

Guidelines for Establishing Positive Media Relations

The Federal Board of Revenue



Implemented by

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



As a federally owned enterprise, we support the German Government in achieving its objective in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Published by
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme
Tax Reform Component
F 7/2, Street 11, House 6
Khosar Road, Islamabad, Pakistan
T +92 51 2608 988/989/990
F +92 51 2608 987
www.giz.de

Responsible
Catherine Isabel Froehling, Head of Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme
Dr. Amna Khalifa, Component Leader, Tax Reform Component, Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme

Authors
Guardian Management , Suite No. 8, Mezzanine Floor, 80 East, Malik Complex, Islamabad, Pakistan
Janine Baudach, Communications Advisor, Tax Reform Component, Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme
Humaira Zahid, Advisor, Tax Reform Component, Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme

Photo credits
Mr. Tariq Bashir

Layout and design
PrintMatic, Islamabad
Flat 103, First Floor, Azeem Mansion
87-East, Fazal-ul-Haq Road, Blue Area
Islamabad-Pakistan.

Printed by
PrintMatic, Islamabad
Flat 103, First Floor, Azeem Mansion
87-East, Fazal-ul-Haq Road, Blue Area
Islamabad-Pakistan.

November, 2013

The views expressed in this publication are those of the consultants and do not necessarily represent those of GIZ and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

On behalf of the
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Contents

Introduction	1
Understanding the Media	1
Characteristics of Pakistan's Media	1
Media Perceptions	1
The Role of Media	1
Media Components	2
Media's Mindset	2
Strategic Contours and General Steps	3
Principles of Communications With the Media	4
Profile of Media Officers	5
Tips for Developing Positive Media Relations	6
Functions and Activities of Secretary (Public Relations)	6
Cooperation With Journalists	7
Contacting the Media	8
E-Mail	8
Phone	8
Fax	8
Mail	9
Personalized Letter	9
Press Kit	9
Calendar Items	9
Newspaper Supplements	9
Media Relations - Check List	10

Introduction

Public relations are a key to the performance of the FBR, as their policies, services and performance directly affect the public. In the present situation when FBR is striving to increase its taxation base, public perceptions and impression of FBR becomes even more vital. Citizens have a right to know the policies and activities of their government. In a well-functioning democracy, the government provides reliable and timely information to the public. In light of the aforesaid, effective communications between FBR and the public is especially important in Pakistan, a country in transition, where major changes in state institutions – indeed in all aspects of life – have left the citizenry uncertain.

Positive media relations are a very important component to the overall success of FBR and the hallmark to any successful taxation agency. Media provides a connection between the Government and the citizens and can play an important and effective role in increasing the tax base and improving the perception of FBR.

Understanding the Media

Characteristics of Pakistan's Media

Media plays an important role in development of the society and shapes opinions. A country which is strong on this front can inject its ideas and messages to get the desired results. Things are moving too fast due to the media invasion. The newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, internet and films, which can generate and spread information, are major tools of the media. Every medium has its own strength of creating public opinion and to change public perception on certain issues. Media's basic role is to inform, educate and guide people. It is a great power which must be used in the right direction.

In order to work successfully with media it is important that its characteristics are understood. The media comprises of many elements, each with different requirements and different agendas.

Media Perceptions

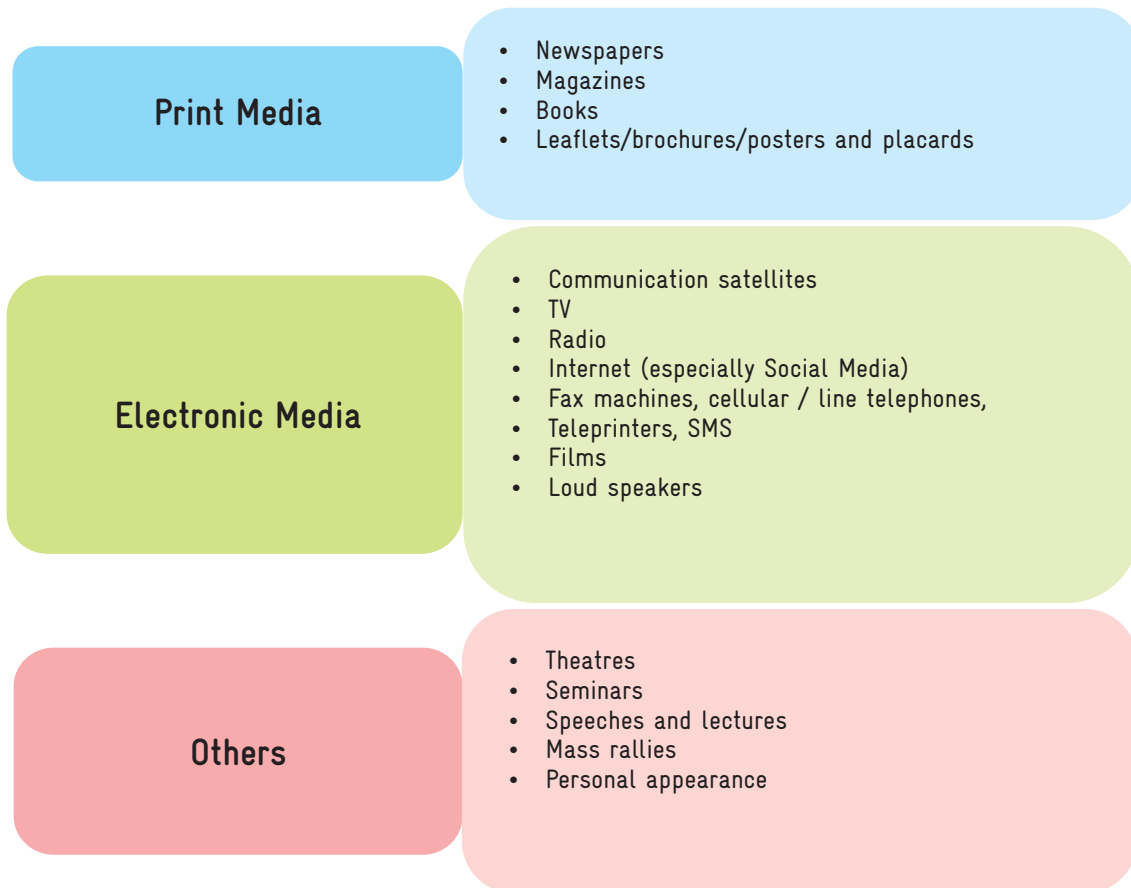
It should always be remembered that the media's perception of a situation or event is likely to differ from our own. The majority of the news media are involved in commercial or quasi commercial competition for audiences. Therefore their primary motivation is to produce newsworthy coverage and to produce it fast.

The Role of the Media

Media's role can be summarized as:

1. Media is a basic source of providing information. While performing this role, media acts as a conduit between the public and the government. In that, it mirrors the public concerns and perceptions whereas it assists the government in transmitting its policies to the public and can help in its functions of governance by sharing its goals. Furthermore, it provides the chance of indirect political participation for the civil society.
2. It acts as watch dog on the government, public as well as media itself and safe guards the national as well as public interest.
3. It impacts decision making by entering into decision action loop, either to prompt premature and wrong decisions or delay the decisions. Media is important for building public opinion and shapes the environments for or against any policy decisions.

Media Components



Media's Mindset

- In Pakistan media is still passing through its formative stage after newfound freedom.
- Media decisions are based on a business enterprise model rather than on professionalism.
- Mostly media is looking for scoops, controversies and sensational and negative news to make headlines.
- Media people are humans with biases, and have political leaning and self-interests as well.
- Media feels it has the right to interpret what is good or bad for society.
- Media is deadline focused.

Strategic Contours and General Steps

To build positive relations with the media and the citizenry in general, FBR should adopt the following strategic contours:

- FBR should be particularly wary of assuming, even in times of crises, that any media are automatically "on your side". They can be and often are sympathetic. But their bottom line is the production of coverage that will 'sell'. Thus it should be remembered that their priorities will be different from those of the FBR. That's why FBR needs to train its officials on how to handle media queries and how to portray FBR's point of view.
- Only the media managers and public relations office/cell of the FBR and its remote organisations should be allowed to interact with media. Even the department head should seek advice from the public relations cell before interacting with media.
- Basic communications techniques should be developed for officers, dealing with media and other communication channels as vehicles for building consensus and support for FBR.
- FBR should run awareness programs for media managers of the private sector to improve their understanding of the role of FBR and taxation reform. This could also mobilize the media managers to invoke potential interest of the public towards matters of revenue and taxation.
- Consensus-building process that requires major cultural change implies a two-pronged communications program tailored to specific audiences. The general public and government employees are principle targets. They can be reached through print and electronic press, advertising, direct mail, community briefings, and in-school education programmes.
- Opinion leaders should be the target of a very specific programme of personalised and in-depth briefings. Included among this group are journalists, business and industry groups, trade unions and trade associations, academia, and non-governmental organisations.

Principles of Communications With the Media

Those in FBR should keep in mind a number of general principles and techniques when communicating with the media:

Action	Description	Example
Build consensus as the foundation for introducing new taxation or taxation reforms	The Government of Pakistan and FBR must "lobby" for support of their reforms. Thus, an early program targeted to the different stakeholders as to the changing roles and responsibilities between the public and private sectors can help make the new taxation policy work more effectively	Meeting with mobile operators before changing taxation in that sector
Maintain a consistent and clear information flow	All press briefings and contacts do not have to be news events. It is essential, though, to develop a sense of "complicity" with the audiences that you want to influence so that they feel that they are consulted on and informed of what is going on	Meeting with members of chamber of commerce or trade unions to discuss general options being considered to curb tax evasion
Communicate early on sensitive or complicated issues	This is particularly important in the complex media environment prevailing in Pakistan where there is great diversity and a "free-for-all" environment, and where the media is establishing its own credibility by demonstrating its ability to criticise in a constructive fashion	Setting up a media briefing in order to explain the rationale of imposing new taxation
Be the spokesperson for your own initiative or crisis	Do not resort to "no comment" and let others talk about your problem and distort facts: Tell your own version – even when it is difficult	Presentation of an honest answer or statement- coordinated with other appropriate authorities – to a question about the use of FBR cars and expense accounts for personal use
Adopt a pro-active and long-term communication strategy	Put all information within the context of a strategic programme and link your messages with "hot" topics	Explanation about that the imposition of new taxation is part of a broader plan aimed at revitalising the energy sector
Transparency to encourage trust	In the current environment, openness or communicated information is the key to power and to building trust and credibility with the media and general public. Although this is complicated and requires sophisticated and vigilant management techniques, it is essential to building a consultative style of governance	Distribute the text of a new regulation on tax evaders widely and make it easily available without delay

Profile of Media Officers

The following are some of the attributes and profile required from media officers:

Attitude

- Attitude towards the government – e.g. the role should be loyal and supportive to the existing policies. The media officer provides information from FBR's point of view, not a personal one;
- Attitude towards the population – e.g. the media officer respects every user of public services, acknowledges the heterogeneous composition of the general public and ensures that he/she is easy to reach and approach ;
- Attitude towards the press – e.g. the FBR spokesperson and Secretary Public Relations, FBR are the person appointed to co-ordinate the provision of information to the population via the media; he/she is the ideal FBR mouthpiece.
- Attitude towards civil servants – in exercising their duties, media officers must rely on the cooperation of fellow officers/civil servants. They therefore must always be ready to cooperate loyally with the administration and maintain cordial personal relations with those in charge in all departments.

Knowledge and Skills

- Matters requiring detailed knowledge – e.g. understanding of the structure and operation of FBR, institutions, public governing bodies and services at all levels; the structure of the media and news system in the country; the theory of information and government information, new technologies;
- Matters requiring less detailed knowledge – e.g. management and organisation of other ministries, departments and public organizations; meeting techniques; documentation and library techniques;
- Skills – e.g. clear, correct and creative writing style; excellent oral communication; good social skills

Position

The Public Relations Officer is directly attached to the Chairman FBR via the Member Facilitation and Taxpayer Education (FATE); thus, it should be given sufficient internal and external authority to perform duties properly.

Tips for Developing Positive Media Relations

Based upon the above mentioned strategic contours and general points, the following is the guideline towards establishing good relations with media:

Functions and Activities of Secretary (Public Relations):

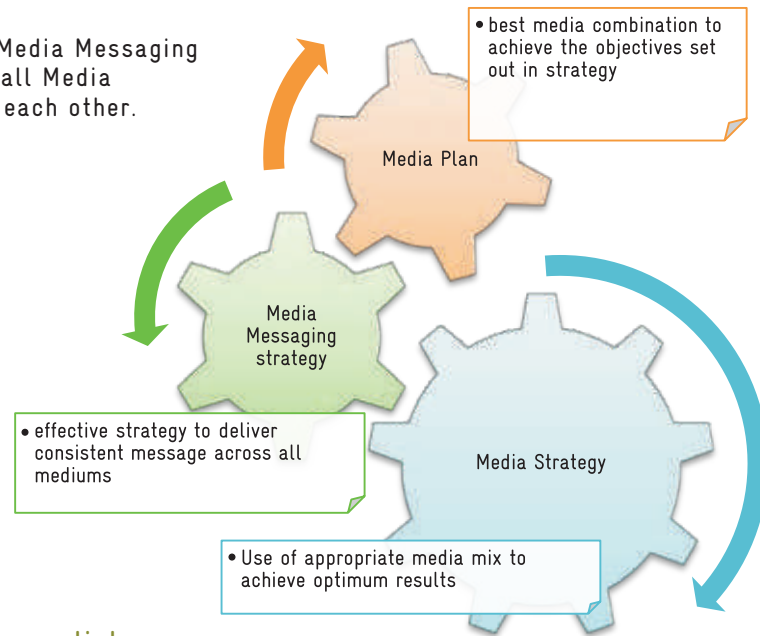
The Secretary, (Public Relations) in the FATE Wing, FBR (Headquarters), Islamabad has been accorded the following responsibilities:

1. Issuance of press releases/clarifications/rebuttals/revenue collection figures and policy decisions conveyed by the official spokesperson of FBR (HQs) to the print and electronic media.
2. Corresponding and coordinating with various Wings of FBR (HQs) and its field offices for collection, preparation and editing the material for FBR's Quarterly Newsletter "Revenews".
3. Liaison with Press Information Department, Islamabad and its provincial offices to arrange media coverage of FBR events and programs.
4. Arranging and coordinating Interviews, press briefings and press conferences of Chairman, FBR and other Members of FBR for print and electronic media.

It is recommended that the Secretary (Public Relations), together with the staff of the FATE wing and under the supervision of Chief FATE also is responsible for the coordination and handling of the following tasks.

- Formulation and compilation of FBR Media Strategy – This media strategy will be formulated with inputs from other wings, departments and ancillary components of FBR and put up to Member FATE for approval of Chairman FBR. The media strategy will form the basis of developing the "Media Messaging Strategy" and the "Media Plan" of FBR. These are important for achieving positive branding of the organization and for fulfilment of the FBR Mission. (Should be inclusive of a social media strategy and plan)
- Formulation and implementing the Media Messaging and Media Relations Plan of FBR – As explained above, these plans will evolve from the FBR Media strategy.
- Supervise media monitoring and analysis – This will require material and trained human resources. Media monitoring and analysis is important to develop a viable media plan and for crises management. Necessary communications/media research and analysis should include monitoring of social media.
- Media handling during crisis – Secretary (Public Relations) and the PR Office will also provide all support to the Member (FATE) or if another officer is nominated as the official spokesperson of FBR during a crisis.

How the Media Plan, Media Messaging Strategy and the overall Media Strategy complement each other.



Cooperation With Journalists

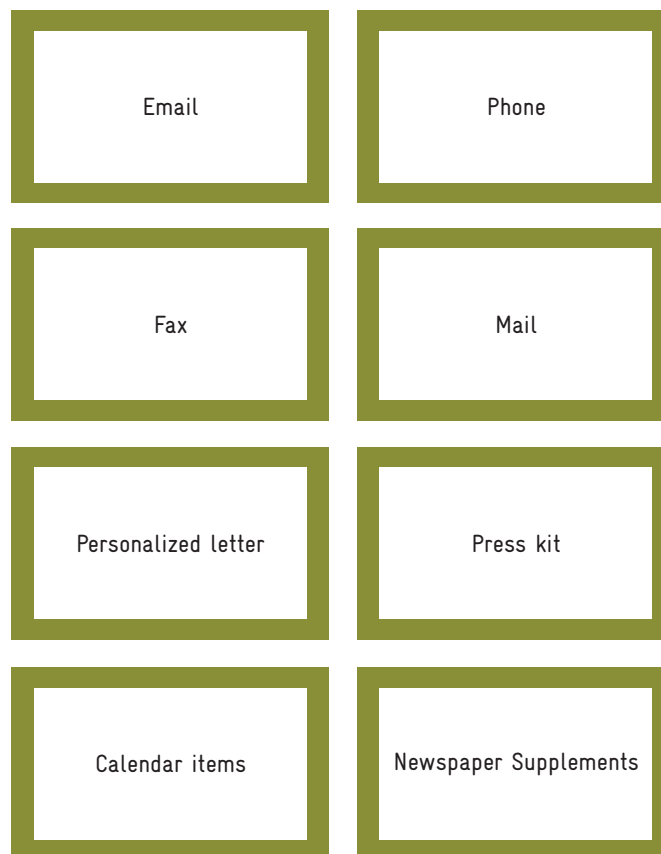
The news media constitutes the most accessible, cost-effective and credible vehicle for reaching the public with information on FBR programmes, services and activities. They also represent the most uncontrollable vehicle. What does this mean for FBR?

It means:

- Establishing the basic principle that FBR is open and accessible to the media;
- Establishing relationships of trust and accountability with members of the media;
- Respecting the right of media representatives to have access to accurate, clear, timely and relevant information about FBR policies, programmes and activities;
- Learning how to work with the media, get across the message you want and keep control in an interview situation.
- Government officials who treat journalists with respect, who are honest and straightforward, who invest time with journalists, and who take the time to explain issues stand the best chance of developing a professional and useful relationship with the media.
- Investing time in knowing the reporters who cover FBR's issues is the first step. Letting those reporters get to know you both as a representative of FBR and as an individual – is the second step.
- Media relations include everything from phone calls to journalists, to informal meetings to formal briefings for individuals or groups of reporters by the FBR spokesperson or Member, news conferences, background briefings or organised tours.
- Media relations can be a phone call to inform reporters about an emerging story or to provide background information on a complex issue. The most fundamental part of media relations is returning phone calls, finding out the journalist's deadline, being realistic and honest on whether you can meet that deadline, and then getting back to him or her on time.
- There are times, however, when reporters do not treat media officers fairly, when they may take a quote out of context, or, even worse, go after an individual on a personal basis. In these cases the decision is whether or not the issue is important enough either to FBR or to the individual involved to take on a member of the news media. Channels available range from letters to the editor, to lodging a complaint with the self-regulating body of journalists.
- While unprofessional conduct by journalists is the exception, it can happen and can be very difficult for public servants who are unable to defend themselves. In the vast majority of cases, however, journalists are professionals who return the respect they receive from government communicators.

Contacting the Media

The FBR's point of view can be obtained in various ways through the print/broadcast media, however, the most effective method depends upon the journalist or media agent's preferences e.g. email, message, meeting etc. Whatever approach you choose, be persuasive, persistent, and friendly – but not aggressive. A detailed database of media stakeholders should be developed and updated by the concerned officials at FBR. Here are some suggested approaches:



E-mail

Most reporters use e-mail and appreciate the time it saves identifying worthwhile stories. Like a headline, your subject line should be well thought out; it can make the difference between your e-mail being read or ignored. If mailing lists are maintained, use of mailing software e.g. Mailchimp or Convento etc can be used.

Phone

Many editors prefer a brief (less than two minutes) phone description of a story, along with the reasons it would interest readers or viewers. They will then tell you if they are interested and if they need additional materials.

Fax

Faxes are an inexpensive and fast way to send information requested by a reporter or editor or to deliver time-sensitive materials. Most reporters discourage unsolicited faxes. A news advisory concisely ticks off the who, what, when, where, and why – often with times and places underscored to catch a busy editor's eye.

Mail

Use the mail for sending one-page letters outlining your ideas or background materials for stories without an immediate deadline.

Personalized Letter

Sent alone or with a press release, a letter can point out a specific angle or suggest story ideas or good interview subjects and show you've taken the time to consider what might interest that particular reporter.

Press Kit

A press kit can be effective if you have several related stories to tell or a number of related events to promote, such as a month-long series of speakers. In addition to a fact sheet and release, it may contain photos (with captions attached), a calendar of events, and brief profiles of FBR Members involved.

Calendar Items

Magazines, newspapers, and radio and TV stations have calendar editors, who list upcoming events. To inform the media about your meeting or event, send the calendar editor one paragraph detailing the program, place, and time.

Newspaper Supplements

Spotlight the good work of FBR by arranging for a newspaper supplement. Ask other related organisations to support the supplement by purchasing advertising space for their businesses. Then, work with the newspaper's editor to develop stories that focus on FBR services and initiatives. Include information on major projects.

Media Relations – Check List

To avoid giving the media any grounds for complaints, observe the following points:

- ✓ Never tell lies – they are invariably found out, and the consequence will be a major drop in credibility, and that is something that no information officer can afford.
- ✓ Never fail to telephone back quickly when a message is left.
- ✓ If you do not know the answer to a question, say so, find out quickly and get back.
- ✓ Get a reputation for responding quickly. Journalists are usually in a hurry and long delays imply that the department hopes the problem will go away. If there is to be a delay let the journalist know.
- ✓ "No comment" is a phrase to be avoided because it will be misconstrued to imply confirmation.
- ✓ You are not in the propaganda business. You are there to give facts and background. Use "the line to take" that is the limit of what FBR is prepared to have quoted on the record.

Never spoil a scoop. When a journalist indicates that he or she has some important information you may be pressed by the department to issue a general statement. Resist this. Exclusive information must be respected. If you spoil an exclusive, journalists will not consult you the next time and you may in consequence not be in a position to correct an inaccurate story.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Support to Good Governance in Pakistan
Programme

F 7/2, Street 11, House 6
Khosar Road, Islamabad, Pakistan
T +92 51 2608 988/989/990
F +92 51 2608 987
www.giz.de