

Promoting the Pillars of the Community

**Working with the news media
to promote your bank**

*A media kit for members developed by
the Texas Bankers Association*



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How to make your bank shine

Banks are the pillars of the community. They pitch in time, money and knowledge to ensure their communities are successful. Many times, however, their good deeds go unnoticed. One of the best ways to promote your bank and the industry is to engage the assistance of the news media.

Just like everything else, there are right ways and wrong ways to deal with the news media. Members of the news media are just like anyone else: their jobs depend on giving their customers what they want, which in their case is providing readers with news they want to read, hear or view. Although some people think the news media only focus on negative news, that is not usually the case. They are interested in heartwarming, human interest stories as well.

Bankers, especially those in smaller communities, have a perfect opportunity to establish relationships with reporters in their areas. But, even in larger communities, it's important to find out who covers the banking beat for your newspaper and get to know him or her.

The following media kit is intended as a guide to help bankers establish relationships with reporters in their communities in order to generate positive publicity for their banks and industry.



TexasBankers
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One Industry. One Vision. One Voice.

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How to conduct a successful interview

Designate a spokesperson(s) for your bank. Make it a bank policy that only these persons may speak to the press. This is very important in the event of a crisis, such as a bank robbery. You don't want a frightened teller talking to the news media.

Establish control over the interview. Ask questions. Find out what the reporter is focusing on and do your homework. Do not agree to an interview time unless you are able to prepare.

Be personable. Learn the reporter's name, establish eye contact, smile and try to relax.

Get your message across. Identify two or three points that you want stressed, and stick to this message.

Don't ramble. Answer the questions succinctly and accurately, but don't add extra verbiage. When you do, you may slip up and give too much information or you risk your message being diluted.

Don't be afraid of pauses. Reporters intentionally allow for pauses so you'll keep talking and, hopefully, divulge information you may not have intended to give.

NEVER EVER speak off the record. Although most reporters will honor a request to keep information "off the record," many will not.

Have fact sheets available for technical responses. This helps ensure accuracy.

Use soundbites — short, concise phrases — to carry your message.

Avoid "no comment" responses as they can have unintended meaning or it may appear that you are trying to hide something. Instead, tell the reporter why you won't discuss the matter or answer questions: "This is a legal issue, and my attorneys have advised me not to comment." Or, "This is a personnel matter; we don't discuss personnel issues in public."

If you don't know the answer, state that. Offer to find out or refer the reporter to another source, but don't answer a question with an incorrect answer.

Stay positive. Smile. Don't allow yourself to get upset.

Don't get too technical. Use words the public and reporter will understand.

Television tips

Being interviewed by a television reporter is more challenging than giving a newspaper or magazine interview. People tend to get nervous when a camera is rolling. For that reason it is extremely important to try and relax and practice in front of a mirror. Even better, have someone at your bank tape a mock interview with a camcorder, if possible. It is always good to have someone anticipate possible questions, so you can rehearse prior to the interview.

In addition, you'll find that a 30-minute interview will be reduced to just a couple of minutes, so it is extremely important that you stick to your message.

1. **Project a professional appearance.** Dress professionally, sit up straight and look confident.
2. **Establish a framework for the interview.** Ask the reporter what questions he/she will ask so you are not caught off guard and can do research ahead of time.
3. **Brief the reporter.** Give the reporter some background for the story. Feel free to hand out fact sheets. Give the reporter your business card so your name, title and bank are spelled correctly.
4. **Really focus on soundbites.** The reporter and/or editor are going to be looking for soundbites during the editing stage. Make sure your message is easy to find.
5. **Look at the reporter.** Try not to look at the photographer.
6. **Relax.** Practice smiling, but don't overdo it. Above all, try to look comfortable and don't talk too fast. This is where practice really helps.
7. **Do-overs.** If you lose your concentration or make a mistake, ask the reporter to start over. Sometimes it's easy to ramble if you are nervous.
8. **Control the setting, if possible.** If you feel comfortable in your office, and the lighting is good, ask to film there.
9. **Television reporters are on tight schedules.** If you make an appointment, try to keep it.

Establishing relationships

As in the government relations arena, relationships are the key to success with the news media. In smaller communities, establish relationships with the editor and some key reporters. In larger communities, take the banking editor or business reporters to lunch. Some other ideas for establishing relationships:

1. Invite reporters to open houses/receptions at your bank.
2. Bring small gifts at Christmas: coffee mugs, pens, mouse pads, etc. — items with your logo. Some newspapers discourage “payola” for fear of appearing to be bribed, so make sure the items are not expensive.
3. If a reporter does call you, return his or her call on a timely basis. Reporters work under constant deadline pressure.
4. Build rapport with your newspaper's banking reporter. There are times when there is little news to report and the reporter may call you for a human interest story.
5. Invite reporters to participate in charitable projects or judge competitions that benefit the community. If reporters participate, they are more prone to cover the event.
6. Offer yourself as a resource. Banking issues are in the news. You can reflect a positive image for the banking industry by serving as a resource on credit and mortgage issues, identity theft, the economy, financial literacy and other timely issues.

Writing a press release

News media, like other businesses, tend to be understaffed. Even in a fully staffed newsroom, it's impossible to be in all places at one time. For that reason, newspapers and television stations rely on news releases to supplement their reporters' work and newswire articles. Before inundating reporters with news releases, however, consider these 12 things:

1. **Include contact information:** a name, phone number or e-mail address reporters can use as a contact in case of questions or if additional information is needed.
2. **Include a date and city.** This is called the dateline, and allows reporters to know the date the news release was issued and the city in which it was issued.
3. **Give the release a headline** that summarizes the story.
4. **The “lead” — first sentence — should summarize the information you are going to present.** Make sure the information is interesting enough that the reporter continues reading. Use the inverted pyramid approach — put the most interesting information first.
5. **Address the five Ws** — who, what, when, where and how.
6. **Use quotes**, but make them relevant and use don't use them to repeat something you've already stated. Good: “We are opening branches in the Rio Grande Valley because we want to enter the Hispanic market and offer specific products for those customers. Bad: “We are really excited about expanding to the Rio Grande Valley because it's a good fit for us.” The second quote is not as good because it doesn't really say anything. Try and state why expanding to the Valley is a good fit.
7. **Double-space if news release is mailed out.**
8. **Try to limit the news release to one page.**
9. **Send the release in plenty of time.** In other words, don't send a news release on an event that occurred several weeks ago. Send it as close as possible to the date it happened.

10. **Make sure you are providing news** and not seeking free advertising. Make the content relevant, timely and interesting.
11. **Use photos when they add to the story.** Photos of bankers teaching financial literacy are good human interest.
12. **Send the news release to the right person.** If in doubt, call the paper/tv station. Or, purchase a media directory, such as the Texas Media Directory or use a service like PR Newswire or Business wire.

Writing letters to the editor

There are several reasons bankers may want to write Letters to the Editor

- To correct a small mistake or misquote that appears in the paper.
- To create interest in a subject that has not been adequately covered by the news media.
- To react to a situation, although responding to negative news might not be advisable as it may serve only to draw more attention to the negative news.

Letters should:

- Be brief — limited to 250 words.
- Be timely — send your letter no more than one or two days after the article appears.
- Focus on one issue — don't include everything you didn't like about the article.
- Include your contact information.
- Be signed.
- State the situation.
- Give essential background.
- Offer a solution or alternative.

Writing an op-ed

Unlike a letter to the editor, an op-ed piece is not necessarily in response to an article that has been written; rather, it can be used to offer a viewpoint on a subject or take a stance on a current issue. Op-ed pieces are generally no more than 750 words; they are timely; locally relevant; and state a strong opinion or unique point of view on a topic of public interest. Also, they should include a call to action.

Prior to submitting an op-ed, bankers should make direct contact, by phone or e-mail, with the person in charge of the editorial pages. Discuss your op-ed idea to determine if the newspaper is willing to run it.

Editorial board meetings

Most newspapers have an Editorial Board that meets with members of the community to discuss timely and important topics. In many cases, these are opportunities to present viewpoints on controversial or hot topics, especially those that the newspaper does not fully understand or embrace. Good subjects can include:

- Legislation that is harmful to the banking industry, but that also negatively impacts the community, such as mandatory counseling for home loans.
- Clarifying instances in which the banking industry may be lumped with unscrupulous financial services companies and it's necessary to clean up the image.
- Banking legislation that helps the citizens of Texas, such as legislation that brought home equity loans to the state.
- Rebuttals to community activists that make harmful accusations about the banking industry, such as denying loans to minorities.

Press conferences

A press conference is a perfect opportunity to make a big announcement at one time to your local community. By inviting all of the relevant reporters in your community, you cannot be accused of favoritism. A press conference also allows all of the reporters to ask their questions at one time.

A press conference should not, however, be overused. Situations in which a press conference can be valuable include the unveiling of a major program (perhaps one that few banks have), a major initiative, revealing a major report, announcing late-breaking news. You don't, for example, want to hold a press conference every time you unveil a new product, especially if it is something offered already by your competitors. Save the occasion for a really important announcement.

Tips:

- Hold the press conference after 9 a.m., but before 2 p.m.
- Keep it brief.
- Provide written background materials for reporters.
- Allow Q&A opportunities.
- Send a notice of the press conference about a week in advance and follow up the day before with an e-mail or phone call.

Crisis communications

(source: American Bankers Association)

The essential services banks offer and the critical role they play in communities and in the economy make any disruption in bank business a potential crisis. So it may come as no surprise that banks and bank holding companies were ranked ninth in a list of the most crisis-prone industries for 2001, a record year for business crises news reports, according to the Institute for Crisis Management's annual report.

Over the years, banks have weathered all manner of emergencies, including floods and tornadoes, and yet found ways to either remain open or reopen within hours of the event. Indeed, regulations require that banks have a disaster recovery or crisis management plan for their operations, data processing and human resources functions. Such preparedness is necessary to retain the public's trust in the nation's banking system. Yet even the most sophisticated disaster preparedness plan will not reassure consumers if they are not made aware of it when it counts, such as during a crisis.

For this reason it is important that banks have an established communications plan that helps ensure the bank's ability to clearly and effectively communicate with critical audiences during a crisis. The goal of effective crisis communication is to maintain and protect the credibility of your organization. To do so requires honesty, candor and timeliness. A well-planned crisis communications strategy will help your organization to be quick with messages, forthcoming with information and keep key audiences in mind.

1. Assemble a crisis communications response team.

The purpose of the team is to develop the crisis communications plan, review and update it regularly and implement it in the event of a crisis. Identify members of the crisis communications response team. Assign their roles and the chain of command. Some standard roles include a media spokesperson, a liaison for employees, a liaison for regulatory agencies and an operations manager.

2. Conduct a brief communications audit.

It's important to examine your organization's internal and external communications practices to ensure good relationships are established with key audiences *before* there's a crisis. Regularly communicate with your key audiences (e.g. employees, customers, shareholders, community

leaders, regulators, media, members of Congress). Develop the appropriate internal and external communication channels. Newsletters, Internet and Intranet sites, and routine meetings with reporters are good ways stakeholders and others can get to know your bank. When a crisis strikes, your communications channels are already in place.

No one would go into battle without a clear evaluation of the enemy and an assessment of the resources available to fight it. Similarly, you would not want to face a crisis without a solid understanding of your bank's advantages and vulnerabilities. Conducting a SWOT analysis — listing your bank's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats — early in the crisis can help guide your tactics during it.

- Plan to use *strengths*, such as strong ties to the community to help your bank pull through the crisis.
- Identify *weakness*, for example, poor relationships with local media and take steps to correct them.
- Look for *opportunities* to be part of the solution to the crisis. For example, offer free online banking services while the bank is closed.
- Identify any *threats* to your bank's business strategy and image, such as legal responsibility for the crisis, competitors using the crisis as an opportunity to steal customers and consider ways to minimize them.

3. Coordinate communications channels.

Make sure communications within the organization are coordinated.

- Establish protocols for decision-making and approvals. The process must be streamlined and fast.
- Develop alternative systems for team communications.
- Be prepared to adjust your communication plan and strategy as the crisis develops and changes.
- Include crisis communications training in new employee orientation.
- Identify updates to the plan including staff changes, employee information and planned responsibilities and incorporate changes/updates in internal employee publications at least every quarter.

4. Craft a crisis communications plan.

Your team should develop a communications plan that offers the who/what/when/where and how of communicating during a crisis at the bank. The contents of the plan should incorporate the overall goal to survive the crisis with the organization's credibility intact, the strategy to be timely, candid and honest and the tactical steps to follow during the crisis.

This plan should be distributed to the bank's senior staff, who should familiarize themselves with the plan and keep a copy of it at home.

The basic contents of a crisis communications plan are as follows:

- Title page
- Distribution list
- Table of contents
- Introduction with rationale, purpose, and policy statement
- List of potential emergencies
- Roster of team members and responsibilities
- Contact list and notification flowchart. Contact list should include core team members' phone, fax and cell phone numbers, as well as email and home addresses. Other emergency numbers should also be included, such as for utilities, vendors, etc.
- Command center needs
- Communication guidelines, for example, how-to's for dealing with the public, the press, customers, employees, and officials
- Evaluation criteria

5. Establish on-site and off-site command centers.

The command center serves as a meeting place for the crisis communications response team. Use it to gather the team at the beginning of the emergency to review facts, identify options, and determine strategy and actions. Use it as a home base until the crisis is over. Keep current copies of the bank's disaster recovery plan, emergency procedures and the crisis communications plan in the command center. The space should have a conference table, phones, fax machines, computers, printers, office supplies, local phone directories, copy machines, a television and VCR, a radio, maps and a phone list of local officials, news contacts, and police and fire department listings.

A disaster may render your bank unusable. Prepare to enact your crisis plan away from the bank by establishing a temporary work site. Possible locations include another bank branch, local hotel, temporary office space, business center or someone's home. Make sure the space is stocked with supplies, records and crucial documents such as the crisis plan. If the space lacks office equipment, make sure it is located near a 24-hour business service center such as Kinko's. Each team member should keep a copy of the crisis plan in his or her home.

Sample news release

Media Release

RELEASE ON RECEIPT

Contact: Olivia Carmichael Solis (512) 472-8388

Texas Bankers Association launches online job bank

AUSTIN, September 29, 2006 — TBA's first-ever online Job Bank was launched on Sept. 25, allowing banks to post employment opportunities and job seekers to apply for them. The Job Bank, which can be accessed at www.texasbankers.com/jobbank.php, was developed in response to a large number of banker requests.

Job seekers will be able to:

- Tap banking industry-specific jobs and employers online, confidentially.
- Conveniently search job announcements by multiple criteria.
- Post resumes online at no charge.
- Save time and money by applying for jobs online.
- Receive e-mail alerts when jobs matching their criteria are posted.

In turn, employers can:

- Easily access a specialized talent pool.
- Recruit qualified employee candidates more cost effectively.
- Post job announcements in real-time from their desktop.
- Conduct targeted, confidential searches of the resume database.
- Track activity online to measure and report recruitment and advertising.

The cost for posting a job opening is \$150 for 30 days for TBA members and \$250 for 30 days for non-members. Additional ads can be purchased at discounted rates.

-30-

(-30- or -#- tells the editor he or she has reached the end of your article)

Sample letter to the editor

Stop Identity Theft

Preserve Your Identity ... Recover Your Good Name

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes today. Every hour there are 57 new victims. In 2003, identity theft losses to businesses and financial institutions totaled nearly \$50 billion, and consumer victims reported \$5 billion in out-of-pocket expenses. Banks work with law enforcement to catch and prosecute the thieves, but we need your help to prevent the potential loss of your good name ... and your money.

Tear up unused credit card offers. Don't lose credit-card receipts. Review monthly statements for fraud. Guard your Social Security Number. Don't release any information to people you don't know, especially on the phone or over the Internet. And report suspected fraud to your bank immediately.

Sample op-ed piece

Setting the record straight on banks and credit unions

By Mike Rigby

A recent article by an Express-News business columnist extolled the virtues of the credit unions while chiding the banks for opposing federal legislation designed to expand credit union small business lending. As a Texas community banker and small business lender I would like to set the record straight.

We have no qualms with the traditional credit unions, like the Express-News Federal Credit Union, that serve the consumer lending needs of a distinct group of employees. This credit union and a dozen or more others in the San Antonio area are doing what credit unions were designed to do in the 1930s: meet the needs of employees that need access to consumer loans. As such, these small, limited cooperatives pay no federal income taxes.

We are very concerned, however, about the new behemoths in the credit union industry that have billions of dollars in assets, do everything a bank can do, allow anybody to join and pay no federal taxes. If you are a man or woman working in San Antonio you will pay more in income taxes this year than the \$4.1 billion Security Service Federal Credit Union. Moreover, when the new state margin tax goes into effect in May, the 704 banks and thousands of other businesses in this state will be paying the new tax to support our public schools and lower homeowners property taxes, while the credit unions will pay nothing. Both Security Service and the \$2.2 billion dollar San Antonio Federal Credit Union are exempted from the new margin tax.

The Express-News writer alleged that there was a credit crunch and therefore less small business lending due to the subprime loan crises. It was suggested that this was a good reason to allow credit unions to expand business lending. In Texas nothing could be further from the truth. Ninety-nine percent of Texas banks never engaged in subprime lending. We are well capitalized and welcome all the business we can get from small business lending. It is our lifeblood.

There are other differences between banks and credit unions. Almost all banks operating in Texas are locally owned with small business folks

sitting on our boards. We are dedicated to the economic development of our communities by our own self interest as well as regulatory requirements to lend to low and moderate income Texans. The credit unions are under no such mandate. Additionally, I would submit that the regulatory regime that the banks labor under is far more stringent than that of the credit unions.

The mega credit unions are trying to lobby the United States Congress to almost double their authority to make commercial loans as well as weaken their capital standards. Part of their spin is that failure to pass the bill will adversely affect many smaller credit unions. That is not the case. It is almost exclusively the billion dollar credit unions (that can do everything a bank can do) that are trying to get increased commercial lending.

Are Texas bankers afraid of competition? Of course not. We compete with other lenders in our marketplaces everyday. What we resent is bank-like lenders, credit unions, that don't have to pay 35 percent of their earnings to the federal government. The ultimate unlevel playing field.

Mike Rigby, president and CEO of Liberty Bank in North Richland Hills, is chairman of the Texas Bankers Association.



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