

PUBLIC RELATIONS MANUAL

Public Relations overview:

Bluntly put, if we are to survive and grow as an organization, we have to get into the PR business or close our doors! The 40 & 8 must become well-known and respected in your community and throughout the country as the fraternal veteran's organization that gets things done and cares deeply for one another.

We must realize that today in most parts of the country we are the least known veterans group. That must change and PR is the tool to use for this to happen. The challenge is there....let's meet it head on!

Public Relations is a term that is not clearly understood. PR by definition is any type of communication with another person, in or outside of the organization. Literally, every time we open our mouths, we are doing either a good or a bad job at public relations.

Good PR must begin within your Voiture and Grand. If you have not developed good communication skills within your organization, it will not happen outside your organization.

Each Voiture and Grand should have a PR person who is responsible for all communications. However, it should be emphasized that PR is everyone's responsibility.

Promoting good public relations within the Voiture and Grand is vital to the life of the organization. **Are we doing this? How are we doing this?** Once this effort takes hold and is done well, we can begin PR outside our perimeters. This 'hands on' manual was put together to assist you in this important matter. We are here to help!

Establishing good relationships with the all-important media:

To begin with, personal visits and cordial report with the local media are vital if the word about our organization is to get out. In approaching the printed media it is extremely helpful for the PR director to stop by newspaper offices and invite the person who is responsible for veterans' news to a cup of coffee. **Be friendly, open and cooperative. Tell them that you'll stop by again soon with news releases and pictures.** At the radio and TV stations contact the Program Managers. Most stations have a talk show and are always looking for guests. It does not hurt to have the Chef with you on these visits! Personal visits plant the seeds that help you get coverage for the Voiture. Knowing who your contacts are can **greatly** help your cause with Voiture news releases and save a great deal of time and frustration.

Developing relationships with the media takes patience, persistence and practice. It may take time to get that first release in print but **DO NOT GIVE UP**. Keep writing, calling and visiting your media contacts. **Using “little caring touches” such as a gift of a small American flag, a small framed patriotic picture or even a plate of home-baked cookies or fresh donuts won’t hurt. Remember that they do not have much room on their already crowded desks but they will find space for small meaningful items or food. Enclose a small card or business card that has your name, your contact information...AND the 40 & 8 logo!**

Always take and submit pictures of Voiture activities. Visits to VA hospitals, veteran homes, nursing homes, schools and any other volunteer activities are always newsworthy. Accompany your picture with the names of the individuals carefully typed or printed in the order they appear in the photo. Please use business cards!

If you have people in your Voiture that have a particular interest or have some special skill or hobby, the media is always looking for newsworthy stories. Find out which of your Voyageurs have an interesting hobby or life experience including their time in the military and are willing to be interviewed. Naturally, he or she will want to wear their 40 & 8 chapeau and uniform during the interview and for any accompanying photos.

Take pictures at your Promenades and other Voiture activities and submit them with every story. Know what the media deadlines are. Do not wait until the last moment. As often as possible, hand carry your stories and pictures to your **media person. Always use these opportunities to include a paragraph or two about the 40 & 8 and its mission.**

Invite the media to as many Voiture functions as possible. They especially enjoy and will attend meals! Make them a nametag with their organization and name on it. Always **have them stand to be recognized at these events. Emphasize that we all work together for the betterment of our communities.**

Nothing happening at your Grand or Voiture? Go to the 40 & 8 web site or the public relations site. Both sites have plenty of news that you can work into a media release.

Remember: the smallest “news” item may generate the most publicity. If it catches the eye of the media they will run with it.

Maintaining and evaluating public relations:

The PR Director and the Chef need to periodically evaluate their public relations efforts. Perhaps every quarter would be a good timeline. Here are a few suggestions of what to look for.....

1. How much publicity did we generate? (newspaper print in columns x inches. Radio and TV = minutes)

2. Start a scrapbook of all functions. This is the job of the Historian. See that the Historian is aware of every inch of print regarding the Voiture or Grand. Make sure that he or she gets a copy of all releases as well as copies of anything regarding the organization that is published.

3. Be sure to report all of this information to the Grand and Voiture Nationale in order to compete for various awards.

Additional ideas on good PR for your Voiture and the 40 & 8:

Develop a “speaker’s bureau” within your organization and then let other organizations know you have speakers available. Organizations are always looking for new speakers and this is a great way to publicize your Voiture or Grand. When your Voyageurs go out to talk to a group make sure they wear their Voiture uniform and chapeau! Contact area schools and offer veterans who are willing to speak about their military experiences (this is especially appreciated around November 11 and Memorial Day).

Remember that in today’s world, PR is not limited to press releases. With a little effort you can let everyone out there know about your Voiture or Grand. **Have a computer savvy Voyageur or friend put together a web page dedicated to your Voiture Locale and Grand. Then keep it up to date with articles, meeting notices, photographs, etc. If it is good and also current people will frequently look at it!**

Always take every opportunity for publicity and take pictures. Ask members to volunteer as Salvation Army bell ringers or to do some other charitable endeavor. All of these things are newsworthy. Visits to VA hospitals, veterans homes, nursing homes, schools and any other volunteer activities are excellent opportunities for well-deserved publicity. Remind all to wear their chapeaus and berets. 40 & 8 baseball type caps draw attention. **Encourage members to promote the organization by always wearing the uniform at any event where they will be seen by the public.**

Public Relations:

Six essential qualities that are the key to success:

- 1. Sincerity**
- 2. Personal Integrity**
- 3. Humility**
- 4. Courtesy**
- 5. Wisdom**
- 6. Charity**

Recruiting (Public Relations) Dos and Don'ts that will help:

DO:

- 1. Leave your bad mood at the door. Don't take out your anger on others.**
- 2. Keep confidences, both personal and professional.**
- 3. Write thank-you notes and letters; do not put it off.**
- 4. Say, "May I share with you what the 40 & 8 is doing in our community?"**

DON'T:

- 1. Criticize or trash another veteran organization (nor any other type of organization).**
- 2. Swear, shout, cry or display anger in the contact arena or you will lose credibility for the 40 & 8 and yourself.**
- 3. Drop in on a prospect unannounced. Call first.**
- 4. Never criticize your organization, complain about problems or other persons or your not being recognized for your efforts when you are conducting PR. Leave those comments at home and instead leave your public relations contacts with only positive thoughts about the 40 & 8!!**

Above all genuine good manners and totally above board professional behavior are essential and productive skills to promote the 40 & 8.

Imagination is the greatest resource for public relations inspiration. **Just because it hasn't been done before doesn't mean you can't do it! Be a trail blazer!**

Zig Ziglar says: "It's a sobering thought that we hold the key to the future of others. We don't live alone. Our actions and deeds effect other people, many of whom we will never meet. That's the reason our obligation and responsibility for doing the best we can with what we have goes beyond our own personal time."

Public Relations Awards presented each year at Promenade Nationale:

- 1. Thomas W. Fay Award**
- 2. John Kilgus Award**
- 3. Arthur McDowell Award**
- 4. John W. Emerson Award**
- 5. LaVerne Eccleston Award**
- 6. Robert Kaseman Award**

Entries for these awards must be received by the Public Relations Director between May 30 and June 30 of each year to be considered for the awards. For more information contact your area Sous PR Directeur or the PR Nationale Directeur.

Recommended Reading:

***** "See You at the Top" Zig Ziglar (This is a must read for everyone. Available in your library)**

***** "Lesly's Handbook of Public Relations and Communications" Leroy Lesly**

***** "Handbook for Public Relations Writing" Thomas Bivins**

Public relations web page: [Public relation web page](#)

Tony Gallagher, Nationale PR Directuer

Chef de Gare, Voiture 333

President: Press Associates La Societe

Faith - Family - Forty & Eight