

Public Relations: Ten Commandments Your Credit Union Needs to Know

It has often been said that any publicity, positive or negative, is good publicity. Many people debate that statement, but anyway you look at it, publicity or public relations is a must in today's credit union environment.

Public relations, the management function that creates, develops and carries out policies and programs to influence public opinion or public reaction about an idea, a product, or an organization, encompasses many areas within your credit union. Areas include advertising, publicity, promotional activities and press contact. Public relations activities can assist a credit union by building prestige for an individual or a group, promote products and cope successfully with many problems.

In the battle for public opinion the media plays a critical role. Credit Union Leagues works closely with the media to spread the good news about credit unions and to set the record straight promptly when the reports are in error. But individual credit unions also need to promote the credit union difference by utilizing its strength through the support of the people and by communicating effectively with the media. Below are the 10 Commandments for good media relations that can assist a credit union when it comes to the proper appeals.

10 Commandments for Good Media Relations

1. **Honesty:** "Thou shall tell the truth." Say what you mean clearly and honestly.
2. **Integrity:** "Thou shall be fair." Treat different members of the media equally. Be nice and fair. Don't hide anything.
3. **Immediacy:** "Thou shall respond quickly." Respond to the press now. If you wait too long, they'll slap you with a "no comment" after your name or move on to the next source — a bank, perhaps.
4. **Accessibility:** "Thou shall not build walls." Make the job of the press easy and give them access to the whole story, including experts for comment when prudent.
5. **Deadlines:** "Thou shall not procrastinate." Know reporters' deadlines and respect them.
6. **Knowledge:** "Thou shall do thy homework." Communicators responsible for media relations must know their organization and industry inside and out. If you don't know the answer, don't guess. Dig it up and get it to the reporter ASAP.
7. **Proactivity:** "Thou shall get out in front as often as possible." To develop better relations with the press, seek them out and get to know their needs and priorities.
8. **Creativity:** "Thou shall grab the media's attention." A unique idea or approach to a story tends to garner more favor with newsmen than stories told in a way that readers find boring.
9. **Interactivity:** "Thou shall interact formally and informally with the media." Media relations work best when they are developed through face-to-face personal communication.
10. **Consistency:** "Thou shall be consistently persistent." Limit messages but be truthful, understandable, appropriate and acceptable.