

Group Project: The Media Event

Media events or conferences are held when firms have an announcement of great, widespread interest, and it is efficient to notify all members of the media at one time. When a media event or press conference is called, members of the media can unquestionably presume that the news or subject or area of interest is of a critical nature. By holding a media event, members of the media (a) have access to those major players from the firm who are directly involved in a specific area of interest, (b) benefit from hearing the answers to other reporters' questions, and (c) are not alienated due to any "scoops" uncovered by a firm's "favored few" reporters.

Media events can be staged as a classroom group activity in any course. Students can conduct research on a specific topic then appear as an expert in that area, such as an historical figure explaining an action taken in the past, a scientist explaining a new discovery, a business executive announcing a new venture, a sport marketer introducing a new promotion, a teacher explaining a new curriculum, and numerous other scenarios.

Media Events and Conferences should be structured according to the typical rules of the trade. For this exercise, student groups must have the following:

- A media manager or press officer as the host who welcomes the members of the media (i.e., for this assignment, the members of the media are the class members), introduces the purpose of the media event/press conference, and acts as the official presider for the sponsoring organization.
- The news topic or subject or area of interest is the reason the event/conference was planned and called (i.e., the items to be explained and discussed). The news or subject or area of interest can be anything related to course content. The instructor should approve the topic of the media event.
- A spokesperson (i.e., the star of the show) who will answer the questions posed by the members of the media.
- The members of the media -- members of the class, all of whom will ask questions of the spokesperson and, if appropriate, of the media manager/press officer.

The ideal class time duration for media events/press conferences is approximately 15 minutes. Media events can be held at any time during the semester during a regularly scheduled class time.

The media manager/press officer and spokesperson(s) will need to completely study the chosen news topic or subject or area of interest, and appear as experts at the media event. The members of the media will also have to study the news topic or subject or area of interest, so they will be able to ask informed questions. Each member of the media (i.e., each class member) must have at least two questions to ask. Everyone (i.e., the media manager/press officer, spokesperson, and the members of the media) must be well versed in the news topic or subject or area of interest.

Furthermore, the media manager/press officer and spokesperson should anticipate the questions and have their responses planned.

Media managers/press officers “plant” one or two questions with the members of the media by alerting them to certain issues that they might want to address. Further, spokespersons are then instructed to call on those media “plants” either first, last, or when in trouble during questioning. Therefore, a minimal amount of planted questions is acceptable.

The media manager/press officer and spokesperson must write a press release to be distributed at least one class period prior to the media event. The press release and subsequent press conference are worth a combined percentage of the final grade in the course.

Each member of the media must write a one-page story about the news or subject or area of interest for one of the events/conferences, to be submitted during the class period immediately following the event/conference selected. The news story is worth a certain percentage of the final grade in the course.

The following WWW site offers hints on a professionally administered media event/news conference: < <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/pressoffice/conferences.htm#before>> The U. S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs produced and maintains this site. The site is comprehensive and instructive, and outlines important information about what to do before, during, and after an event/conference, and also outlines additional information such as the purpose of a press office, the duties of a press officer, how to write communications plans and devise a media plan, and numerous other pieces of good advice.