**Press Conference**

Press conferences (also known as *news conferences)*are occasions when someone with something to say which they believe is newsworthy calls reporters together so that they can tell them all at once. The person calling the press conference usually makes an announcement or statement first then allows reporters to ask questions. The terms, *media conferences* or *media calls*, are also used occasionally, though usually about an event to which a company publicist invites the media - not necessarily just journalists - in order to promote a product, performance or a celebrity, e.g. a visiting singer or actor.

**Promotional press conferences**

All sorts of people organise press conferences for all sorts of reasons. A politician may call one to announce a new policy or to deny an allegation. A scientist may call one to reveal a discovery. A police chief may call reporters together to give details of a crime or to ask for public help in solving a case. Promotional press conferences are among the most common. Public relations professionals use press conferences to make important announcements to gain coverage in newspapers, magazines, blogs and on TV news broadcasts.

Reasons to hold a press conference include:

* Introducing a new product
* Revealing a new scientific breakthrough
* Unveiling a new advertising campaign
* Announcing a charity event with a featured celebrity
* Acquiring a new player on a sports team
* Releasing company financial statements

**Advantages**

* 1. The main advantage of a press conference to the person calling it is that they do not have to repeat themselves to several different reporters at separate interviews. It also means that their announcement will have maximum impact by being in all the media at the same time (assuming that all the reporters think it is newsworthy).
  2. It is usual for the person who called the press conference to say what they want first then allow the journalists to ask questions. The speaker controls the situation from the start. They even control where and when the press conference takes place, although if journalists do not like the place or the time of the press conference they should let the organiser know.
  3. The main advantage to the journalist is that it reduces the chance of individual newspapers or broadcast stations missing the story.
  4. It also allows them to share the workload of questioning the interviewee. If one reporter forgets or overlooks something, another reporter will probably think of it.
  5. A press conference also can build excitement or anticipation about an event.

**Disadvantages**

1. There are disadvantages to the media in press conference, the major of which is that it is more difficult to get an exclusive story from press conferences. When every reporter hears the same words from the interviewee, they cannot keep secrets from each other.
2. Press conferences can also give false importance to the topic being promoted. Promoters try to convince journalists that by getting them all in the same place at the same time the topic is of great importance, when often it is nothing more than free publicity or advertising.
3. Press conferences can waste time and money if the press conference is poorly organized and executed.

How to organize a Press Conference

### **Step One: Choosing a Story**

Not every news or event announcement deserves its own press conference. Press conferences require journalists to travel and set aside time from their busy schedules, so they should be reserved only for stories that are compelling and newsworthy.

For a story to be newsworthy, it should satisfy one or more of the following five requirements:

* **Timing** -- It's happening right now
* **Significance** -- It's affecting a lot of people, especially the target audience
* **Proximity** -- It's happening locally or to people with whom the audience relates
* **Prominence** -- It's happening to a famous person or organization
* **Human Interest** -- It's emotional, such as homeless pets or children living with cancer.

### **Step Two: Choosing a Time and Location**

Journalists work under tight deadlines. If you hold a press conference too close to when a reporter must file his story, he won't be able to attend. It's important to research the deadlines of local journalists and plan accordingly. Avoid Mondays and Fridays, because these days are likely to be the busiest for journalists. Mornings are always preferable, since it gives daily newspaper and broadcast journalists more time to write their story.

A press conference location is equally important for attracting journalists and serving their professional needs. **On-location** press conferences can add a dramatic, visual backdrop for an announcement. For example, if a company is donating money to clean a local river, it could hold the press conference at a scenic spot next to the water.­

Some locations make it difficult to meet the technical and logistical requirements of the media. Some of these are:

* Having enough parking for important people and media, including room for large TV production trucks
* Availability of a stage, podium and audiovisual aids to present information
* Adequate seating for journalists and guests
* Enough electrical outlets to plug in computers, cameras and audiovisual equipment
* Ample room for TV cameras to set up their shots; perhaps on a raised platform in back
* A **mult-box** that allows media to receive direct audio feeds from one microphone

To meet these requirements, it's sometimes easier to hold press conferences in dedicated conference rooms, either at an organization's headquarters, a hotel or in a local press club

### **Step Three: Invitations**

Journalists are typically assigned a "beat", or particular news area to cover. Target press conference invitations to journalists and publications that have a proven interest in your news or event announcement.

Once you've narrowed down your list of journalists, write a **media advisory**. It should explain the news or announcement without giving away the entire story. It should also list which key spokespersons will attend the event and their availability for one-on-one interviews.

Media advisories can be sent by e-mail or fax, depending on the journalist's preference. Both should be sent out at least a week in advance of the press conference, and it's a good idea to make a reminder follow-up call or e-mail to the journalist a day before the event.

### **Step Four: Deciding Whom Will Speak and What They Will Say**

Choose the speakers carefully: informational experts who are well trained on working with the media.

* Statements should take 10 minutes or less and be built around key "talking points."
* Speakers should be prepared with short, clear answers to expected questions.
* Limit press conferences to two speakers so the message doesn't get confused.
* Consider using visual aids such as posters or multimedia presentations to make your message clearer.
* Rehearse statements on camera, including mock Q-and-A format sessions

### **Step Five: Assembling a Press Kit**

A press conference's main goal is to make the journalist's job easier. Supply good sound bites and photo opportunities. Give journalists any additional pertinent information in a press kit, which should include:

* A press release summarizing the story, important facts and key players
* Bios and photos of the key players
* Fact sheets including copies of any graphs or charts presented during the press conference
* Contact information for follow-ups and interview requests

Many journalists now work in a digital environment, so it's helpful if the press kit includes digital copies of documents and photos, perhaps on a CD-ROM. The CD-ROM could include other promotional materials like TV commercials, video and audio files, and official logos and images.

Now that the planning stage is through, let's find out how to make things run smoothly on the day of the press conference.

## Running a Press Conference

[**PREV**](https://money.howstuffworks.com/business-communications/how-press-conferences-work2.htm)

On the day of the press conference, everything should be designed to make life easier for all involved. Organizers need to arrive at least an hour before the press conference begins to double-check the physical and technical set-up of the room and to help camera crews get their equipment in place.

Make sure parking is easy to find, close to the location and free (or at least validated). If you expect TV coverage, arrange for special places to park satellite trucks. Direct journalists to the room in which the conference will be held, making sure that all routes are wheelchair accessible.

A greeter should direct journalists to the media check-in table. At the table, staff members can check press credentials, answer questions and hand out the press kit, including a program of who's going to speak and when. The staff can then direct the journalists to a clearly marked media area with seating that can accommodate laptop computers. Food and drink are optional, unless the press conference runs through lunch.

Start the press conference on time, even if only a few people have shown up. This shows respect for reporters' deadlines and the care they took to arrive on time.

The focus should always be on giving the journalist what he needs to do his job. The moderator should keep things moving, never indulging in lengthy introductions or re-hashing material that's stated in the press kit.

The press conference shouldn't run more than 30 to 45 minutes, including the Q-and-A format session. The moderator should ask reporters to identify themselves before asking a question and might want to repeat the question so everyone can hear it.

After the conference, it's a good idea to send press kits to journalists who showed interest in the press conference, but couldn't attend. However, with the gain in popularity of Web press conferences, journalists can attend virtually. Let's look at how Web conferencing technology brings press conferences right to a journalist's desktop

Reaching multiple journalists at once delivers immediacy and significance surrounding your news event, in addition to covering your topic thoroughly.

A press conference can be a effective way to convey company news.

Organizations can deliver more information than a press release affords, and spokespeople can explain the wider implications of the news in greater detail.

In addition, a press conference is an efficient way to brief numerous journalists and news outlets at once. Briefing 10 journalists individually in 30-minute interviews would take five hours of a spokesperson’s time, whereas with a one-hour press conference, you can share information with 10 journalists simultaneously.

Recently Communiqué PR had the opportunity to support Bank of America’s press conference with the Seattle Police Department (SPD) in Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighborhood. The press conference announced the mega-bank’s participation in the SPD’s [Safe Place](http://www.seattle.gov/spd-safe-place/) initiative, an effort to make Seattle safer for its diverse communities by providing places of refuge for victims of LGBTQ-related crimes or harassment.

**RELATED:**[Upgrade your editorial operation and improve your storytelling. Attend The Influential Communicator in NYC.](https://store.prdaily.com/ProductDetails.asp?product=Y6CU0NY&listshow=Conferences&catid=2ED70BB224CD4C98A1F9FA27EA225E6B&promo=164003118218&grfr=Yes&utm_source=site&utm_medium=inlinead)

B of A’s team organized the event and relied on Communiqué PR to manage media outreach. Based on that success, we offer these best practices for organizing press conferences.

To hold a successful press conference, you should:

**1. Have relevant and newsworthy information to share.**If there isn’t a timely news hook, busy journalists will not attend. Timing is crucial for reporters to map out their schedules and plan timely, relevant stories to air or publish. For example, our press conference happened days before the Seattle Pride weekend celebration, so equality and support for the LGBTQ community were hot topics.

**2. Use credible spokespeople.** Have two to four knowledgeable people deliver your message; each one should be present for three to five minutes, ample time to deliver key messages.

Our press conference had six speakers, which is higher than the norm, but each person had specific expertise and information to share.

**3. Create photo opportunities.** In order to get broadcast journalists to attend, you must offer compelling photo and video opportunities. Ask: Will you need a banner behind the podium? Is the signage easy to read? Will there be visually compelling activities?

**4. Hold it at a convenient place and time.** Mid-morning is ideal for a press conference, because it accommodates news cycles and usually aligns with reporters’ schedules. Remember, journalists are on tight schedules, so hold the event at a place they can get to quickly and easily. The Capitol Hill neighborhood is a centrally located, diverse community with LGBTQ-friendly businesses and rainbow-painted crosswalks, so this made it a particularly conducive place for the SPD Safe Places press conference, both for location and visual impact.

**5. Develop a compelling media advisory/invitation.** If possible, you will want to send your media advisory out to print new outlets about three days in advance of your press conference. For broadcast media, they should get the invitation one day in advance. You will also want to make sure your event is on the daybooks of wire services. (A daybook is a localized news distribution service that delivers your news and event information to a specific city.)

**6. Focus on the details.**Here are several other important things to keep in mind when organizing a press conference:

* Create an agenda and make sure all the spokespeople are clear on their roles and responsibilities during the press conference.
* Make sure spokespeople feel comfortable making their remarks and have anticipated any questions they might receive. It is also important to ensure there is no message overlap among the speakers. Each speaker should have a unique message to deliver.
* Designate someone to greet the TV reporters and make sure they know what access they will have for shooting video.
* Provide journalists with any necessary background material, or follow up via email after the press conference to provide fact sheets or supplemental information they might need.
* Ask spokespeople to make themselves available after the press conference in case journalists need additional sound bites or quotes.
* Share articles and other content from the event on social media. You also may want to share your photos of the event on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. Finally, consider asking other community leaders and stakeholders to share the information along with any resulting press coverage.