

How to get the news out

District 2 Day 2009 roundtable session

Facilitated by Lori Sherel, KK, District 2 Webmaster

Know your audience.

- Who is this message for, e.g., alumnae, potential new members, students, the general public?
- What matters to them? "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM)
- What is the purpose? What do you want the reader/viewer to do?

What's newsworthy?

- Depends on the audience.
- The new, the interesting, the odd, the unusual; human interest stories; overcoming adversity; community interest; local people and events.

Keep the medium in mind.

- **Newspapers and magazines:** Longer feature stories work in newspapers and magazines. Short calendar items work in newspapers. Magazines love photos.
 - Write in the "inverted pyramid," 5 Ws and an H in the first paragraph.
- **Radio:** Good for announcing upcoming events open to the general public, e.g., a charity car wash.
 - Write a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) describing your event.
 - This is writing for the ear. Read your copy aloud and time yourself. Have someone else listen and see if they get the gist.
- **TV:** Prefers stories with a visual element, people doing something, e.g., a charity walk, danceathon.
 - Give the station enough heads up so that can assign a videographer to cover your event.
- **Web:** Websites, such as the District 2 website, are good for announcing upcoming events, reaching out to alumnae, and celebrating chapter and individual member accomplishments.
 - Write short articles with the 5 Ws and an H in the first paragraph (inverted pyramid).
 - Use short paragraphs, 2 or 3 sentences each.
 - Use lists, subheads, and boldface to make text scannable.
 - Include links.
 - Write quality headlines and search descriptions.

Make it easy on the editor or webmaster.

- Follow the rules for submitting items.
- Submit early, 2 to 4 weeks in advance.
- Include your contact information.
- Talk to the editor in advance about what he or she is looking for.
- Know where your item should go: Is it a feature story, announcement, photo, calendar item?
- Follow press release format. (See Resources section below.)
- Edit yourself. Be sure your article's grammatically correct. Don't rely on spellcheck; know how to proofread your own copy.

A picture's worth a thousand words.

- Visual interest.
- Good composition.
- Appropriate. Don't submit anything you wouldn't want your mother, clergy, or future employer to see.
- Technical attributes: smaller file size for Web, higher quality for magazines
 - 500 KB minimum recommended for the *Phoenix*.

News outlets:

- District 2 website: <http://asadistrict2.com/>
- *The Phoenix*
- Your campus newspaper.
- Local daily or weekly newspapers.
- Local TV stations.
- Local radio stations.
- The Internet.
- Your college's alumni magazine.
- Alumnae chapter newsletters.
- Start your own newsletter or website.

Tips for submitting items to District 2 website, <http://asadistrict2.com/>

- Write an article—not a letter, not an e-mail.
- Write for the Web.
- Follow the principles above.
- Include photos! JPEG (.jpg) is usually best format. In your photo editing software, save it for the web.
- Include a contact and e-mail address for more details or to RSVP. This will be published.
- Include name, chapter, office, e-mail address, and phone number in case the webmaster has questions or needs to verify something. This info will not be published.
- Submit news often, at least once a semester.
- Questions? Contact the webmaster at lori-philametroasa@comcast.net.

***Phoenix* submission guidelines**

- Article types, photo technical requirements, and issue deadlines are posted on the Phoenix Magazine group on Sister Circle, <https://alphasigmaalpha.affinitycircles.com/>
- Questions? Contact the editor, Louise Morales, at lmorales@alphasigmaalpha.org

Resources

Web writing:

- <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>
- *The Web Content Style Guide* by Gerry McGovern, Rob Norton, and Catherine O'Dowd

Radio and TV writing:

- www.cmo.vermont.gov/resources/documents/writePSA.pdf
- <http://www.mab.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3303>

Public relations:

- <http://publicrelationsideas.com/>
- <http://www.press-release-writing.com/newsletters/t54-psa.htm>

Photography:

- <http://www.websiteoptimization.com/speed/tweak/format/>