



Media Tips for Green Candidates

The following 'Media Tips' were prepared by the Media Committee for Green candidates, campaign media directors, campaign managers, and all Greens working on campaigns or interested in knowing how to use the media to promote a Green candidate or a local or state Green Party.

Please forward the Media Tips far and wide among Green campaigns and Green Parties.

Write back to us if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions.

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TIPS ON HANDLING MEDIA

Setting up a functioning media operation is essential for any Green candidate. Using the media right will give your campaign a strong public presence. For a lot of the public, a candidate doesn't really exist until they see the candidate's name in the newspaper or on TV. But if the media doesn't know you exist, you might as well not bother running.

Get someone to be your media director. Candidates should not be their own media directors, just as they should not be their own campaign managers, volunteer coordinators, treasurers, etc.

Candidates running for local-level office in the same area can share a single media director, if one person is willing to do media work for multiple candidates. Local Green Parties can help their candidates by having party media directors also function as campaign media directors. If a candidate is handling his or her own media work, all the tips below are still relevant.

Media directors should compile lists of local reporters & editors (with their phone numbers & e-mail addresses). They should also develop a campaign 'relationship' with reporters & editors, which means becoming familiar enough to be able to call them about the campaign, and they'll know who & what you're talking about right away.

WEB SITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Set up a web site and place the address prominently in all party literature & paraphernalia, including press releases, buttons, posters, flyers, bumper stickers, etc.

Use social media like Facebook and Twitter in conjunction with your campaign web site. Set up a Facebook page for your campaign. When you have announcements, press releases, videos, and campaign news, post them on your Facebook page and use Twitter to promote them. Be interactive. Get people involved in discussion. Engagement, rather than passivity is key to getting people to echo your voice. Likes, Shares, ReTweets, Mentions, use of HashTags are critical for outreach and the public's ability to respond to you. You can take advantage of "home bound" volunteers this way as well. Provoking responses to your posts. Learn how to target in local issues.

When sending out press releases, campaign announcements, and other messages on e-mail, always write out the full address so it shows up as a hyperlink that any reader can click on. E.g., use <http://www.Green4Congress.org> instead of www.Green4Congress.org or [Green4Congress.org](http://www.Green4Congress.org)

On the web site, have all the contact information, especially phone number & e-mail address for your media director, on your home page. Don't make reporters have to search your web site for this information.

Have a professional looking head shot, preferably taken by a professional or experienced photographer. Don't use a photo by a friend in your living room. Copies should be included in all press packets. Upload a jpg of your photo to the home page of your web site, so any reporter visiting the site can easily download it for publication.

Don't place your entire campaign platform on your web site home page or social media sites (or on campaign literature). Instead, choose and summarize three of your most prominent campaign issues. Reporters, like most visitors to your sites, won't have the patience to read through an entire platform or 12 bullet points. The home page should be dynamic, with campaign updates and video clips, so people keep coming back.

Use your web site to gather information and raise money, with a donation button, volunteer sign-up button, and e-mail list sign-up button. These should be prominent on your home page. E-mail sign-up, which is not the same as volunteer sign-up, can help spread the word about your campaign without committing people to do volunteer work. You'll want a large list of people to send e-mail blasts about the campaign, which might lead to more volunteers or donors. It can also be used for the GOTV ("Get Out The Vote") effort..

Remember that web sites, like e-mail, don't reach everyone inside or outside the Green Party. The Internet is still a luxury for some people, including some Green Party members, who can't afford a computer and an Internet account. Look for ways to ensure that your supporters who aren't online receive all your literature and campaign updates. Suggestion: set up a 'buddy system', pairing Greens who are on line with people who aren't, with the online Green printing out information for those not on a computer.

Post videos of the candidate on the site, including one or two really good ones on the home page. Set up a video page. The Media Committee can provide advice and assistance on video clips, viral video marketing over the Internet, public access TV, and other important and effective kinds of outreach to the media and the public upon request.

MEDIA RELEASES

Make sure the candidates' name, office he or she is seeking, location, contact information, and web site are at the top of every release. The campaign media director's name, phone number, and e-mail address should also be listed as a contact.

Releases are NOT op-ed columns, position papers, manifestos, or graduate dissertations. They are short, concise announcements about the candidate, a position taken by the candidate, or a campaign action or event.

The chief topic of every release is the candidate. Don't write a release on rent control or recycling, write a press release on the candidate's position on rent control or recycling. The candidate's name needs to be in the e-mail subject line, the heading, and in the first line of the first paragraph.

For a more effective press release, send out a video news release (VNR), with a video clip of the candidate speaking: see more under the 'Video' heading below. Nearly every news print publication has online editions that post video clips. Here's an example: <http://multivu.prnewswire.com/mnr/prne/iep/42434/>

Quotes: Have at least one quote from the candidate in every release. The quote should be 'quotable' -- a really good line or two that a reporter or editor can lift from the release and use in a news article.

Use releases to emphasize what distinguishes your candidate from all the others. If other candidates also support recycling or rent control, show what makes your support for recycling or rent control different and more significant than their support. Stand out from the crowd.

Don't send out too many releases. If you send one out every day, or more than one a day, it looks like spam. One or two a week is good. (If the candidate is the focus of an ongoing news story, then more is fine.)

Check and recheck all facts, grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. in the release. Don't send out sloppy work.

Distribution: Distribute releases not only to major newspapers, TV & radio stations, news web sites, etc. in your area, but also to small publications, specialty & niche media, on-line community bulletin boards, etc. Sometimes the small publications will give you coverage when the major media ignore you. Don't hesitate to send releases to conservative publications. Treat all reporters as 'friends', and remember that (whatever the reason) sometimes conservative publications give Greens publicity when progressive & liberal publications won't. Don't send attachments to reporters, they won't open them.

Distribute your releases to lists of Green supporters & campaign volunteers, too, and encourage them to forward all your releases (as well as campaign announcements) far & wide.

Follow-up calls: After you've sent out a release announcing a campaign event, action, or press conference, call reporters & editors to talk about the event and answer questions they might have. It's not necessary to call reporters for all releases, but if it's a newsworthy event, you want to be sure they know about it. Make sure you call the right news desk. A reporter whose beat is national news isn't interested in a city council campaign. Use your judgement -- if you call a reporter too often, it'll seem like harassment.

Pitching stories: You can also call reporters & editors to pitch stories that they might want to cover, such as a rally at which the candidate is speaking, a candidate's unique personal involvement on a particular issue, a project the candidate is working on -- whatever might be newsworthy. Try to think like a journalist: what you might consider newsworthy might not be what most reporters consider newsworthy. Remember that, as important as the Green Party is to all of us, reporters are usually more interested in candidates than in political parties. Make sure you don't give an 'exclusive' to more than one reporter.

Lead time: Make sure you pay attention to 'lead time', i.e., you get your press release, ads, announcements, etc. out to the press early enough. For a press conference or other newsworthy event, I recommend sending out at least two releases: (1) 7-9 days before the event; (2) 1-2 days before the event.

Don't send out releases on Friday or Saturday or early Sunday, except in rare circumstances (breaking newsworthy story; ongoing story in which the candidate is already getting lots of coverage). It's OK to issue a release late on Sunday with a Monday date on it.

Set up a release page on the campaign web site, where all releases are archived. Do not place your releases on the web site in pdf format, which discourages reporters and other visitors from clicking on the link.

Press clippings: Keep 'clippings' of media coverage of your campaign, post or link positive articles about the campaign on your web site and forward them to your supporters.

PRESS CONFERENCES

Hold press conferences when you have news to announce -- something really newsworthy, not just an announcement you support recycling or rent control. Reporters prefer not to attend press conferences if they don't have to. Some good reasons for press conferences: announcement of your campaign; you organized 300 tenants to march on City Hall for rent control; you've filed a lawsuit against an unfair election rule in your district. If you can make the press conference visually interesting (unique location; people in unusual costumes; catchy graphics or props on display), let reporters know, especially TV reporters, who look for stimulating images to fill up newscasts.

Campaign announcement press conferences should focus exclusively (or nearly so) on the candidate, not on other people. Don't talk about your competition, talk about yourself. Make sure the issue to be addressed at the press conference is relevant -- city council candidates shouldn't talk about the Middle East; school board candidates shouldn't talk about global warming.

Tips for the press conference program: Have someone else briefly introduce the candidate, then let the candidate talk for a few minutes. Keep everything as concise as possible. Two minutes of really good, memorable, quotable lines is better than a 15 minute lecture. Be specific, not abstract, and be relevant to the state or town in which you're running. Don't recite your platform -- reporters aren't interested in laundry lists, which is what platforms sound like when read aloud. Be personal -- tell a story about how health care policies have affected you. Don't hesitate to talk about mundane neighborhood issues that are nevertheless important to voters, like constituent services, which often make or break a campaign. Say something funny. Make eye contact with your audience. Speak out, don't mumble. Set aside politics for a moment and study what made Ronald Reagan & Bill Clinton effective speakers. Practice your speech and hold a press conference rehearsal.

Follow the formal presentation with a Q&A period for reporters. Know your material and prepare for challenges. When answering reporters' questions, frame answers to include key points whenever possible. Use complete sentences so that their quote will make sense when edited. If you don't know something, say "I don't know -- I'll get back to you on that" instead of fumbling for words. (Make sure you get back to them.)

Appearance: Look professional -- dress conservatively (jacket & tie for men, suit or dress for women). Don't wear jeans or other casual clothing. If you don't dress up, people (especially the media) will not consider you a credible candidate. Dress for the office you're running for, so voters can imagine you in that position. Don't give anyone an excuse not to take you seriously. (Exceptions: certain on-site press conferences, e.g., if you hold a press conference at a landfill or a community garden where you're helping out.)

Press kits: Have a 'press kit' available for reporters. It should contain an introductory statement with a list of talking points on the issue addressed in the press conference; a couple of recent press releases; a bio of the candidate; and (if it's a campaign kick-off press conference) the candidate's photo.

Have a business card to give reporters who meet you. The card should have basic information: your full name and the office you're running for, phone, e-mail address, campaign web site, social media site. It's easier for you to give them a card than for them to write all such information down.

Mention your campaign web site and, if possible, the Green Party web site (gp.org) and your state party's site. Having a banner behind the candidate with the candidate's name, the party's name, and/or web site address will help too.

Remember that a press conference is for the media, campaign rallies are for supporters. Only reporters should be allowed to ask questions at a press conference. Your supporters, if they attend the press conference, should not applaud or ask questions.

Have someone on hand to record the press conference on video, then promote it widely online. Make the video look as professional as possible, with clear sound and image. Get it posted as soon as possible on your campaign web site and encourage your local and state Green Party to post it on their sites too. Promote the press conference video through Facebook and other social media.

VIDEO

One of the best ways to reach people is through online video. You can produce something simple, like a three-minute video of you introducing yourself as a candidate and discussing an important local issue. Or you can create something more elaborate, with flashy graphics, music, lots of editing, other people speaking, etc., depending on your resources. If you produce a truly imaginative video clip that people want to watch, you might 'go viral' and reach thousands of people. Seeing you on video will make you more 'real' to people than just seeing your name or your photo. Along with other sites, post the video on your campaign home page. See this video of a workshop conducted by Wilton Voght, "How to be an effective media activist": <http://vimeo.com/28102307>

Make sure the video shows you in the best light. Look your best and use good lighting. At the bottom of the screen have your name, the office you're running for, and your campaign web site link. Show some text: the main points you want to make, a few soundbytes, using as few words as possible. Make it easy for people to enjoy watching you, remember you, and learn more about you and your campaign.

Place your video clip on the campaign home page and send an announcement about it to other Greens, all your friends & neighbors, and some reporters. Urge them to forward the link to their own friends, neighbors, etc. Use Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. You want as many people as possible to see your video. Send it to local, state, & national Green Party lists, too.

Use Livestream to broadcast forums, discussions, and other events. The Green Party has its own Livestream channel and has aired numerous shows, which are archived on the site: <http://www.livestream.com/greenpartyus>

The Media Committee and other Greens who do video work can assist you. See the online resources below.

MORE SUGGESTIONS

The campaign media director should work on setting up interviews with reporters & editors for the candidate. This is especially important to introduce candidates to newspapers that are considering endorsements. If a face-to-face meeting with an editor or reporter can be arranged, it's more likely to warm them up to the candidate.

Good way to get the candidate's name in the news: guest op-ed columns, articles, letters to the editor written by the candidate on timely topics. The media director can help submit them. If major newspapers refuse to publish them, then submit them to smaller community papers. You'll reach hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands of people.

Open a Skype account (www.skype.com) and use it for meetings with reporters and others when face-to-face isn't possible. It can be valuable for interviews, call-ins to fundraisers, and meetings with campaign staff and volunteers.

Get your information into newspapers, web sites, etc. that provide a candidates' page during election years. Here are two good web sites that reporters and voters visit for information about candidates & elected officials: Vote-USA (<http://www.vote-usa.org>); Project Vote Smart (<http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>). Your campaign should also be listed on the Green Party's candidate pages (<http://www.gp.org/elections.shtml> / <http://www.greens.org/elections>).

Put the candidate's name on Google Alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) and respond online to articles and blogs as soon as they get published, so you can offer good information about your candidate before others post their responses.

Remember that politics is theater. Look for 'theatrical' events -- public occasions, rallies, demos, etc. that help define your campaign. Do something daring & imaginative and create your own media events. In Washington, DC, members of the DC Statehood Green Party responded to the Washington Post's refusal to cover its local candidates in 2002 by holding a press conference on the sidewalk in front of the Post's front door. One DC candidate, Adam Eidinger, suspended a giant banner from overpasses over local freeways.

RESOURCES

Media Committee of the Green Party:

<http://www.gp.org/committees/media>

<http://www.gp.org/press.html>

The national Media Committee can answer questions and provide all sorts of help for Green campaigns. We also have an 'A-V' (audio-video) subcommittee that can provide help for Greens preparing video for broadcast over the airwaves, cable, and Internet, radio ads, and related forms of media. Contact the Media Committee co-chairs, Starlene Rankin (starlene@gp.org) and Scott McLarty (mclarty@greens.org). Visit also the Green Party's Coordinated Campaign Committee page (<http://www.gp.org/committees/campaign>), which has lots of valuable resources for candidates.

MSM Toolkit: Progressive Summit Media Workshop and other guides <https://docs.google.com/#folders/0B1sc8Jds3vSDMjEyNGQxNjEtNWFhYy00NDhLWjkYzUtZDg5ZTNIYmEiOWU2>

Media & Publicity for Green candidates, courtesy of the Green Party of California: <http://www.cagreens.org/>

-- click on Organizing Resources for Greens <http://cagreens.org/grow/> -- click on Media & Publicity

<http://cagreens.org/grow/media.html>

"Dare to Win", article by Phil Tajitsu Nash, CommonDreams.org, March 22, 2006

<http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0322-25.htm>

Using the Internet for political campaigns:

Winning Campaigns Online: Strategies for Candidates and Causes. Book by by Emilienne Ireland & Phil Tajitsu Nash. Science Writers Pr; 2nd edition, 2001. Web site: <http://www.campaignadvantage.com>

Vimeo Video School: video education site with video tutorials for those who want to advance their shooting and editing skills to advance the Green Party's media presence <http://vimeo.com/videoschool>

Campaign Creator: <http://www.campaigncreator.org>

Don't Think of an Elephant! Know your values and frame the debate. Book by George Lakoff (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004).

Toastmasters: site for improving your communications skills, especially public speaking
<http://www.toastmasters.org>

The Candidate's Handbook
<http://www.candidateshandbook.com>

Notes

