Press conferences

Adopted from Paul Mundy and Bob Huggan
Press conferences (1)

- Call a press conference if
  - Your organisation has something important to announce
    - Technological breakthrough
    - Major expansion
    - Merger with another organisation
    - Response to criticism
    - Other announcement where media may wish to ask questions
Press conferences (2)

- Can be very useful
- But also can be difficult and risky
  - What if no one attends?
  - What if a journalist asks aggressive questions about something you don’t want to talk about?
How to run a press conference (1)

- How to improve chances of attracting media and getting your message out

1. Think like a media editor
   - Ask yourself:
     - Why should I send a reporter?
     - What kind of story will the reporter get?
   - If answers are not positive, then don’t call a press conference
   - Know **why** you are holding a press conference
   - Know **what** you want to say
How to run a press conference (2)

2. Cater to the press
   - Know their deadlines and constraints
   - If the announcement is aimed at evening TV news, don’t call conference for 4 pm
   - Choose time that allows reporting in prime broadcast time and in next morning’s newspapers
3. Manage time
   - Allow time at start for latecomers to arrive
   - Provide snacks and refreshments, but make the announcement within 30 minutes of starting time
   - If later, busiest reporters may have left
   - Keep it short: 45 minutes maximum

4. Stage-manage
   - MC introduces each speaker
   - Practise beforehand
How to run a press conference (4)

5. Check venue 1-2 hours before start
   - Equipment working?
   - Everything ready?

6. If outdoors, have indoor location ready if weather is bad

7. Presenters
   - Keep number of presenters to minimum
   - Limit length of their prepared remarks
   - Put large-type name cards in front of speakers
How to run a press conference (5)

8. Staffing
   - Enough staff for a press table
     - Greet reporters
     - Provide name badges
     - Hand out press kits
   - Facilitate interviews with spokespersons
How to run a press conference (6)

9. Materials
   - Printed materials
   - Photographs
   - Video footage of your organisation for TV crews
   - More than enough! Journalists compete: they will not share

10. Sign-up sheet for media people, with column for phone numbers and email addresses
    - Use to update your address list
How to run a press conference (7)

11. Visuals

- Use visuals (charts, diagrams) during presentation
- Large, big type, colourful graphics
- Display so cameras can zoom in
12. After press conference
   - Spokespersons stay a short time for follow-up interviews

13. Back at the office
   - Have someone at office to answer questions during press conference
   - Reporters who cannot attend may call to ask for press kits
Press conferences: Resources

- Indoor or outdoor
- Good sound system for speakers and journalists’ questions
- Audio-visual projecting and recording equipment
- Speakers’ table, podium or platform
- Refreshments and serving staff
- Enough chairs
- Press kits
  - Folder or plastic briefcase
  - Press release
  - Copies of speeches
  - Photos of organisation HQ, director, staff involved, relevant activities or products
  - Organisational brochure