

Media Terminology

Provided below is a standard list of commonly used definitions and explanations for audio, video and general media-related terminology. Given the rapid growth and fluidity of online media, please visit **The Ultimate Glossary: 120 Social Media Marketing Terms** for free, up-to-date definitions of terms specifically related to social media and online engagement. Additionally, the Associated Press (AP) recently released its **2012 AP Stylebook – the new edition** (for a fee) which provides fundamental guidelines on spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage, with special sections on fashion, food, social media, business, sports and media law. This guide is hailed as an essential handbook for all writers, editors, students and public relations specialists.

1 Backgrounders: In-depth explanations of an issue that can be used to bring a reporter, who is completely new to an issue, up to speed. A quote from a background interview typically cannot be attributed to an individual or organization but may be quoted as from someone like “a source familiar with the case” or “a local domestic violence expert.”

Before doing a background interview, it is important to agree upon the ground rules and fully understand how the information will be used.

2 Calendar Announcement: A short, one-page notification of an event that is of interest to the public. A calendar announcement is intended to air or to be published.

3 Editorial Board Meeting: An editorial board meeting is an in-person conversation with a publication’s editorial board (the group of people who write and publish editorials for the publication). It’s a good idea to meet with an editorial board when your agency is trying to get editorial support for a particular cause or priority.

The optimal result of an editorial board meeting is when an outlet publishes an editorial advocating for your agency’s side of an issue. Editors and reporters who are part of the editorial board sometimes join these meetings if the issues being discussed are of interest to them.

4 Fact Sheet: A one-page information sheet that contains statistics or other data.

5 Letter-to-the-Editor: A letter from a newspaper reader that responds to reports or editorials with a confirming or opposing point of view, often expanding on a point made in the original article. Letters-to-the-editor should be brief. Each paper has different word limits and can commonly be found on the paper’s Website. Typically, letters-to-editor are about 200 words and are signed by a program director, another representative or a survivor.

6 Media Advisory or Media Alert: A one-page dated announcement of an upcoming event such as a press opportunity or photo opportunity. It includes a contact name and telephone number that reporters can call for more information and is sent to assignment editors, reporters, editors and producers.

- 7** **News Conference:** An event staged exclusively for the press. One or more spokespeople (but not more than four) deliver statements and answer reporters' questions. You should call a news conference only if you have something newsworthy, timely, extremely important to announce and/or visually interesting. Announcing that October is DVAM will not be enough to draw reporters to a news conference. However, a proclamation by the Mayor in conjunction with DVAM may be a good draw if the mayor speaks at the news conference.
- 8** **News Release:** A one- or two-page report of a newsworthy event. It is written as an article; portions of good news releases often appear in print. A news release must contain a contact to call for further information, a headline, a first or lead sentence that grabs the reader, a quote from a spokesperson and additional background information. You should put out a news release in conjunction with the events or activities you hold for DVAM. The news release is distributed at the time of the event, either by fax, email, online media outlets, or handing it out.
- 9** **Op-Ed Piece:** A 500 to 700 word signed guest editorial that is submitted to newspapers. It should emphasize the writer's opinion or experience and be of interest to the general public. An op-ed on DVAM could talk about the pervasiveness of domestic violence and the importance of every person taking it upon herself or himself to take action to help prevent abuse. You can usually find guidance for submitting an op-ed piece on your targeted publication's Web site. Most national publications will not publish an op-ed unless it will be exclusively provided to one outlet only.
- 10** **Pitch Email:** A personalized note that specifically urges a particular reporter to cover an event or an issue. Pitch emails often link the issue to something that is already in the news.
- 11** **Photo Opportunity:** A photo opportunity that has a particularly good visual component, worthy of space in a newspaper or magazine.
- 12** **Public Service Announcement (PSA):** A 30-second or 1-minute announcement made on behalf of a nonprofit organization on either radio or television. They must be non-political, of wide interest, and benefit to the public. October may be a prime month for media outlets to accept and run PSAs. PSAs can be costly to produce but local media outlets sometimes provide studio time and resources for production. Local news anchors and personalities sometimes agree to be the voice or face for the PSA.
- 13** **Pre-Interview:** A telephone conversation with a producer at a talk show. These are used to be certain that the guest is a legitimate, articulate expert on the relevant issues, quick on her or his feet and interesting to hear. A pre-interview requires the same serious preparation as the interview itself.
- 14** **Press Kits:** Sets of information for the media, usually in a pocket folder, distributed at news conferences, press briefings or in response to requests for information. Press kits contain

news releases, statements, backgrounders, fact sheets, a brief description of your agency and biographies of leadership for the agency. As you work to publicize your DVAM events and activities with the media, you will want to have press kits about your program to give to reporters.

15 **Press Opportunity:** An event that is not planned solely for the media, but which reporters may attend. Examples of potential press opportunities are rallies, marches, candlelight vigils, fundraisers, public speeches or appearances, awards ceremonies and issue forums.

16 **Statements:** Brief (one page or less) prepared remarks of a spokesperson. Statements should be dated and include a contact name and phone number. If you hold a news conference, a rally or any other public event, you will want statements for all the speakers to distribute to the press.

Statements can also be used to respond quickly to a breaking story (such as a highly publicized incident of abuse). They must be prepared quickly and be less than one page. Email a statement within an hour or two of an event. Statements **MUST BE** quotable. Good reporters often follow up a statement with a question, but having a statement helps the reporter insert commentary into the story immediately.