or similar subject with them. Pay careful attention to how you word your messages to help ensure the meaning is not, or cannot be, misconstrued. When crafting your key messages, keep the interests of the public in mind. It’s important to be clear, concise, positive, believable, probable and local—and don’t deny problems.

Position yourself to be part of the solution: part of the community providing a tax and employment base; caring about the environment; and working for sensible growth issues. Then, back up those messages with proof. Statistics, experience, quotes, and analogies will all serve as support and proof for your key messages.

**B. DEVELOP AN OVERALL STRATEGY**

Before developing a plan for your council’s promotional activity, it is important to decide on an overall strategy. This strategy should be the result of careful consideration of the council’s objectives in light of marketing conditions. The strategy will guide the choice of activities in your council’s program.

Issues to consider include:

* Economic, social, and political climate
* National promotional campaigns
* Local perceptions of the remodeling business
* Newsworthy information that your council generates
* Any other factors that affect how the press and public view the remodeling industry in your area

Assess Your Council’s Current Relationship with the Media and Public

* Do you know who covers real estate and housing issues at your local newspaper, television and radio stations?
* Do you know of any local websites or blogs that cover real estate and housing issues?
* Has your council contacted someone in the media with a news item in the last month?
* Does your council keep a file of industry data on local issues? Visit NAHB’s blog [Eye on Housing](http://eyeonhousing.org/) for current economic news.
* Do your association executive officer and council members make a practice of skimming news each day?

After analyzing these factors, decide what types of programs, events, and member activities organized by your council will enhance your members’ profile and generate greater awareness of the remodeling industry. A good exercise to begin your brainstorming is to list three events or pitches such as design trends or tips for finding a professional remodeler that you would like promoted in the media.

For each activity, prepare answers to the 5 “Ws” – Who, What, When, Where, and Why. The “Why” is particularly important. Once you have developed these ideas fully, incorporate them into the plan’s overall promotional strategy.

Create a List of Talking Points

Once you have developed a strategy to guide the council’s promotional activity, it is helpful to create a list of core ideas, messages and issues for the council to communicate. These “talking points” will help members of the council who serve as spokespersons to respond with consistency and confidence to inquiries from the public and the media in a manner that supports the overall strategy. Talking points can be facts and figures, or council positions on important issues. For assistance with drafting talking points, contact NAHB Remodelers staff.

**C. DEVELOP A MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN**

Keep media contacts informed as to your council’s activities and projects by sending press releases, advisories and statements on a regular basis. Not all contact will result in a story being published, but will keep the council fresh in editors’ and reporters’ minds and make them more likely to contact the council in the future for quotes, data, and information. Remember that programs such as Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), Graduate Master Remodeler (GMR), and Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) designations are “evergreen” and always worth promoting.

Contact with the public through direct advertising and promotional vehicles is equally important, and should be part of your planning. Be prepared to make “course corrections” in your strategy, adding or deleting activities as market conditions change.

It’s also important to coordinate your strategy with activities planned by NAHB Remodelers to maximize the benefit your council derives from press and public relations activity. Read each monthly issue of the Local Council Update newsletter for news of events, or contact NAHB Remodelers for information on NAHB programs.

Introduce Your Council to the Media

Meet with your local editors, bloggers and television/radio producers to introduce your association and your council. At this introductory meeting, be prepared to discuss the benefits and value of your council’s projects to their audience, as well as your council’s positions on major local and national remodeling industry issues.

Prepare an introductory press kit including:

* Background information on your local council, its goals, and how its existence will benefit the community
* Contact information for your designated media contact
* A press release about a recent event or activity (community service project, awards, parade of homes, etc.)
* A list of council members
* An original article about remodeling that is ready for publication
* Brochures, pamphlets, and other promotional material used by the council

**D. PREPARE MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS**

Review and develop these tools. Some materials can be prepared in advanced and kept on hand for easy use.

Press Kit

As discussed earlier, the press kit is comprised of a core set of materials, which provide background, facts, figures and marketing information on your council, as well as releases on topical issues. Save the kit as a PDF so you can email it quickly to reporters. Always be sure that contact information is up to date, in case a member of the media needs information on a tight deadline.

Press Release

A press release is the most frequently used means of distributing news to media sources. It answers five basic questions: Who, What, Where, When, and Why. These questions should be answered in the first paragraph of your press release so an editor or reporter can easily identify the pertinent details of your news/event and convey those to the public. Try to keep release length to less than one page.

Press release tips:

* Use council letterhead
* Double-spaced (or 1.5 spaces) to allow for easy editing of text
* Contact name and number on the top right of the page
* The words “For Immediate Release” centered at the top of the page
* A headline in bold text, which succinctly conveys the essential story
* Your city name and the date
* Five Ws summarized in the first paragraph
* Subsequent paragraphs providing additional details, moving from most important to least
* Final paragraph of standard text describing the council’s purpose and activities
* Three centered number symbols (# # #) to signal the end of the release

Possible press release topics:

* A particularly good remodeling project
* A community service project
* A universal design or aging-in-place remodeling project for a senior’s home
* Publication of local or national industry statistics
* Council reaction to or position on a hot industry topic
* Local CGR, GMR and CAPS graduates with an explanation of the designations
* Awards
* Parade of Remodeled Homes
* New council leadership
* National Home Remodeling Month (visit [www.nahb.org/remodelingmonth](http://www.nahb.org/remodelingmonth) for more resources)
* Local promotional campaigns

Press Conference

For an especially important event like a community service home reveal to the family, a press conference is a good way to inform the media. The advantage of a press conference over a press release is the opportunity to have dialogue with the media. It is important to examine your information carefully and be certain that a press conference is the best way to communicate your key messages. Reporters are always strapped for time and it’s hard to get them to attend a press conference. It needs to be a really interesting subject, ideally with visuals that provide good photo opportunities.

Send a media advisory to reporters and editors approximately three business days in advance of the conference. Don’t promise more than you can deliver in the WHY section of your advisory but do make it as enticing as possible. Follow up with telephone calls one day before the event to remind reporters and to determine how many people will attend. If a reporter is unable to attend but would like to have your press kit, send it out immediately following the press conference—not before.

Time your press conference so it is convenient for the reporters to file their stories and meet deadlines—between 9:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. are normal starting times for reporters to meet an afternoon deadline. This allows time for television reporters to edit videotapes for the evening news.

Choose a room for the conference that will accommodate your expected attendance but avoid too large a room that could appear empty. Make sure there is good lighting, a sound system and sufficient power and outlets to accommodate electronic media coverage.

Prepare written background material on the issue and a press release on the announcement being made. A picture and biography of the person making the presentation should be available. Make sure that your spokesperson is available afterward for one-on-one interviews if requested. If you use visuals, keep them simple and direct and large enough to be seen from the back of the room.

Make sure a staff person signs in all attendees so that you know what media attend, can approach them for a one-on-one interview, ascertain if vocal opposing groups are attending and track any media coverage you earn as a result of your press conference.

Photo Opportunity

A good photo can capture the public’s attention more than a headline. Always designate a photographer for the event so that you can distribute photos afterward and include them in any stories.

Public Service Announcement

Public Service Announcements are a regular part of radio and television programming. They are different from commercials because they do not directly promote sales, but instead inform the public about community or charitable services, school or church functions, commemorative days/weeks/months (such as National Home Remodeling Month) and useful information such as how to avoid “scam” contractors, how to prepare your home for winter/summer seasons, safe driving or energy conservation. See example PSAs at [nahb.org/remodelingmonth](http://www.nahb.org/en/members/committees-and-councils/councils/nahb-remodelers/hba-resources/national-home-remodeling-month-promotional-materials.aspx).

These 15 or 30 second spots help stations fulfill their requirements of information in the public interest, and most stations seek them out to round out their programming. PSAs are an excellent venue for councils to promote consumer education programs and community service activities. Contact your local radio or local cable television station for more details on programming and taping.

Letters to the Editor

A letter to the editor expresses the council’s or an individual’s position or opinion on a topic of interest. It is important that a letter be concise and well composed. Credibility is enhanced if the letter is written by someone with respect and visibility in the community, and even better if the person is outside of the building industry.

Op-Ed Article

Op-ed is the term used for the page opposite the editorial page of a newspaper, typically used to publish the work of syndicated columnists. Most major newspapers also accept submissions by non-professional writers. These by-lined articles provide an excellent opportunity for the exposure of new ideas or analysis of current or future problems facing the community.

An op-ed article should concentrate on one issue, should be straightforward and simple and should not use industry jargon. The first few paragraphs should accomplish two objectives: capture the readers’ attention and state the central idea for the article. The rest of the article should provide information and facts to support the point being made. The closing should leave the reader with new insight to the issue or a call to action.

Op-ed articles should be submitted to the editorial editor of the paper. Contact your local paper(s) for details on the length of articles accepted. Include a summary biographical statement to provide the editor a basis for evaluating the writer’s credentials.

Speakers Bureau

An active speaker’s bureau is one of the most effective public relations tools of a local association. It provides a powerful means of presenting your message to the community. To set up a speaker’s bureau, start with a nucleus of members who are articulate and effective public speakers. Involve as many association members as possible in the bureau. Inform the civic, service, social, professional, church, business, library, and educational groups in your community that you have a list of speakers who are willing and able to speak about the industry. Your Chamber of Commerce will have a list organizations and clubs in your area.

Website

A website is vital to accomplish a great many of your council’s communications goals. Press releases, for example, can be posted for easy access by the media and the public. A directory of council members should always be included, as well as complete and up-to-date contact information for the council offices.

Straightforward organization and easy navigation are the hallmarks of good websites. Use photos of community service projects and Parade of Homes. Make sure that links are included that make it easy to return to the home page or other central navigation points. Be careful to monitor the number of graphics on pages, to avoid frustrating slow downloads.

Be sure to include enough hidden search engine meta-text triggers on your page to lead browsers to your site from search engines such as “*remodelers, home improvement, interiors design, home remodeling, renovation, kitchens, bathroom remodeling*” etc.

**E. PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES**

Projects that involve the public directly should be conceived with accompanying press relations (such as press releases, press conferences, photo opportunities) in mind.

**BRANDING IS IMPORTANT!**

Remember to use logos consistently on promotional and marketing material. Contact NAHB Remodelers for questions on guidelines for using the council and NAHB logos.

Community Service Projects

Get your council involved with a public service organization or project on a continuing basis. The annual renewal of the event or campaign keeps you in the public eye.

Below are newsworthy projects to consider. Contact NAHB Remodelers for other ideas.

* Remodel a youth center, daycare center, senior center, etc.
* Restore a historic home or building
* Help remodel a home of a person or family in need
* Offer assistance to help rebuild after a disaster
* Help a family who has lost their home
* Sponsor a Little League team or scout troop
* Work with schools on a home safety program
* Rebuilding Together projects

Parade of Remodeled Homes/Home Shows

Parades of Homes and Home Shows offer ideal opportunities for media coverage and promotion of the council, as these events show consumers and reporters the work of remodelers firsthand. Any community with between four and eight remodeled homes is a good candidate for a parade of remodeled homes. The more the projects differ from each other, the better. Remember that kitchens and bathrooms are the most popular remodeling projects. It is also a good idea to represent as many kinds of projects as possible to demonstrate the diversity of services offered by remodelers.

Awards

Recognition of outstanding remodeling work is ideal for generating publicity and increasing consumer awareness of the remodeling industry. Visit [nahb.org/NAHB-Community/Awards](https://www.nahb.org/NAHB-Community/Awards) for more information.