



A GUIDE TO CREATING AND USING A LIST OF CONTACTS

WHAT IS A LIST OF CONTACTS?

A strong list of contacts is an essential tool when working with the media. It is the first tool you reach for before making any calls to the media and it's the most organized way to ensure you are getting your message across efficiently and productively. Your list of contacts is simply a list of people who work at key newspapers, wire services, television and radio stations, and who are your key contacts when you have a story to tell. The most common way to create a list is by using a contact management application such as Microsoft Access or Excel. However, the most important thing is not how you create your list, but that you do have one and it is easily accessible to you.

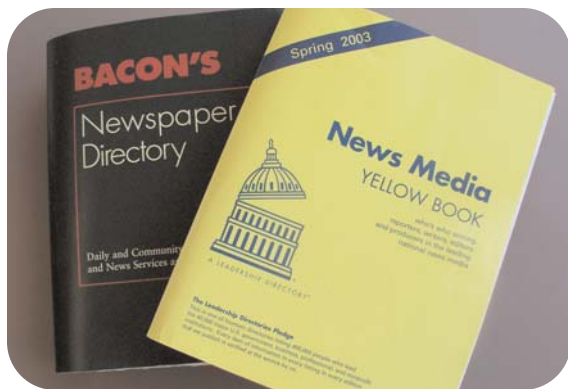


WHAT WILL A LIST OF CONTACTS DO FOR ME?

You may have the strongest, most important, most news-worthy message in the world, but if you don't get that message to the correct person, the public will never hear it. A reporter, editor or news director who is likely to be interested in what you have to share is a valuable resource in activism.

HOW DO I GATHER THE NECESSARY CONTACT INFORMATION?

Start with the names of all newspapers, wire services, television and radio stations that are relevant to your issue. From there, make phone calls, look on websites, read previous coverage and talk to others in your field to find out who covers your issues at these outlets.



An excellent tool, if you have the funds to purchase them, are media directories. These directories are printed annually, and contain names of media outlets and all the contact information you would need for each outlet. Bacon's is one organization that publishes a media directory. They have a database to which you can subscribe, as well as CDs and other software. In addition, Leadership Directories Inc. puts out the *News Media Yellow Book*, which features national news media. These resources are expensive, so if you can't justify the cost, check your local public or college library to see if they carry them.

WHO SHOULD I INCLUDE IN MY LIST?

Your list of contacts is a working document. You should update it every time you have new information. The more you work with the media in your area, the more aware you will become of who's who at each media outlet, and who is the most appropriate person for you to contact in various situations. By the same token, people occasionally change contact information, change beats, or even change jobs—all of which will need to be reflected in your list of contacts. Using the following protocols as a guide will help you get started:

Newspapers: You will want to include any environmental reporters that may be on staff. However, you may occasionally have a message that is appropriate for another reporter’s beat. Keep that in mind when making your list. You’ll want to consider adding:

- outdoor reporters
- health and science reporters
- education reporters
- state legislative reporters
- city council reporters

Sometimes your message may not be hard, breaking news, but softer, more story-like news. In this case, you’ll want to contact a feature reporter. Editorial writers are also an important part of your list. Keep in mind that not all papers assign the specific title “environmental reporter,” or “education reporter” to those who may cover those beats. If unsure of the best person to cover your story, call the city desk of the newspaper and ask them who is the most appropriate reporter.



Wire Services: Wire services are news agencies that provide news articles and reports to their subscribers. These subscribers, which include everything from national and local newspapers to television stations are free to use these stories in their own papers or on their own television newscasts. A couple of important wire services you’ll want to include in your list of contacts are:

- **The Associated Press:** The AP is among the most influential wire services in the country. You will be hard-pressed to find a media outlet that does not subscribe to this service. The AP has bureaus throughout the nation, most of them including a handful of general assignment reporters. It is to your benefit to find out who your key contacts are at the AP bureau in your area, and make that person your first point of contact when you have news to share. By securing a story through AP, you will reach many of the newspapers in your region, city or state.
- **Reuters:** This is another popular wire service. Reuters isn’t as large as AP, but operates in a similar way. Once again, find out who the key journalist is in the bureau closest to your area and make that person one of your first contacts.

Television Stations: The news assignment editor is your best contact person because that’s the person who decides the stories and issues that will be reported. In general, television reporters are general assignment reporters who are given their assignments from the station’s news assignment editor.

Radio Stations: The news director is your best contact person at a radio station. Most radio stations don’t have reporters, and the news director is often the one solely responsible for choosing the stories that are reported.

SO, HOW DO I CREATE THIS LIST?

No matter how you choose to create your list, it should contain the following information:

- Contact person’s full name
- Media organization where contact works
- Contact person’s title
- Phone number
- Email address
- Fax number
- Mailing address
- Contact person’s preferred method of contact (email, phone, fax) and other notes on them.

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TITLE	PHONE	EMAIL	FAX	ADDRESS	NOTES
Traci Watson	USA Today	Environmental Reporter	(202) 906-8175	twatson@usatoday.com	(202) 906-8200	1100 New York Ave. Washington, DC 20005	EPA/Pollution
Jim Drinkard	USA Today	Lobbying Reporter/ Political Business Reporter	(202) 906-8172	jdrinkard@usatoday.com	(202) 906-8220	1100 New York Ave. Washington, DC 20005	Preferred order email, fax, mail, phone.