

How to make your PR photos work

One of the most effective tools for getting positive news coverage is the still photograph.

Whether aimed at community newspapers, or the larger dailies, Public Relations (PR) photos that get picked-up by publications can powerfully convey your organization's message. But there is a real art and science to the news photo.

Ron Welch is General Manager of CPimages, (www.cpimages.ca) a division of The Canadian Press, one of Canada's prime news gathering and dissemination services. Mr. Welch says "editors know the value of good pictures – they draw readers' attention, they sell papers and they can make or break your chances of getting your point across."

Welch, who has been in the photo business for 23 years, offers 10 tips to help communicators get the best out of their news photo.

1. Hire a photographer with editorial experience – they understand what photo editors are looking for and will deliver them in the correct digital format, colour corrected and ready to go.
2. Good photos are new and in some way unusual.
3. A good photo shows action the instant it happens.
4. Strong photos portray people and appeal to the emotions.
5. They always relate to some important person, event or place.
6. The photo should wrap-up a story and provide an overall view of it.
7. Remember context – excellent news photos tie in with a current story, the season, the weather, a fad.
8. Large empty spaces should always be avoided in news photos – the entire frame should contain useful information.
9. Stand-up group shots, unless filled with VIPs, don't work.
10. The digital format of choice is an 8X10, 300 dpi JPEG.

PR photos can be distributed in a number of ways – through paid wire services such as CCNMatthews and directly to photo editors via e-mail. The latter distribution tactic should not be overlooked, because some community newspapers and smaller dailies do not subscribe to paid wire services, and they tend to be heavy users of photos generated by PR, especially of local events or people. Captions under 50 words please!