NAA Affiliate Public Relations Toolkit

Introduction: What is PR?

We've created this Public Relations Toolkit to help you, our affiliates, raise your local profile through media coverage, content generation and social media. Use it as a reference when writing press releases, speaking with the media, posting to social media or promoting your members and events.

This toolkit is a guide, not gospel. It includes best practices and strategies in public relations. Given that PR is always evolving, so too will this guide. If you ever have questions or concerns about tactics or procedure, we are here to help.

What is PR?

Definition

Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the public.

This is how the Public Relations Society of America defines the discipline.

For you, this definition means three things:

1. Public relations should be an ongoing commitment, rather than random activities done at random intervals.
2. Public relations should help long-term or strategic goals and not be used only for a quick piece of coverage.
3. Public relations should connect your organization to multiple audiences including the media, affiliate members and the public at large.

What It's Not

While the definition of public relations is always evolving, what it's not is more straightforward.

Public relations is not:

1. **Advertising** – If you want a full-page logo of your organization in the local paper or 30 seconds of uninterrupted TV time to say exactly what you want, that's advertising, not public relations.
2. **All about you** – Public relations is about mutually beneficial relationships. There are no mutually beneficial relationships that are just about one person or organization.
3. **One-way conversation** – Advertising is a one-way conversation. PR is about open dialogue and connecting with audiences as much on their terms as yours.
4. **Spin** – Shows like "Scandal" or "House of Cards" make many people think that PR = spin. While messaging is important in PR, spin is considered unethical and counter-productive by the industry's best practitioners.

What It All Means to You

Now that you have a better idea of what PR is and what it isn't, how does that relate to you and your organization? How can you connect your mission and work to PR and how can PR help improve your work and mission?

1. **Goals** – Organization goals should help set the direction of public relations efforts. Conversely, PR should help your organization meet its stated goals.
2. **Benefits** – Depending on your goals, PR can benefit you in many ways, including but not limited to:
    a. Increased membership
    b. Increased visibility in the community
    c. Greater business opportunity for your members
    d. Improved relationships with media and key stakeholders
    e. Engagement through social media
    f. Higher organizational morale
    g. More well-defined organizational mission and goals
3. **Challenges** – As with any new endeavor, PR will have bumps in the road. You can expect to encounter some, or all, of the following challenges:
    a. Mixed messages
    b. Unresponsive journalists
    c. Lack of stories
    d. Bad publicity
    e. Unreceptive audiences
    f. Difficult interviews
4. **Opportunities** – The great opportunity that PR presents is inherent in its definition: building mutually beneficial relationships between your organizations and the public.

PR is a chance to grow your reputation through third-party validation while providing these third parties with valuable information. PR should be a win-win. This toolkit will help make that happen.

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Before You Start

Before you dive headfirst into a PR campaign, this section will help you better understand:

- What makes news and what does the media want?
- What you have to say and who will say it?
- Basic press collateral.
- How to coordinate with NAA.

What Makes News?

We all know a good news story when we see one. The bad ones we usually ignore. But what elements go into making news news?

1. **Timely** – News is what just happened, is happening now or will happen soon. If something is "last week's news," it's irrelevant. Make sure the news you present to the media or public is current or connected to something current.

2. **Local** – For your purposes, all news is local. For events happening within your geographic area, this is easy to present. For national events, it gets trickier. A paper in Houston isn't going to care about a shortage of apartments in Orlando. That is, unless you can connect what's happening nationally to be relevant to the local market.

3. **Significant** – Is the story important enough that it has to be covered? Are the lives of your audience affected by what is happening? If you don't know about this, will you be at a disadvantage?

4. **Sensational** – "I can't believe that just happened!" These are the news stories that "go viral." The feel-good or shocking stories that you discuss at the office the next day.

5. **Emotional** – While news is informational, it's also there to entertain and make us feel. A great news story will elicit emotion of some kind.

6. **Weird/Out of the ordinary** – Dog bites man is not news. Man bites dog is. These are stories that are usually reserved for the end of a broadcast and make you say, "I've never heard/seen anything like that!"

What Does Media Want?

The media is not out to get you. They just want to do their jobs, which is to bring information of interest to their audience.

Successful public relations efforts will help members of the media do their jobs better. To do that, you need to know what the media wants from you:

1. **Honesty** – The media wants honest commentary on subjects so that the audience can make informed decisions. There needs to be trust between the audience and the media outlet. Your honesty builds this trust and therefore strengthens your relationship with the media.

2. **Non-biased information** – While not an outright lie, there are many things you can say to the media that they considered biased. The media is not interested in promoting your organization. They want to share the wealth of information you have built up over years in the industry. Give the facts and present them with NAA messaging but don't present them as if they are the only answer.

3. **Information their audience wants** – Media outlets would not exist without an audience. Every one has fine-tuned its messaging and focus to appeal to a specific audience. Discover who that audience is and present your information in a way that engages them. This makes the outlet look good and deepens their comfort with you.

4. **Star quality** – Like in politics, "name recognition" means a lot in media. People tune in to see/read someone they've heard of. If there is someone well known in your organization or who will speak for your organization, use him/her when appropriate.

What Do You Have to Say?

In real estate, it's "location, location, location." In PR, it's "message, message, message."

With messaging, **consistency** is key. Have key messages, organizational tenets and positioning written down and easily accessible. This will greatly help your spokespeople know what to say and how to say it.

NAA wants to help you craft your local messages. We've included in the appendix our **national messaging points**. They are what we believe on a national level, and will help formulate positioning for your affiliate.

We've also included "**Fast Facts**" that quickly answer frequently asked questions about NAA.

Who Will Say It?

If you've ever noticed that the same handful of "experts" are always on TV or quoted in print, you're not too far off. Media tends to gravitate toward those who are:

- "Media friendly"
- Telegenic
- Can provide a great sound bite

It's your job to find those people from within or outside your organization who will speak on your behalf.

1. **Internal spokespeople** – Usually senior level staff, these are the mouthpieces of your organization. They are experts in their field/topic and have deep organizational knowledge.
2. **External spokespeople** – Third-party validation always looks good to the media. Identify friendly allies who are willing to add commentary and insight to stories. Provide them with messaging and help shepherd them through the media process. Reporters will be grateful for the additional, non-biased insight.

Spokespeople ***do not*** have to be senior level. They do need to be willing and have an interest to speak to the media. If they are not comfortable, their performances will hurt, rather than enhance, your relationships with the press.

When in doubt, refer to the three things media gravitate toward. Does your spokesperson possess these qualities?

Not all people will be great for all media. You might find the TV star in your ranks is less gifted at a phone interview. Play to the strengths of your staff and spokespeople. Don't be afraid to have multiple faces of the organization.

COMMON ARARTMENT INDUSTRY TERMS

These are the official NAA approved terms you should use when talking to the media.

Use:	Don't Use:
Owner	Landlord
Resident	Tenant
Apartment community	Complex or Property
Apartment	Unit
Lease (as a verb)	Rent

Press Collateral

Reporters and editors are busy and often working against deadline (the time by which they need to turn in a story). The more information/collateral you can provide them, the easier it makes their jobs and the more likely they are to run your story.

Some basic pieces of collateral you should always have on file are:

1. **Headshots** – High-resolution (1MB or larger), digital color photos for anyone who might speak with the media.
2 **Press bios** – Short (1-3 paragraph) professional bios for anyone who might speak with the media. You can narrow down what you send the press from this larger profile.
3. **Logos** – High-resolution images of your organization's logo.
4. **Stock photos** – Many outlets will look to include photos of apartment communities in stories about your organization or your members. Having some at the ready will not only save the reporter time, but give you a chance to present your organization as you want it to be seen.

What Is Your News?

After you've decided on your messaging, lined up spokespeople to talk and created media collateral, it's time to actually figure out what you will talk about. What is your news?

While we will get to this more in-depth in the next section, there are two key things to consider when selecting what to publicize:

1. **Would it interest you?**
2. **What outcome do you want to achieve?**

If the "news" you have doesn't interest you, it's probably not news. Trust your instincts as a consumer of media and as an expert in real estate. Will the general public or a specific real estate audience care about your news?

If the answer is, "Yes," you're good to go. If it's, "No," spend some time trying to find a different, more appealing way to present it.

You should have some outcome in mind for any PR effort, even if it's just to "get something on the

record." By working backwards from the outcome you want to achieve, you can work to identify the correct tactic(s) that will get you there. More on this in the next section.

Coordination With NAA

The last thing before you get started is to check in with Lauren Boston, NAA's Manager of Public Relations. You can contact her at lauren@naahq.org or 703-797-0678.

NAA would love the opportunity to support your PR initiatives or serve as a sounding board for ideas. We're here if you ever have questions about:

- Press releases
- Media alerts
- Press requests/interviews
- Messaging
- Crisis situations
- Collateral
- FAQs
- Anything else relating to your public relations campaigns

We'd also love the opportunity to help expand the visibility of your media coverage. So when you get that first interview published, please send it our way. We'll pass it around and be able to show more people the great work you've done.

Beginning Public Relations Strategies and Tactics

You’ve created your messaging, lined up your spokespeople and are ready to start your public relations campaign.

So where do you start? How do you start? To whom do you tell your news?

This section will provide beginning strategies and tactics that will help you:

- Identify appropriate outlets to contact.
- Select reporters to contact.
- Compose press releases.
- Write media advisories.
- Distribute press releases and media advisories.

Identifying Media Outlets

Identifying the correct media outlet(s) is the first step in telling your story. What good is media coverage if it appears in an outlet that doesn't fit with your goals or match the audience you want to reach?

A few questions to ask to make sure an outlet is appropriate to pitch:

1. **Is the outlet local?** – Since most of your PR stories will revolve around local issues, make sure the outlet in question covers that particular geographic area.
2. **Does it have an audience you want to influence?** – Coverage for the sake of coverage won't help you achieve your goals. Research an outlet's audience to make sure it is an audience you want to see your story.
3. **What is its reputation?** – Is it a respected outlet? Is it known for quality and honest coverage?
4. **Is it pay-to-play?** – Some outlets will happily run your story, if you pay them to. Avoid these if at all possible. They are usually less reputable and can end up hurting, rather than helping, your affiliate's image.

That's what to look for. But how do you actually find outlets that meet these criteria?

1. **Internet search** – The same way we search for anything else, a simple Web search can turn up great information about media outlets in your area, what audience they reach, their reputation and if you will need to dig into the expense account to be covered.
2. **Media databases** – Services such as Vocus, Cision or Meltwater are great tools for compiling media lists. However, they aren't cheap to use and typically require a yearly commitment. NAA can assist with this.
3. **Staff knowledge** – You and your staff have a wealth of knowledge about local media simply from living in the area and being part of the real estate industry.

Selecting Reporters

Once you have pinpointed the correct outlet(s) for your story, you will need to identify the correct person(s) to contact.

Start by identifying which reporters or editors are assigned to the "beat," or general area of coverage, that pertains to your story. Most often, these will be reporters who cover real estate or business. But, depending on the story, you may want to contact reporters who cover general interest, local news, law or personal finance.

PITCH(n.) vs. PITCH(v.)

In public relations, "pitch" is used as both a noun and a verb.

Pitch(n.) – A written or spoken appeal created for the purpose of explaining a news item or story in order to attract media coverage. e.g.: I'm writing a pitch about our upcoming ground breaking ceremony.

Pitch(v.) – The act of contacting a media outlet.

e.g.: We should pitch this idea to TV because it has some great visual opportunities.

THE AFFILIATE THAT CRIED WOLF

Figuring out who would want to cover your story is one of the trickiest, yet most important, aspects of public relations. If you pitch stories too often that are irrelevant to the reporters you contact, you run the risk of being black-listed from that outlet even when you have relevant information to share. Reporters remember who sends pertinent information and who blasts out news like a spammer. Do your research and you'll stay on the media's good side.

As with identifying outlets, the Internet, media databases and staff knowledge will help identify reporters and editors. Other ways include:

1. **Publication websites** – Many media outlets have an "About Us" or similar section on their website where they list their reporters/editors and what they cover.
2. **Social media** – Social media bios and content often provide insight into what reporters cover or are interested in covering in the future.
3. **Past coverage** – Read a reporter's previous articles. Are they writing about your topic area? Have they written about it recently? What's their take on the subject? Past coverage offers a wealth of knowledge on what interests a reporter.

In identifying the correct outlet or journalist to contact, **make sure your news is relevant to what they cover**. You don't like telemarketers calling you with irrelevant information. Journalists feel the same way about the pitches they receive.

A top complaint of many journalists is how many stories they are pitched. Some get 500-1,000 emails every day. Make it easier for them to say yes to your story by making your pitch relevant and not wasting their time with stories they would never cover.

Press Release

One of the easiest ways to tell the media about your organization, event or news is with a press release. Written properly, it can be a key piece in your PR strategy. Written poorly, it can instantly turn off journalists and hinder your PR efforts.

The purpose of a press release is to concisely and precisely announce news from your affiliate. It is a formal way to get news "on the record."

When drafting a press release, always keep the audience in mind. Make sure to use common language and explain industry terminology.

The mechanics of writing a press release are more formalized than a blog or social media post. We've included a template in the appendix that you can use to format press releases.

The basic elements of a press release break down into these components:

1. **Headline** – The first thing an audience reads. This should be a short (65 characters or less if possible) overview of the release. Headlines should give a reader an idea of what the news is and a reason for them to read it.
2. **Subhead** – Comes directly under the headline. A subhead expands on the headline and offers a few additional and important details about the news.
3. **Dateline** – Indicates where and when you are announcing the news. For example: **Arlington, Va. – May 2, 2014**

REPORTER OR EDITOR?

Should you contact a reporter or an editor?

For print, the more specific you can get the better, so try and contact a reporter first.

For TV or radio, stories are often assigned, so pitching to an assignment editor or producer is often recommended.

ELDERLY AUNT RULE

A rule of thumb is to write a press release using language you would use to describe the news to your elderly aunt.

Be careful not to fill your press release full of industry jargon or acronyms. Any audiences outside of the real estate field won't be able to relate to such writing and therefore the release won't have the desired impact.

Be clear and explain the news in plain language that can be quickly understood by everyone.

4. **Intro paragraph** – Also called the lede (or lead), this important first paragraph should present the "who, what, when, where, why and how" elements of your announcement.

5. **Body** – The remaining sections of a press release should add additional details to the lede. The body is a chance to tell the story of your news and include affiliate messaging, rather than sticking just to the bare-bone details.

6. **Quotes** – Quotes from internal or external spokespeople add insight and color to a press release. For any quote drafted, be sure to get the approval of the person to whom it is attributed.

7. **Boilerplate** – Located at the end of a press release, a boilerplate is a quick overview or description of your affiliate. The language remains the same for each release.

8. **Contact information** – When you put out a release, you want people to contact you for more information. Make it easy by including contact information (at least email, phone and full website address) in every press release.

Other things to consider:

Hyperlinks – Are there relevant materials you can link to that provide the reader additional information? Is there a specific page on your website to which you want to drive traffic?

SEO keywords – If your press release will live online, include strategically placed keywords for search engine optimization (SEO). These might be the name of your affiliate, key leaders or terms such as "Denver real estate." The closer to the beginning of the press release, the more affective the keywords are.

Media Advisory

Related to the press release is the media advisory. While the former is a complete telling of a particular news item, a media advisory is a quick and effective way to invite a media outlet to an impending event. See appendix for a media advisory template.

When writing a media advisory, there is some overlap with the mechanics of a press release.

1. **Contact info** – Placed prominently at the beginning of the advisory, this should include info for how to contact you both in the office and at the event.

2. **Headline** – Quick and to the point, the headline must give the reader a reason to attend the event.

3. **Four "W"s**
    a. **Who** is going to be at the event and whom can media talk to?
    b. **What** is the event about? What is happening? What is the news?
    c. **When** is the event?
    d. **Where** is the event?

4. **Event Details** – Anything else the media needs to know about the event?

5. **Outlet-Specific Information**
    a. **TV** – What visual and audio opportunities are available at the event?
    b. **Print** – Are there additional opportunities to talk with the audience? Should they bring a photographer or will pictures be provided?
    c. **Radio** – What sound (both interviews and ambient) is available at the event?

6. **Other Information**
    a. **RSVP** – Do outlets need to reply in order to attend the event?
    b. **Parking** – Is there assigned space for media vehicles? Can TV trucks extend their broadcast transmitters without interference?
    c. **Media guidelines** – Are there any people, topics or questions that are off limits? Will media be confined to a staging area or allowed to roam the event? Be very upfront and honest about what media can/can't do.
    d. **Story angles** – With media in a rush, provide some story angles for them. They might not adhere to them, but it gives you a chance to frame the event and potential coverage.
    e. **Bios** – If there are important people attending the event, provide background or bio information on them.

Distribution of Press Releases and Media Advisories

The press release or media advisory is written and approved. How should you distribute it?

1. **Wire services** – The classic way to distribute a press release is to "put it on a wire." These wire services companies contract with networks of media outlets to provide them news. Some of the more established/reputable wire services are PR Web, BusinessWire and Marketwired.
    a. **Benefits** – These services add validity and credibility to your news. Your news lives online on a third party's website.
    b. **Drawbacks** - They can be expensive and not actually land your news where it will make the biggest impact.
2. **Email** – Those meticulously researched media lists you compiled are perfect for press releases or media advisories. These news items can help you build relationships with journalists.
    a. **Personalize it** - If possible, send an individual email to each contact. If it's not possible, use the Bcc option. Never expose the fact that you emailed multiple and competing outlets at the same time.
3. **Blog/website** – Many companies are shunning the traditional wire service distribution in favor of posting press releases directly to their blog or website. If you have media and followers constantly checking your site for news, it's a great tactic. If not, you still need to make sure the correct people receive your news.
4. **Social media** – Social media, such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, is an easy way to distribute your news to an audience that follows you.

SHOULD I TWEET A PRESS RELEASE?

Sharing a press release or media advisory via social media seems like a great and inexpensive way to distribute your news.

However, press releases and media advisories are, by their nature, formal and not very social.

Try writing a blog post about the press release or breaking down the news into a series of tweets. Make the news as shareable as possible if you choose to distribute via social media.

Intermediate Public Relations Strategies and Tactics

Writing and distributing news via a press release or media advisory is step one in your public relations process. Hopefully, your news generates interest and the media contacts you for more information.

This section will prepare you for:

- How to handle an interview request.
- How to respond to an email interview.
- How to conduct a phone interview.

In addition, we will review media relations beyond the press release, including:

- Pitching events or news.
- Creating multimedia collateral.
- Using multimedia collateral.

Incoming Press Request

It's always exciting to receive a request from a reporter wanting to know more about your news or asking for a comment on a story. But before you answer or provide a quote, there are a few questions you should ask:

1. **Timeframe** – By when do they need a response? Are they working on deadline?
2. **Story angle** – What type of story are they writing? Do they have a particular angle(s) in which they are interested?
3. **How will your affiliate fit into the story** – Are you being used as an expert to comment on a larger trend, another organization's news or is your news the centerpiece of the story?

When you know more about the story, you can plan your **messaging**.

You don't want your messaging to be all about your affiliate. This will appear biased and will be of little use to the reporter. But, if you answer the questions without including your messaging, you lose the opportunity to reach a wider audience.

Match what you want to say to what the reporter wants. Striking this balance is key to being included in the story.

After deciding on your messaging, the next step is deciding who will deliver it. Who will talk to the press?

WHAT IS DEADLINE?

Being "on deadline" means that the reporter has to file the story by a specific time. Make sure you know when that deadline is and get information to the reporter in plenty of time to incorporate it into the story. Remember, deadline is when the final story must be completed, not when you should get them information.

1. **Attributing vs. quoting** – Often, your spokes-people are busy or unavailable to draft responses themselves. In these situations, it is advisable to speak with them directly, edit their responses and then attribute the quotes to them. Of course, this only works with written responses.
2. **Sound bites** – Whether responding via email, phone or in person, present your answers in easy to understand sound bites. Start narrow with a specific answer to the question. If needed, you can expand your answer to provide greater context or additional information.

Remember that **you can say no** to media requests. Reasons for turning down a media opportunity include:

1. **Negative story about your affiliate** – If the outlet or reporter is clearly biased or you believe your words will be used against you, you can always decline the request.
2. **Conflict of interest** – The reporter might want comment about a rival organization or a former affiliate member.
3. **Not in area of expertise** – Sometimes reporters aren't informed about NAA, your affiliate, your members and the mission of all three. Their story could be irrelevant to your affiliate and outside your area of expertise.
4. **Not relevant to organizational goals** – A story about which apartment communities are most decorated for the holidays might seem like a fun piece, but does it advance your affiliate's public relations or members' goals?

If there is any question about whether or not you should respond to a media request, please contact NAA's Manager of Public Relations, Lauren Boston. She is here to talk through the opportunity, help craft messaging, draft a response or provide a written statement. Lauren is also here to support you in your decision-making process and, hopefully, spread the good word when you do land that great piece of coverage.

Email and Phone Interviews

Each type of media request has specific do's and don'ts. For **email interviews**:

1. **Attribute quotes** – As mentioned above, answers don't have to be composed directly by the person to whom they are attributed. Talk through the answers with the appropriate person(s), get the message correct and then

attribute to the person(s) you want to present to the media, such as your affiliate's President. Keep the process transparent within your affiliate and inform everyone involved of his/her role.

2. **Write in sound bites** – The first sentence of every response should answer the question. Everything else supports that answer or adds additional details.

3. **Grammar, spelling, punctuation** – Edit, edit, edit! Have several people read over email responses to make sure there are no copy mistakes or typos.

4. **No attachments** – Reporters don't want email attachments. Unless they specifically ask for them, don't send them. Include everything in the body of the email.

5. **Offer images or other collateral** – Outlets are focusing more on the images that accompany a story. Offer to supply relevant photos or images, but don't send them unsolicited.

Do's and don'ts for **phone interviews**:

1. **No need to answer immediately** – If a reporter calls and asks for comment, buy yourself some time to properly prepare. Ask for their deadline and what the story is about. Say that you'll be back in touch with them shortly.

2. **Preparation** – Research the outlet and reporter to see what types of questions they usually ask. You can also ask the reporter directly for sample questions, but they are not obliged to share those with you.

3. **Practice** – Do mock interviews with other staff members. Have someone play the role of the journalist and another listen to rate your performance. The more you practice, the less nervous you'll be for the actual interview.

4. **No distractions**
   a. Turn off the computer.
   a. Don't check email.
   c. Be in a quiet place where you can hear the reporter and he/she can hear you.
   d. Use a landline phone if at all possible.
   e. It's OK to have a set of reference notes if needed.

5. **Body language**
   a. Stand up. It gives you more energy and presence even on the phone.
   b. Smile. It makes the tone of your voice happier and more personable.
   c. If you move your hands when you talk, feel free to do so while on the phone. It will make the experience feel more natural and comfortable.

6. **Blocking and bridging** – If the interview gets off track because either the interviewer is asking questions you weren't prepared for or questions that are irrelevant, you can take control of the conversation by blocking and bridging.

BLOCKING AND BRIDGING

When a reporter takes the interview to a place you're not comfortable, blocking and bridging helps get you back on track.

Acknowledge the question but answer with the message you want to present.

For example, a reporter asks about rising costs of rent forcing out lower-income residents in your city. A block and bridge answer could be:

"*While affordable housing is a concern, it's important to remember that apartment communities still offer some of the best values in real estate and allow individuals and families opportunities they might not otherwise have.*"

Pitching News and Events

Beyond composing a press release or media alert, public relations and media relations revolve around "the pitch." This is a short appeal created to explain a news item and convince the media to cover it.

Most important when writing a pitch is to **identify what makes the news or event newsworthy**.

1. **Just because something happens, doesn't make it news** – Refer to the "Before You Begin" section of this document. Does your news or event meet the criteria for what is news? If not, how can you make it more news-worthy?

2. **Angles, not spin** – To present something as newsworthy, work to discover what angles or storylines will interest a particular outlet. This doesn't mean exaggerating or misrepresenting your news. That gets into the world of "spin" or mischaracterization, which is something to avoid.

3. **It's about the audience, not about you** – Outlets care about what their audience wants to read/hear/watch, not about what you want to say. Don't make your pitch all about you. Make it about how your news affects/interests the outlet's audience.

When you've worked out what you're going to pitch, there are two things to keep in mind when actually creating the pitch:

1. **Keep it short** – Research indicates you have less than 10 seconds to grab someone's attention. Keep pitches short and to the point. Place important information at the beginning.

2. **Make it relevant** – A reporter should know in the first sentence what your pitch is about and if it's relevant. If it's not clear, re-write it until it is. Research and personalize your pitches for each outlet and reporter.

MAKE IT SHORTER!

A great first pitch is around 150 words. When drafting, here are elements you can leave out:

1. Formal greetings.
2. Long intro sentences. Just get to the point.
3. Proper names, titles or organizational names.

Other ways to make pitches shorter are:

1. Use bullet points.
2. Link to additional details rather than writing them out.
3. Include details in subject line.

When you've created your pitch, how should you pitch it to the media?

1. **Email** – A large majority of the media prefer first contact via email. Make sure to include a descriptive and concise subject line. Send any email to yourself first to check if it's properly formatted.

2. **Phone** – If a pitch is time-sensitive, or you know an outlet/reporter prefers to be contacted via phone, call them. Ask if it's a good time to talk. Get directly to your pitch just as you would in an email. It might feel awkward at first, but reporters will appreciate your directness and efficient use of their time.

3. **Social media** – Be careful when pitching a story via social media, such as through Twitter. You need to be certain that a reporter wants to be contacted that way. Social media can be a good tool for keeping in touch with people with whom you have a strong relationship.

If/when you don't hear back from a reporter, it's time to **follow up**. Here are several ways to be persistent but not bothersome:

1. **Wait** – Like in a romantic comedy, you can call too soon. Give the reporter time to read or review the news before you re-pitch the story. Unless the pitch is very time sensitive, invoke the rule of dating and wait at least three days.

2. **Short** – Via email, a great follow up might be simply, "Any thoughts on this idea?"

3. **Don't call and ask if they got the previous email** – If they did and didn't respond, it probably means they weren't interested. If they didn't get it, then you've just made them look bad.

4. **Re-pitch as if it's the first pitch** – Instead of asking if they got your email, use a phone follow-up as a new chance to make a great first impression.

Multimedia

Creating videos, photos, infographics or other multimedia content is a great way to communicate with internal audiences and provide extra value for the media.

Several options for creating **videos** are:

1. **Long and polished** – These are training videos, advertisements, trade show videos or other professionally recorded and edited pieces. They look fantastic and showcase your affiliate. However, they can be expensive, time consuming and usually require an outside resource.
2. **Short and dirty** – Just about any mobile device can be used to shoot broadcast-quality video. Just look at how often you see iPhone footage on CNN or your local news. For shorter videos, you can use:
    a. **Video camera, smartphone or tablet** for recording.
    b. **iMovie** or similar software for editing.
    c. **YouTube, Vine, Instagram** or other social media platform for posting and distribution.

While the quality of a video somewhat affects its ability to garner coverage, the content matters more. Shoot video that appeals to the media outlet you are pitching. Your videos should add insight into an event or story.

The same principle applies to **photos**. Photos can be used to:

1. **Capture an event** – These can be used to tell the story in real time via social media, or as a wrap up after the event.
2. **Help gain post-event coverage** – Sometimes outlets are too understaffed to cover every event they want. Providing them with photos makes it easier for them to write about your news. Many outlets also have photo-only sections to which you can submit for coverage.

If your news is complex, such as a rental housing survey, an **infographic** can present that data in a fun, easy-to-digest format.

How to use it

Multimedia content can be used in a variety of ways to support your PR efforts:

1. **Social media** – What do you see on your Facebook timeline or Twitter feed? Mostly photos and videos. This is how we express ourselves and share information. Multimedia content will strengthen your social efforts.
2. **Blogs** – A picture is worth a thousand words. Adding multimedia to blogs makes them more interesting, readable and adds information and context that the written word can't.
3. **Pitching** – Outlets are strapped for time and resources. Yet they want to include as much multimedia in stories as possible. You can provide it for them. Just remember not to send anything unsolicited and nothing as an attachment unless instructed.
4. **Marketing and affiliate collateral** – While they might not be used in the moment, multimedia can add color to future marketing materials. You never can have too many photos to choose from.
5. **Strengthen connection to members** – Your membership wants to feel connected. Using photos or videos can build community and strengthen bonds between members and your affiliate.

LANDSCAPE NOT PORTRAIT

Hold a smartphone in landscape (horizontal) rather than in portrait (vertical) when shooting video or pictures. This is the way that TV or online video displays best.

Advanced Public Relations Strategies and Tactics

As you become more comfortable with public relations, there will be opportunities to provide comment on current events and establish your members as experts in their field.

In this section, we will introduce you to the advanced strategies and tactics of:

- Live interviews.
- Pitching trend or topic stories.
- Discovering editorial opportunities.
- Developing thought leadership.
- Tracking media coverage.
- Extending the life of media coverage.

Live Interviews

A staple of media coverage, the live interview can be one of the most important yet nerve-wracking elements in public relations. But, like an email or phone interview, there are specific tactics you can follow to prepare that will calm the nervousness and help you deliver a great interview.

1. **Preparation** – Watch the show or segment on which you will appear. This will give you a sense for camera angles and physical positioning along with the host's interview style.

2. **Practice** – Like any other interview, the more you practice the better you will perform. Create a replica of the show's set and have a staff member interview you. Film it and watch it back. Focus on:
   a. **Message** – What are you going to say?
   a. **Sound bites** – How are you going to say it quickly?
   a. **Body language and position** – How will you look on camera?

3. **Presentation** – TV is a visual medium. How you present yourself is equally, if not more, important as what you say. Presentation aspects to consider include:
   a. **Proper dress** – What is the dress style for the show? What style do you want to present? Rule of thumb: Dress how you would for a meeting with an important client.
   b. **Eye contact** – Focus on the interviewer. You will make an instant connection and show the audience that you are focused and engaged.
   c. **Ignore the camera** – The audience doesn't expect you to talk directly to them. Keep your attention on the interviewer.
   d. **Speak steadily** – Not too fast and not too slow. Speak in an authoritative voice. You are the expert and your tone should reflect that.
   e. **Slow your gestures** – Moving your hands is fine, but do so at a slower pace than usual. Make your movements fluid. Fast, jerky movements present as nervous or aggressive to the viewer.
   f. **Listen** – Engage the interviewer, and therefore the audience, by really listening to what they ask.
   g. **Block and bridge** – The same techniques for a phone interview can be employed if a live interview starts to veer off track.

RADIO IS LIVE, TOO

Suggestions made in this section can be applied to radio interviews as well.

While many people focus on TV when talking about live coverage, there are many local radio programs that can help you reach relevant audiences. Many times these programs are more "long form" and give you additional chances to discuss an issue in depth.

9 SECONDS

The average length of a TV sound bite is nine seconds. That's all the time you have to get across your major messages.

In advance of any live interview, make sure the producer or host has your correct **name**, **title** and **affiliate name**. You can ask for this information to be displayed on screen, in what is known as a **Chyron**.

Pitching Trend or Topic Stories

We've discussed ways to pitch news and events created by your affiliate. A more advanced tactic is to connect your affiliate to current events, trends or topics that are already in the news.

When deciding what trend or topic you should pitch, ask yourself these questions:

1. **What is happening in the world?** What stories, trends or topics are the media already primed to cover?

2. **How does a trend/topic relate to what you do?** Find a legitimate connection/angle between what your affiliate does and the larger story.

3. **How can you add value/insight?** What can you say that a reporter can't get anywhere else?

Once you have identified a larger topic or trend that fits these criteria, you need to tailor the pitch to the specific outlet.

Take for example an increase in local foreclosures. You want to comment on this trend's impact on the local rental market.

A business reporter/outlet will care most about the economic impacts of the story, a real estate reporter about the direct ramifications to the housing market and a general interest reporter will want to tell the story of a family directly affected.

To help tailor your pitch, offer to provide reporters with examples they can use in their story.

1. **Residents** – People directly affected by the news.
2. **Experts** – Banking or other financial experts who can talk to the economics of the situation.
3. **Owners** – Have they seen an increase or decrease in available apartment units in relation to the foreclosure rates?
4. **An employee** – Who at your affiliate is best positioned to talk about foreclosures?
5. **Study data** – Are there valid third-party sources that will support your messages?

Part of tailoring your pitch is to **make it local**. Outlets are always looking for local examples of national stories. They are also interested in **what local stories/people have the potential to go national**.

NAA is here to help coordinate these national-to-local and local-to-national angles. We have a wealth of data and experts from around the country that can aid your pitching efforts.

ARE YOU DOING GOOD?

A powerful way to gain coverage for your organization is to focus on the good that your members are doing in the community. Is anyone connected to your affiliate:

1. Doing outstanding charity work?
2. Sitting on community boards?
3. Involved in other philanthropic endeavors?

Looking for Editorial Opportunities

Outlets have two basic types of coverage: what's happening now and what they planned to cover in advance. For each type of story, there are ways to discover what the media is covering.

1. **Editorial calendars** – Editorial calendars are listings of what an outlet is scheduled to cover throughout the year. Be sure to note "lead times," or the cutoff date, for submitting information to be included in the story. Depending on the outlet or section, this could be anything from a few days to a few months.
2. **HARO** – HARO (Help a Reporter Out) and similar daily newsletters include inquiries from reporters looking for story sources. Many are on deadline and need information ASAP. Be sure to validate the outlet making the inquiry.
3. **Networking events** – Many outlets hold open houses or networking events with local PR groups. Attend, ask questions about coverage interests and introduce yourself to reporters who you might pitch in the future.
4. **Reading the news** – Read/watch the news every day. This gives the best picture into what outlets are covering and helps you pitch the right story at the right time.

Thought Leadership

Thought leadership is a pillar of successful public relations. Beyond interviews or pitching news and events, thought leadership is an opportunity to establish your affiliate members as respected, forward-thinking experts in their field. It's a chance to showcase knowledge and gain long-standing credibility.

A prominent way to demonstrate thought leadership is with **contributed content**, which can include:

1. **Byline articles** – Written to journalistic standards, byline articles help an audience better understand an issue, help them solve a problem or present a vision of what will happen next in your industry.
2. **Guest blogs** – Less formal pieces, these are articles that reside on the blog of a separate, non-media organization. They are a good way to reach a wider audience without relying directly on the media.

3. **Letters to the editor** – Do you disagree with a recent article or opinion? A well-formed letter to the editor can present a countering opinion or present your side of the story.

4. **Op-Ed pieces** – Op-ed articles address an issue affecting the larger public. They offer a specific opinion and course of action, e.g. opposition to a new rental tax.

Contributed content should:

1. **Take a position** – If it's not about something, it's about nothing.

2. **Share knowledge** – This is a chance to show how much you really know about real estate and the rental market.

3. **Provide insight** – Is your take fresh or is it something anyone could write?

4. **Be about a topic, not about you** – Contributed content is not advertising. Any outlet you want to be in will not hesitate to reject your content if it appears biased or self-promotional.

Tracking Media Coverage

As important as getting an interview or writing a byline article is keeping track of if/when it is published. This helps you gauge the success of your PR program, track goals and analyze what topics, pitches and content resonate with the media.

The easiest and most cost-effective way to track coverage is to set up Google Alerts. Google will send you automatic alerts when it detects a mention of a keyword, e.g. your affiliate name or name of a prominent member.

Services such as Cision, Vocus or Meltwater that offer media research also typically provide media monitoring. They will often catch more than Google Alerts, but come at a price.

There are also specialized monitoring services if you are generating a high volume of TV or radio coverage.

Repurposing and Extending the Life of Media Coverage

Public relations efforts don't stop once you get media coverage. Your next priority is to ensure as many people as possible see that piece of coverage.

1. **Send coverage to NAA** – We're here to help promote your affiliate. Our extensive networks can help publicize your news or knowledge to a national audience.

2. **Share in social** – Create social media posts highlighting the coverage. Encourage affiliate members to share through their personal accounts as well.
    a. **LinkedIn** – Make copy professional in tone.
    b. **Twitter** – Short and more casual copy. Include reporter's/media outlet's Twitter handle.
    c. **Facebook** – Tag reporter and/or media outlet's Facebook page.
    d. **Google+** – Tag reporter and/or media outlet's Google+ page.
    e. **YouTube** – Create a video about the coverage.
3. **Post to "News" section of website** – Put the coverage on your own website with a quick description and link to the full article/segment.
4. **Write a blog** – Add additional details or more affiliate-focused messaging by writing a blog post about the coverage.
5. **Put out a press release** – Treat the coverage as the news item and distribute a press release on a wire service.
6. **Add to email signature** – Highlight coverage with a quick link that goes out to everyone you email.
7. **Email to key contacts** – Prompt people to action. Coverage can serve as a great excuse to check in with key contacts.
8. **Thank the reporter** – Tagging a reporter in social media or sending a quick, direct thank you message can help build that relationship.
9. **Order reprints** – Order professional reprints to display prominently in your office.
10. **Interact** – Encourage members to write comments directly about the story.
11. **Video** – Create a short video about the coverage. Interview the person quoted or who wrote the byline. Add the video to a blog post, social media post or press release.

HELPING THE REPORTER

Promoting your coverage does as much to help the reporter as it does to help you. Reporters are often judged by how many times their stories are read or shared. Anything you do to help increase those numbers is noticed.

Social Media

Almost all of us use social media in our personal lives to connect to family and friends, gather news or converse about current events.

But how can you use social media to help with your PR efforts? This section will:

- Review social media policies.
- Offer an overview of social media platforms.
- Explain social media do's and don'ts.

Policy

Attached in the appendix is our NAA **social media policy**. It outlines acceptable behavior and practices for NAA social media accounts. You can adopt it as is for your affiliate or use it as a basis for writing your own.

It's as important to have a social media policy as it is to have any other HR-related policy. It sets clear expectations for staff and can help to mediate any disputes or incidents that might occur.

Platforms

New social media platforms seemingly spring up every week. Currently, here are some of the most popular networks and how to best use them to connect to your audiences.

1. **Facebook** – The largest social network, Facebook has the potential to reach a broad audience. The platform is visually oriented, so posts with images or videos tend to get more interaction.
2. **Twitter** – At 140 characters or less, Twitter is a way to share information in quick bursts. Many journalists are on Twitter. Following them can provide useful information on what they are covering or might cover.
3. **LinkedIn** – A professional social network, LinkedIn is a place to share industry knowledge and thought leadership. Consider joining and participating in groups dedicated to the apartment industry.
4. **YouTube** – For sharing video content, YouTube is one of the largest search engines. Videos from YouTube also display prominently in Google search results.
5. **Google+** – Google+ serves as the social hub for all of Google's products and platforms: YouTube, Places, Hangouts. It even integrates with Gmail. Information on a Google+ profile will populate search results.
6. **Pinterest** – A visual social network, Pinterest users "pin" or share images and ideas they find useful or aesthetically pleasing. The platform can be used to share images or provide audiences with ideas relating to construction or redecorating.
7. **Instagram** – What started as a photo-sharing platform, Instagram now allows users to share 15-second videos. Instagram content can be shared on Instagram or integrated with most other social media networks.
8. **Vine** – Vine allows users to create and share six-second videos that loop. Many companies have used these to film very creative stop motion "how-to" videos. As with Instagram, Vine videos can be shared across a number of platforms.

So, which social media platform is right for you? It depends.

1. **Where is your audience?** – Find which platform the audience you want to reach uses most. Make that your primary focus.
2. **You don't need to use them all** – Pick a couple networks that you want to use and maintain them. Post regularly. Become experts in what works and what doesn't.
3. **Sign up for the rest** – Even if you don't actively use them, it is a good idea to establish accounts on other social media sites because:
    a. They show up in search results.
    b. If you own them, it keeps others from misrepresenting your affiliate.
    c. If you decide not to maintain them, be sure to point visitors to sites you do update regularly.

Do's and don'ts

What are the best ways to utilize social media and what practices and behaviors should you avoid?

1. **Do**
    a. **Make it social** – The purpose of social media is to be social. It should connect on a human level and inspire others to engage with it.
    b. **Make it interesting** – Would you read that post in your personal life? If not, why would someone else? Make posts engaging and interesting. Social media allows you to be freer and more conversational.
    c. **Make it visual** – Social media is shifting more toward visual platforms. Photos and videos are proven to increase engagement over text-only posts.
    d. **Make it relevant to the platform** – You have to include links to articles on Twitter. On Facebook, you can erase the URL and still have the article appear in the post. Craft each post to match the unique characteristics of that specific platform.

e. **Make it timely** – The average "lifespan" of a Facebook post is about three hours. A tweet's can be measured in minutes. Posts should be timely and focused on what the audience needs to know now. You can always post an item multiple times, each with a slightly different take on the news.

f. **Stay on message** – Find the voice you want your affiliate to have in social media and stick with it. Posts should integrate greater messaging points, but do so in a less formal manner.

g. **Take conflict offline** – There will be people who want to complain about, argue with or berate your affiliate on social media. Offer them an alternative way to contact you so the issue can be resolved in private rather than in public.

h. **Encourage staff/members to share** – Staff and members can amplify your social media efforts. Encourage them to like, share or re-tweet your posts to their personal networks.

2. **Don't**
   a. **Ramble** – Get to the point and make it interesting. Remember, you have less than 10 seconds to make someone care.
   b. **Feed the trolls** – Trolls are Internet users whose sole purpose is to bash your affiliate or members and make your life miserable. Don't give them any ammunition. Take conflict offline or just ignore them.
   c. **Whitewash dissent** – While it might seem like a good idea to delete any negative content posted to your Facebook page, this is essentially feeding the trolls. By publically showing you made an effort to resolve their issue, you have gained the upper hand. However, if there are abusive, racist, profane or otherwise inappropriate comments, those can and should be removed.
   d. **Act unprofessionally** – Anything you post from an affiliate account reflects directly on your organization. This is not a place for personal agendas or vendettas. While social media should be fun, it's not a place for content or materials that don't fit into the workplace in general.

Crisis Communications

Even with careful planning and execution of a public relations strategy, something can still go wrong.

When a crisis occurs is not the time to craft your response. You need to have a basic crisis plan in place before something happens.

This section will ready your affiliate for a potential crisis by helping you understand:

- What you need to do to prepare.
- Barriers to successful crisis management.
- Elements essential for successful crisis management.
- Apology strategies to avoid.

Planning for a Crisis

No one expects a crisis. So, it's nearly impossible to plan for every scenario that could arise. However, there are several things you can do in advance that will prepare you to handle almost any crisis situation.

1. **Identify crisis team**
   An effective crisis team should be as small as possible. It should be able to make immediate decisions in regard to the crisis at hand. Team members should have knowledge of the stakeholder/media landscape at play.

   We strongly encourage you to include NAA's Lauren Boston on your crisis team. NAA is here to provide insight and counsel to get you through any potential problems.

2. **Incident response questionnaire**
   This document will help the crisis response team collectively determine what makes the situation a crisis, what the desired outcome is and potential solutions. Take the time to fill out this information from the earliest stages of crisis response. It will help establish a more consistent and effective response.

See appendix for sample questionnaire.

3. **Identify spokesperson**
   To communicate a consistent message throughout the duration of the response, it is recommended that the organization put forth only one spokesperson.

   Take the time and effort to train them. Every six months, hold a refresher in crisis communications and practice your response in the face of hostile stakeholders.

4. **Identify stakeholders**
   Evaluate who is or will be impacted by the current situation. Anticipate the extent of that impact. Relating to each stakeholder group will help assure the public that your organization is doing all it can to right the situation.

5. **Messaging**
   Create a media statement. This will equip you with a response if the media contacts you. It will also help the crisis response team create baseline messaging for your response.

   After you've created a media statement, create key messages, an internal Q&A document and any other necessary communication materials. If you've determined to proactively issue a media statement, via a wire or simply posted to the website, now is that time to do so.

6. **Communicate with employees**
   Employees can be your greatest asset or your strongest opponents during a crisis. Communicate with employees early and equip them with the materials they need to deliver the same consistent messaging.

   Although employees are generally not authorized to speak on behalf of your affiliate, each and every employee is an unofficial spokesperson. Make them cheerleaders.

7. **Communicate with stakeholders**
   It should be a top priority to communicate directly with each stakeholder group. The more personalized the communication the better. But when dealing with large or multiple groups, personal communication is not always possible.

   Communicate via personal phone calls or through formal letters or emails. For situations that impact a large group, post important information like a media statement and steps being taken to resolve an issue to your website.

8. **Communicate with media**
   How to communicate with the media is best determined on a case-by-case basis. There are times when a single press statement is all that is needed or advised. For some situations, taking your story directly to the media is the best plan of action.

NAA is here to help you make this determination.

Barriers to Crisis Communications Success

In a crisis situation, employees, key stakeholders and the public will be watching your organization closely. The following are barriers to successful crisis response:

1. **Lack of empathy**
   A crisis isn't the time to be self-righteous or blame others for the problem. Not showing compassion or empathy for stakeholders or the situation in general will doom your communications, regardless of if you are in the right.

2. **Communication delay**
   With the advent of instant communication via social media, waiting even a few hours to respond to a crisis is too long. You don't need to offer a complete answer to the situation at hand. But you do need to at least acknowledge the situation.

3. **Failure to anticipate the degree of angry response**
   Anyone affected by a crisis will be angry. With social media providing an instant and unfiltered outlet, you will see much more of it now than ever before.

   Don't take it personally or respond in kind. Stick to your messaging and treat each complaint with empathy and respect, no matter how angry it might be.

4. **Lack of coordination among groups within your affiliate or between your affiliate and outside entities**
   A crisis response must be coordinated and delivered with a singular voice. Everyone must be on the same page and remain there for the duration of the crisis. All parties involved should know ahead of time of important dates and times, like when a press release will be distributed or press conference held.

5. **Lack of clarity about the respective roles of key decision makers**
   There is no time in a crisis for forgetting one task or duplicating a second. Have clear delegation of responsibilities.

6. **Failure to communicate quickly and directly with those most affected, especially employees**
   People want to know what's happening. If they don't know the facts, they are likely to speculate. Those rumors often make their way to the public. Give employees as much information as needed to quell any speculation and do so as soon as possible.

7. **Inconsistent messaging**
   Competing or contradictory statements are the quickest way to lose credibility and political capital during a crisis. They undermine trust. This is why it's so important to clearly define messaging at the beginning of a crisis.

8. **Overestimated readiness**
   Are you prepared or do you just think you are? The middle of a crisis is no time to find out that your spokesperson can't speak or that you don't know who your key stakeholders are. Prepare and practice crisis communications.

9. **Insufficient commitment and leadership required to respond quickly, compassionately and conclusively**
   A crisis team must have the authority and the ability to make and implement decisions. They must be savvy enough to do so in the best interest of your affiliate without alienating other stakeholders.

Essentials for Crisis Communications Success

How an affiliate communicates, the tone, timing and message, is directly tied to how victims, stakeholders and the public will perceive you. Effective communication can help to preserve your affiliate's reputation after the crisis. The following are essentials to effective communication during a crisis:

1. **Candor**
   Effective crisis communications is straight and to the point. Don't try to hide facts or paint a picture different from reality. Stick to the facts and to your messaging.

2. **Openness, accessibility and transparency**
   Running and hiding from the problem will not make it go away. It will only make you look worse. Spokespeople must be available and key stakeholders/media members should have access to them in some capacity. Show, don't tell, what you are doing to fix the problem.

3. **Truthfulness**
   Don't lie. It is the media's job to find out the truth, and they are good at their jobs.

4. **Apology**
   If you have something to apologize for, say you're sorry and mean it. A phony apology only adds another crisis to the situation.

5. **Responsiveness**
   Answers don't need to be immediate. But they need to be timely. A simple response of, "We are aware of the situation and are currently investigating," can pacify stakeholders while you work to resolve the issue.

6. **Engagement**
   Get ahead of the story by engaging key stakeholders on your terms. Don't wait for them to come to you. This will help you control the terms of the interaction and show that you care about their concerns.

7. **Clarification and correction**
   Mistakes happen in the course of a crisis. Keep them to a minimum with proper planning and messaging. If someone does misspeak or an incorrect fact is used, make a point to correct it publicly. Own the mistake and move on from there.

Apology Strategies to Avoid During Crisis Response

With all eyes on your affiliate during a crisis situation, key stakeholders and the public will be looking to your affiliate for signs of regret, or for an apology. Although a direct apology is not always necessary, there are certain apology strategies, or deflections, that are important to avoid in these situations. In the end, they can do more damage in an already uncertain situation.

1. **Self-Forgiveness**
   Using the excuse that it's an industry problem or that it could happen to anyone. Right now, it doesn't matter if that's true or not. The public wants someone to take responsibility and shared responsibility with others in the industry won't satisfy that need.

   Examples:
   - It's an industry problem.
   - We're not the only ones.
   - Let's not blow this out of proportion.

2. **Self-Talk**
   Apologizing on the basis that it's a rare incident that won't happen again can lead to loss of trust from the public. Can you guarantee that it won't happen again? Probably not. Do your best to make right the current situation, and you will gain sympathy in the public eye.

   Examples:
   - It's an isolated incident.
   - If we don't do it, someone else will.

3. **Self-Delusion**
   Pointing the finger, or outright denying that your affiliate is at fault. Even if your affiliate is not directly at fault, the public trusts, and in turn sees more favorably, an affiliate that can accept its role in the situation and do everything in its power to reverse the situation.

   Examples:
   - It's not our problem.
   - Its not our fault.

4. **Lying**
   Lying to employees, stakeholders or the public is perhaps one of the most critical mistakes an affiliate can make in a crisis situation. Regaining trust and empathy are primary goals of a crisis response, and when an organization is untruthful, not only is its reputation impacted negatively during the current situation, but future perceptions will also be forever altered.

   Examples:
   - It can't happen again.
   - It hasn't happened before.

Appendix and Checklists

This section provides at-a-glance resources to assist in your public relations efforts. We have included:

- NAA fast facts.
- Talking points to help with messaging.
- NAA social media policy.
- PR checklists.
- Templates for press releases and media alerts.
- Crisis incident response worksheet.

NAA Fast Facts

- NAA was founded in 1939.
- NAA's members represent all facets of the multifamily housing industry: apartment owners, management executives, developers, builders, investors, property managers, leasing consultants, maintenance personnel, suppliers and related business professionals throughout the United States and Canada.
- NAA's mission is to serve the interests of multifamily housing owners, managers, developers and suppliers and maintain a high level of professionalism in the multifamily housing industry to better serve the rental housing needs of the public.
- NAA is a federation of more than 170 state and local affiliates.
- NAA is comprised of over 63,000 members representing more than 7 million apartment homes throughout the United States and Canada.
- Members in good standing of any affiliated association are automatically considered members of NAA and entitled to NAA benefits.
- Doug Culkin has been NAA's President and CEO since 1999.

NAA Messaging Points

On the shift from homeownership to renting:

- One third of Americans rent their homes.
- More people are choosing to rent because apartments offer freedom, flexibility and a diverse set of options to fit their desired lifestyle.
- Today's apartment residents range from young professionals to couples with and without children, and empty nesters who want to downsize. It has become a desired lifestyle for all walks of life.
- In many cases, the care and maintenance of a single family home is no longer desired.
- "The American Dream" is changing. Owning a home is no longer the right—or desired—choice for many. The numbers show that demand for apartments is on the rise.
- According to "The State of the Nation's Housing" report released in June of 2013 by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2012 saw an increase of 1.1 million renter households.
- 2012 also marked the second consecutive year of double-digit percentage increases in multifamily construction.
- According to "The State of the Nation's Housing" report released in June of 2013 by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, it is estimated there could be as many as 7 million new leasing households by 2020.
- Many apartments are being built in an urban core or strategic locations—close to shopping areas, business districts, and rail or transportation systems. This saves professionals time they would have otherwise spent commuting from the suburbs. Millennials, in particular, like these urban areas.
- With one third of Americans leasing their homes, and the number of apartment residents increasing, the demand for quality housing will continue to increase. More Americans will find themselves living a lifestyle more appropriate to their needs and desires.

On rental housing affordability:

- For the first time, more than half of all U.S. renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent, according to the most recent Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies report. This is due, in part, to the numerous regulatory barriers our industry still faces when building new rental housing—specifically affordable housing.
- The apartment sector did not overbuild during the housing boom, and then built nearly nothing for two years after the market crash because no financing was available. The financial collapse virtually shut down new apartment construction. Construction is now increasing, but it still remains below the levels needed to meet rising demand.
- Unnecessary building regulations, outdated zoning codes and general opposition to apartments raise construction costs—and thus the rents for residents—for those apartments that do get built. These must be reduced in order to provide a greater, more affordable supply of apartments.

- There must be greater incentives to invest in existing affordable housing, such as more generous tax breaks for maintenance and improvements or exemption for certain local building code requirements. Cost-effective rehabilitation projects will provide residents with safe and affordable housing that may not otherwise be possible from a new construction standpoint.

- The development of more micro-apartments could increase the affordable supply in high-density, high-cost areas. Many cities and towns have specific zoning laws that include minimum square footage requirements for livable units. Reevaluating these specifications would provide urban residents with more affordable housing options. Micro-apartments are particularly popular among Millennials.

- Rising rents are a temporary situation in a highly cyclical market caused by factors outside the industry's purview. When adjusted for inflation, rents are actually lower than they were 10 years ago, according to Reis and NMHC. America's affordable housing shortage is an income problem. It's not that rental housing has gotten so expensive, but rather that the income of too many renter households is too low to afford rents that the market can reasonably offer.

- NAA and its affiliates are dedicated to providing residents with safe and affordable housing, and look forward to continuing to work with policy-makers at all levels of government on sensible and effective strategies to meet this need.

On housing finance reform:

- The bursting of the housing bubble exposed serious flaws in our nation's housing finance system. Yet those shortcomings were largely confined to the residential home mortgage sector.

- The Government Sponsored Enterprises' (GSEs') (i.e., Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) very successful multifamily programs were not part of the meltdown and have actually generated over $10 billion in net profits to the government since being placed into conservatorship.

- More than just performing well, the GSEs' multifamily programs serve a critical public policy role. Unfortunately, even during normal economic times, private capital alone cannot fully meet the industry's financing needs.

- The GSEs ensure that multifamily capital is available in all markets at all times, so the apartment industry can address the broad range of America's housing needs from coast to coast and everywhere in between.

- NAA urges lawmakers to recognize the unique needs of the multifamily industry and to retain the successful components of the existing multifamily programs in whatever succeeds them.

- We believe the goals of a reformed housing finance system should be to:

  1. Maintain an explicit federal guarantee for multifamily-backed mortgage securities available in all markets at all times;
  2. Ensure that the multifamily sector is treated in a way that recognizes the inherent differences of the multifamily business; and
  3. Retain the successful components of the existing multifamily programs in whatever succeeds them.

On tax reform:

- Lawmakers are calling for reform of the nation's overly complex tax code to foster economic competitiveness and economic growth.

- The apartment industry supports tax reform that promotes economic growth and investment in rental housing without unfairly burdening apartment owners and renters relative to other asset classes.

- Congress should enact pro-growth tax reform that protects the flow-through entities that dominate the apartment industry.

Tax reform legislation must:

1. Protect Flow-Through Entities.
   - The multifamily industry is dominated by "flow-through" entities (e.g., LLCs, partnerships, S Corporations, etc.) instead of publicly held corporations.
   - This means that the company's earnings are passed through to the partners, who pay taxes on their share of the earnings on their individual tax returns.
   - Accordingly, Congress must not reduce corporate tax rates financed by forcing flow-through entities to pay higher taxes by subjecting them to a corporate-level tax or by denying credits and deductions.

2. Maintain Current Tax Treatment of Carried Interest.
   - Certain lawmakers have sought to reign in high-flying hedge fund managers by proposing to eliminate capital gains treatment of a carried interest and taxing it as regular income instead.
   - This proposal would affect all investment partnerships (not just hedge funds), 48% of which are real-estate related.
   - Commercial real estate has used a carried interest structure for several decades, and it is not a "tax loophole."
   - Raising taxes on a carried interest is bad for the entrepreneurs and small businesses that need capital to innovate, grow, build and create jobs.

3. Retain the Deduction for Business Interest.
   - Efforts to prevent companies from over-leveraging are leading to calls to scale back the current deduction for business interest expenses.
   - Unfortunately, reducing this deductibility would greatly increase the cost of debt financing necessary for large-scale projects, curbing development activity.

4. Protect the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).
   - The push for a simplified tax code is threatening this major financing incentive for low-income housing development.
   - Any downsizing of the program would exacerbate the shortage of affordable rental units, which Harvard University estimates to be 5.3 million units.

5. Retain Current Estate Tax Legislation.
   - Policymakers should retain the estate tax compromise contained in the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, which calls for a $5.25 million exemption (indexed for inflation), 40% top rate and retention of stepped-up basis rules.

On disparate impact liability:

- The apartment industry is committed to equal housing opportunity for all without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, handicap or familial status.

- In the 45 years since President Johnson signed the Fair Housing Act into law, instances of overt, intentional discrimination are far less common and more likely to be identified and remedied.

- However, on Feb. 8, 2013, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a final rule that marked a significant expansion of the Fair Housing Act.

- The rule implemented the act's Discriminatory Effects Standard, which established uniform standards for determining when a real estate practice or policy violates the act.

- More important, the final rule also recognized that, as part of the act, liability exists under the "disparate impact" theory.

- Disparate impact is when a business practice or policy statistically demonstrates a discriminatory effect, regardless of whether the discrimination was intentional. HUD's rule establishes a three part burden-shifting test to determine liability for discrimination:

  1. The charging party has the burden of proving a challenged practice caused or predictably will cause a discriminatory effect.
  2. The respondent then has the burden of proving that the challenged practice can be supported by a legally sufficient justification.
  3. The burden shifts back to the plaintiff to prove there are other practices that can be employed that have a less discriminatory effect.

- At issue for apartment owners and managers is that under the new rule, seemingly neutral and common business policies, such as occupancy limitations, criminal background screening and Section 8 voucher policies, among others, could trigger discrimination claims despite no intention of singling out a particular group for adverse treatment.

- The HUD disparate impact rule is unworkable and puts housing providers at risk of inadvertently violating the Fair Housing Act for legitimate multifamily practices that ensure safe and decent housing for residents.

On immigration reform:

- Immigration policy directly impacts the apartment industry.

- It's a significant driver of growth in rental housing demand.

- Immigrants also play an important role in building and operating apartment communities, and they make up 22 percent of the construction workforce.

- Without a robust labor force that includes immigrants, the apartment industry's ability to meet the growing demands for rental housing could be compromised.

- Immigration policy is a federal responsibility with national security and economic implications.

- In the absence of congressional action, state and local immigration laws have created a burdensome patchwork of compliance obligations for apartment companies.

- Comprehensive immigration reform legislation should provide for:

  1. Strengthened interior and border enforcement;
  2. An improved employment eligibility verification system;
  3. Amply sized temporary programs; and
  4. A practical process for earned legalization.

- Temporary visa programs, such as the H-2B Program, should be designed to meet labor demands when local labor markets are inadequate—without capping participation by individual industries.

- The E-Verify employment verification system must be accurate, efficient and protect employers against liability when acting in good faith.

- NMHC/NAA are encouraged by the Standards for Immigration Reform, announced by House Republican leaders, for recognizing the critical importance of immigration reform to our nation.

- We urge senators to continue to support the components of S. 744, bipartisan, comprehensive Senate immigration legislation and remove the arbitrary cap on temporary work visas for construction.

NAA Policy on Social Media and Other Public Internet Communications

NAA believes social networking can be a valuable tool and acknowledges that it is one of the fastest growing new uses for the Web. We recognize that these sites are being utilized by NAA employees and provide this policy to remain current with evolving technologies tools. The term "social media" encompasses all forms of communication through which users create profiles, share information, ideas, personal messages and other content. Examples of popular social media sites include but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Yelp and personal blogs or websites. NAA's social media policy includes rules and guidelines for company-authorized social networking and personal social networking and applies to all levels of the organization. **The bottom line—employees need to follow the same company standards online as offline.**

Procedures

1. **Rules applicable to all social media use, including both authorized social networking and personal social networking:**
   a. Privacy does not exist in the world of social media: Assume your thoughts are in the public domain and can be published or discussed in all forms of media. Have no expectation of privacy. An employee who is unsure whether something is appropriate to post should contact Human Resources prior to posting.
   b. Protect confidential information: Do not post confidential or proprietary information about NAA on any platform. This includes information about finances, personnel matters, services, current, former, or potential members/customers, company strategy or any other information that has not been publicly released by NAA. Sharing this information, even unintentionally, may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, or legal action against the employee or NAA.
   c. Protect copyright: Employees cannot post any images or other content from another source unless they are sure they are in the public domain or the owner has granted permission.

2. **Authorized Social Networking (social networking in an official capacity for NAA):** For some employees, completion of their job duties requires the use of social networking.
   a. All authorized social networking must be done from an official NAA account on the site on which it's taking place. Employees should not share the login information for these accounts with staff who are not authorized by their job responsibilities or supervisors to perform authorized social networking.
   b. Employees representing NAA have a responsibility to be truthful, accurate and accountable and to always reflect the NAA brand and NAA values. Do not engage in name calling or other behavior that will negatively reflect on NAA's reputation or could potentially damage NAA's business relationships.

c. Content should be reviewed for grammatical and spelling errors prior to posting.

d. Any errors brought to NAA's or the employee's attention should be corrected promptly.

3. **Personal Social Networking**:
Employees' use of personal social networking should at no time and in no way interfere with the execution or quality of job responsibilities.

a. Employees are prohibited from using NAA logos, trademarks, photographs, images or other copyrighted or intellectual property belonging to NAA.

b. If you choose to identify yourself as an employee of NAA, please be aware that some may view you as a spokesperson for NAA. Because of this, you should state that your views expressed are your own, and not those of the company, nor of any person or organization affiliated or conducting business with NAA. A sample of an appropriate disclaimer is: "The comments that follow this disclaimer are mine and mine alone and do not reflect the opinions of NAA, nor should they be construed as such." Those with leadership responsibilities, by virtue of their position, must be especially conscientious of this.

c. Please respect the privacy of co-workers and the opinions of others. Before sharing a comment, post, picture or video about another employee or customer, consent is required.

Privacy and Monitoring:

a. Employees should have no expectation of privacy in information they post to social networking or other Internet sites, whether the sites are publicly available or under various privacy settings.

b. While NAA generally will not seek to learn the content of an employee's personal Internet postings, it does reserve the right to investigate an employee's postings using any legal means, as may be necessary to ensure enforcement of company policies, to investigate any possible legal violations, to ensure safety and security of its employees and visitors, or to investigate other misconduct. Company managers may also learn of inappropriate information posted by employees from other employees, or because they inadvertently learned of those postings through other means. NAA will take appropriate action when it learns of violations of this policy or other company policies (such as but not limited to the harassment or ethics policy) taking place on social networking sites.

c. NAA reserves the right to access any company computer or other communication devices owned by the company to monitor user activity, including social networking.

d. Remember that all employees are subject to NAA's IT Policy while using a company computer or other company-owned communication devices.

These guidelines will continue to evolve as the social media landscape changes and nothing in this policy should be construed to prohibit employees from engaging in social media. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, and/or legal action against the employee or organization.

CHECKLISTS

What makes your news newsworthy?

- ☐ Timely
- ☐ Local
- ☐ Significant
- ☐ Sensational
- ☐ Emotional
- ☐ Weird/Out of the ordinary

Do you have proper collateral ready for media?

- ☐ Headshots
- ☐ Press bios
- ☐ Logos
- ☐ Stock photos

Are you pitching the correct outlet?

- ☐ Outlet is local
- ☐ It has an audience you want to influence
- ☐ Outlet is known for quality and honest coverage
- ☐ Outlet is not pay-to-play

Are you pitching the right reporter/editor?

- ☐ Do they cover the area/topic of your news?
- ☐ Are they local?
- ☐ Are they the proper type of contact (reporter vs. editor)?
- ☐ Is your news relevant to them?

Is your press release finalized with all the needed information?

- ☐ Headline
- ☐ Subhead
- ☐ Dateline
- ☐ Intro paragraph
- ☐ Body
- ☐ Quotes
- ☐ Boilerplate
- ☐ Contact information
- ☐ Hyperlinks
- ☐ SEO keywords

Is your media alert finalized with all the needed information?

- ☐ Contact information
- ☐ Headline
- ☐ Four "W"s
- ☐ Outlet-specific information
- ☐ Other information

When to say "No" to a press request?

- ☐ Negative story about your affiliate
- ☐ Conflict of interest
- ☐ Not in your area of expertise
- ☐ Not relevant to organizational goals

For email interviews:

- ☐ Attribute quotes
- ☐ Write in sound bites
- ☐ Triple check grammar, spelling, punctuation
- ☐ Include everything in body of email (NO ATTACHMENTS!)
- ☐ Offer images/other collateral

For phone interviews:

- ☐ Take your time before answering
- ☐ Prepare
- ☐ Practice
- ☐ Have no distractions
- ☐ Stand up
- ☐ Smile
- ☐ Block and bridge

For TV interviews:

- ☐ Dress properly
- ☐ Make eye contact with interviewer
- ☐ Ignore the camera
- ☐ Speak steadily
- ☐ Slow your gestures
- ☐ Listen
- ☐ Block and bridge
- ☐ Give producer name, title, affiliate name

Have you extended the life of your coverage?

- ☐ Send your coverage to NAA
- ☐ Share in social media
- ☐ Post to "News" section of your website
- ☐ Write a blog
- ☐ Put out a press release
- ☐ Add to email signature
- ☐ Email to key contacts
- ☐ Thank the reporter
- ☐ Order reprints
- ☐ Interact
- ☐ Create videos about the coverage

Is your pitch good?

- ☐ It's newsworthy
- ☐ It's not just about you
- ☐ It's relevant
- ☐ It's clear and concise
- ☐ It avoids jargon
- ☐ It's short
- ☐ It's in the appropriate format

Are you ready for a crisis?

- ☐ Identify a crisis team
- ☐ Make an incidence response questionnaire
- ☐ Identify the spokesperson
- ☐ Get your messaging ready
- ☐ Communicate with your employees
- ☐ Communicate with stakeholders
- ☐ Communicate with the media
- ☐ Avoid crisis communication barriers

Social media Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- ☐ Make it social
- ☐ Make it interesting
- ☐ Make it visual
- ☐ Make it relevant to the platform
- ☐ Make it timely
- ☐ Stay on message
- ☐ Take conflict offline
- ☐ Encourage staff/members to share

Don't:

- ☐ Ramble
- ☐ Feed the trolls
- ☐ Whitewash dissent
- ☐ Act unprofessionally

Press Release Template

News Release

Contact: First Last, XXX/XXX-XXXX or
email@naahq.org

HEADLINE, CENTERED 18-22 pt. Arial Bold

CITY, State abbv. / DATE – Arial 10 pt. You must have a dateline and date.

###

The National Apartment Association (NAA), currently celebrating its 75th anniversary, is America's leading advocate for quality rental housing. NAA's mission is to serve the interests of multifamily housing owners, managers, developers and suppliers and maintain a high level of professionalism in the multifamily housing industry to better serve the rental housing needs of the public. As a federation of more than 170 state and local affiliates, NAA is comprised of over 63,000 members representing more than 7 million apartment homes throughout the United States and Canada. For more information go to www.naahq.org.

*__Note__: Logo and "News Release" are in document header. Boilerplate is in document footer.

Media Alert Template

Media Alert

Contact: First Last, XXX/XXX-XXXX or email@naahq.org

HEADLINE, CENTERED 18-22 pt. Arial Bold

Arial 10 pt.

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Parking:

Timing:

Footage:

Interviews:

***** SPECIAL MEDIA NOTIFICATION *****

Story angles:

*__Note__: Logo and "Media Alert" are in document header.

Crisis Incident Response Worksheet

Crisis Incident Response Worksheet

Date:_____
Company Name:_____
Company Contact:_____

Problem: Describe clearly, directly and briefly

_____
_____
_____
_____

Urgency: Why now

_____
_____
_____
_____

Outcome Desired: What's the goal

_____
_____
_____
_____

Solution Options:

1. _____
_____

2. _____
_____

3. _____
_____

Best Option Recommendation:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Reasons | Consequences:

_____
_____
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_____

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