

ELEMENTS OF A PRESS KIT

What is a press kit?

While the name implies a package focused solely on the media, a press kit (sometimes called a media kit) is simply a packet of information about your chapter, programs and activities. In fact, a press kit can be tailored not only to potential editorial or advertising media, but also to potential audiences and donors.

Whatever the size of your chapter, an effective press kit will convey who you are, what you do, and why people should care. It can help you stand out from a crowded field of other arts organizations, and it can be your best, or even only, chance to make a favorable impression on the people you're trying to reach.

News editors at media outlets are extremely busy and have time to do little more than skim materials that come across their desks. An effective press kit can mean the difference between getting a follow-up call and getting lost in the shuffle.

Traditional Paper or Electronic Media Kit (EPK)?

The world of media kits has changed considerably in the last several years. It used to be that a media kit consisted of a batch of pages stuck into some kind of folder that you handed over or mailed to someone who was requesting additional information.

While it is still vital for you to have a physical, paper-based media kit for certain circumstances and for those who wish to get information on paper, today's world has made it important for you to also have an electronic version of your media kit available on your website for instant accessibility and download. It is easy today to create the materials mentioned below and then have them available both in hard copy and electronically.

Large chapters might want to prepare a video presentation that is a visual complement to written materials. This should be suitable for television broadcast. Having an available ready-to-air on television EPK for those reporters attending your program might yield exciting televised coverage that can directly help benefit your chapter for both the short and long-term.

What should I include in my chapter's press kit?

A press kit is like a résumé for your chapter – it highlights your best qualities so you can make a good impression. Like any other marketing materials your chapter produces, your press kit should get the reader's attention and generate enough interest in your chapter to motivate your potential audience to contact you for more information.

A press kit brings together information and articles that could be of interest to the media, sponsors, donors and others. While a press kit directed at the media will look different

from one targeted to potential sponsors or other audiences, some elements will remain the same no matter for whom it is intended:

- **A printed cover letter or handwritten note to your intended recipient**
This should be fairly short – no more than one printed page. This letter is an introduction to your intended recipient and gives a quick explanation for why you’re sending the press kit. Always try to address your letter to a specific person and avoid the impersonal “Dear Sir/Madam” approach. A quick phone call is all it takes to find out the name of the appropriate recipient, and it may provide an idea for a personalized approach for your letter.
- **A brochure or fact sheet about your chapter**
The main purpose of a press kit is to inform others about your chapter’s programs and activities, so your brochure or fact sheet should be the heart of the kit. It should give a clear description of your programs and activities and explain why they are outstanding or unusual.

Keep your audience in mind when crafting this page, as you will want to highlight different aspects of your chapter depending on whom you are trying to reach. For example, if the press kit is going to potential sponsors, make sure your fact sheet highlights successful fundraisers, recitals, or programs, and add testimonials if chapter or audience members are willing to provide them.

- **Current, accurate contact information**
If you’re going to go to the time and expense of producing and sending press kits, you want to make sure your target audience can reach you when your kit spurs them to action. If possible, add a couple of business cards to the kit for media people to add to their card files. Do make sure all contact information is correct and up-to-date.

A number of other items also can be important parts of a press kit depending on where your press kit is being sent.

- **A press release**
If you are sending your press kit to the media, you absolutely must include a press release so reporters and editors can quickly understand the purpose of the kit. Your press release should provide an interesting “angle” on why your event is newsworthy now. Is your chapter hosting a recital? Did you just launch a new program for youngsters? Did your chapter receive or bestow an award? Make sure to make the most newsworthy information the focus of your release.
- **Chapter and/or AGO history**

This is an especially good element to include for kits addressed to potential donors and sponsors. The chapter's mission and history should be brief – no more than one page – and they should be consistent with the message or image you are

trying to portray with the kit. The general AGO mission and history, located in this handbook, could also be used.

- **Biographies of key people**

These are particularly important when the recital or program is noteworthy because of the performing artists or people providing it. Biographies should highlight their experience, credentials and important facts about them. Don't be shy about tooting your own horn, but don't exaggerate, either. If any members of the media want to interview someone presenting a program and find out his/her credentials are false, your whole chapter will lose credibility.

- **Past coverage**

If your chapter already has been covered in any print media, make clean copies of the stories and enclose them in your press kit. If articles were printed with color photos, try to get color copies to maximize visual impact.

- **Photos, data sheets and glossy brochures**

If you want to increase the chances of getting press coverage, include photos of your artist or program leader, or past events in your press kit. Make sure to write captions for your photos as the reporter will not know all the details. Some media would rather download the photos available through the Internet via an FTP site.

How do I put it all together?

The old adage "You never get a second chance to make a first impression" holds particularly true for press kits. While they don't have to be expensive, budget-busting productions, they must be neat and professional looking at the absolute minimum. First of all, information is far more important than glitz, so make sure all materials are accurate both in terms of content and grammar. Have several people proofread it, and then proofread the material again. Your potential audience is relying on the kit's information to be reliable and correct, and a typo or misspelling on such materials is inexcusable.

Although a press kit should be comprehensive, you don't need to include every promotional item or piece of marketing your chapter has ever produced. Be selective about what to include, and only add materials you think will be of interest to your potential audience. Being selective demonstrates you recognize the media's needs, and just as importantly, it spares your chapter unnecessary expense.

Glossy, two-pocket folders with cuts on one inside pocket for a business card are an excellent and reasonably priced way to package your materials. These are available at any office supply store, and you can customize your folders with a chapter or AGO label on the front as long as the label is of equally high quality. The packaging of your press kit,

as well as every single written piece in it, should be visually consistent with your chapter's identity – meaning colors are consistent; documents are printed on letterhead, etc.

The kits do cost money to produce, so maximize your budget and its impact by distributing one only when the potential payoff justifies the expense – like courting a potential donor or publicizing an important recital or activity.

Whatever the size of your chapter, a good press kit can be one of the best ways to convey your strengths to the people you most want to reach. The key is to have the materials prepared beforehand, and to customize the presentation to the media you wish to reach.