

## Purpose

The Zonta District 15 Public Relations Guide (PR Guide) provides guidelines, tools, and tips for D15 clubs to use in promoting Zonta within their local communities.

## Overview

PR Guide? Does this mean more work for our club? Not really...your Zonta club is undoubtedly already involved in a PR effort – whether you know it or not.

Public relations is about managing the communications between an organization and its public. Broadly speaking, “public” is anyone who has, or will ever have, an opinion about you. For Zonta clubs specifically, this includes current members, community partners, other Zonta clubs, media, the general public, etc. You can add the word “potential” in front of each of these groups, too – *potential* members, *potential* community partners...you get the idea. Your Zonta club is certainly already managing communications.

This guide is designed to help your club *better* manage those communications in an organized way with access to a few tools that can cut your work in half. Who doesn’t want to cut their work in half?

## Why is Public Relations Important?

The main goal of public relations for most groups is to enhance that group’s reputation. We use it to build rapport and communicate with the “public”. Here are a few great things PR can help us do:

- Educate the public about our club and its programs.
- Build our brand, “Zonta” – make our name instantly recognizable.
- Build goodwill and credibility in the community – get people to admire us, trust us, and generally think we’re cool.
- Obtain funding for programs and services.

*Visibility, visibility, visibility!*  
*The community will not know about  
our great work to improve the lives of  
women unless we tell them.*

*Denise Quarles, Governor*

- Stretch our (very limited) marketing budgets.
- Attract quality members and avoid *competition*.
- Attract quality community partners.
- Stimulate interaction and feedback from the community.

You get the idea – we *need* to do some PR. If you’re wondering about “competition” and Zonta, think about this. There are a lot of service clubs out there competing for your members. You need to let them know that Zonta is the **best** of them – we are special, this is where they need to be, our programs are the most impactful, they have the most opportunities here, etc.

No kidding – it is critically important to get the public accustomed to seeing our name, Zonta, especially associated with mission-related service projects and fundraisers. We need to share our impact on the community and world.

## Planning a Public Relations Program

If you are now convinced that it is time to be strategic about PR, you might want to spend some time planning for it:

- Define a goal – Is it to improve your visibility in the community and make the name “Zonta” more recognizable? How about just doing a better job of publicizing your annual fundraiser? Think about what you really want to accomplish with this PR effort.
- Identify your audience – Break it down as much as possible so you can really target those communications
- Outline your opportunities for communication – Do you have an upcoming speaker presentation? Maybe you can have handouts about your fundraising efforts. Try to multi-task. If you’re a Zontian, you are already a master!
- For each opportunity, brainstorm ways to communicate your message – what type of communication would work – flyers, advance press release, feature story for the newspaper, email blast, posting on Facebook, etc.

**TIP:** Okay...here’s the first one. Develop (and maintain) a media list for your community. Make sure you include women-focused media.

**TIP:** ALWAYS invite the media to your event or fundraiser – it makes them feel special and gives them “the scoop”.

- Find someone to do it! Now this is a toughie...most of us are spread pretty thinly. A group effort may be necessary. Zontians can turn anything into a fun social event – why not an evening of brochure development! Doesn’t that sound fun? You know what I mean...

**TIP:** If this step is difficult for your club, think about marketing or PR people in the community who might be willing to help you at least get started. Try the local newspaper or a community college – even churches do a fair amount of PR. You might even recruit a new [and very valuable] member along the way!)

- Measure your success – I know this sounds a little like marketing or strategic planning or something...it can be as simple as asking for feedback. Ask people who apply for membership or request community collaboration how they heard about your club and why they want **you**. That will help you decide which PR efforts made an impact.

## Elements of a PR Program

Okay, here is the good stuff...a laundry list of ways to reach your audience. Check out the TIPS for specific examples and ideas that have worked for other Zonta D15 clubs.

### Press Kit

A press kit or package is pretty much the foundation of a PR program. It can be as simple as a brochure about the club or as complicated as a printed, multi-piece packet. It provides instant background material when a story arises. Here are some items to include:

- A description of the organization – an elevator speech would be nice here (something easy to memorize and concise enough to be delivered during an elevator ride)
- Key facts and figures; organizations impacted by your efforts
- Biographies of the officers
- A brief history of the club
- Two or three examples of events or programs

**TIP:** Be sure to include information about your annual fundraiser! Update your website frequently or send the information to our district webmaster ([webmaster@zonta15.org](mailto:webmaster@zonta15.org)) in plenty of time for uploading to your site.

**TIP:** You might consider housing these docs on your website – most media folks will go right to your website for this kind of information. To do this, you will need to save the documents as pdfs and upload them to a separate tab on your homepage where they can be found easily.

### Press Releases

There are many different types of press releases. Here are three:

Announcements – A brief press release issued about topics like a new Board being installed, an upcoming fundraising event, etc. You can make this one paragraph or up to 500 words,

depending on the importance of the news to the club and the amount of detail available. Be sure to send this to the right contacts on your media list.

**TIP:** See **Resources** for a press release template that can get you started.

**TIP:** If your local newspaper has a “business news” section, specify publication of your Board installation announcement in that section *and* the community news section. Remember your audience – news like this attracts potential members.

Trends – The media likes news about trends in the community or world and this type of press release will help you establish your identity *and* a reputation as an “expert”. This type of news is more work to write, though. You have to do some research and include your sources. Start by describing the tie-in to your club and expand to the trend from there. For example, announce your club’s involvement in an auction of paintings made by human trafficking victims. Then go on to talk about the ZI programs and the global trend in trafficking.

**TIP:** If you have established a relationship with a media person or journalist, you may be able to ask *them* to write the story (and do the research) with your announcement on the front – they love human interest stuff – and isn’t that what Zonta is all about?

**TIP:** If you see a story in the paper on which your club has some expertise or involvement, be sure to issue a release right away. Include your contact information and a statement that you are available for interviews. This will help establish your club as local “experts”.

Feature stories – This is a little different from an announcement because it is “timeless”. It can be run in today’s paper or next month. It can have a distinct point of view or angle and is usually longer than a press release. Consider a feature story on the club’s history or an expose about a community program funded by your club. Take the opportunity to mention “Zonta” many times.

**TIP:** Write a feature story with a community partner whenever you can – let them write more than half!

**TIP:** Always include a link to your club’s website and to the Zonta International website for more information.

## **Editorial**

Op-Ed Articles – These typically run opposite a newspaper’s editorial (sort of a guest editorial that allows community members to wax eloquently with minimal editing). Having one of these published about a women’s issue with a Zonta member in the byline could go a long way toward enhancing your club’s credibility.

Letters to the Editor – Most papers still publish these and take them very seriously. Unfortunately, you have no control over *when* the letter will be published, so don't try to advertise an event here. This is best for general information and thanking people. Make your letter short, concise, and focused on a single point – never more than 3-5 paragraphs.

**TIP:** Consider this format for thanking volunteers and list them by name.

Blogs – Do you have a member who blogs? Most people who blog have at least a few people following them. Share information about your club and have them post it. You'll be getting some exposure. Be sure your website link is included.

Community Calendar Listings – Make sure your events are included in local community calendars. Some of these are widely publicized and posted online, making them good avenues for club exposure and increased attendance at your events.

**TIP:** Be sure to target local business publications, women's magazines and newsletters.

**TIP:** Try using an email alert software like Google Alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) to be informed about Zonta activities all over the world. These alert services send you an email every time their search engines find a new link related to your listing criteria. If it's news, cut and paste it into the home page of your website or copy it to your newsletter. Send it to District 15 ([www.zonta15.org](http://www.zonta15.org)) too!

Events Data Distributors – Public Drum ([www.publicdrum.org](http://www.publicdrum.org)) is a free public service that permits event data to be shared automatically (the sharer saves time by only entering the data on a single web form). Public Drum is easy to use, easy to set up, and helps clubs promote events to local media outlets with the push of a button. Events posted by individual clubs are extracted and featured on the Club Events page of the D15 website.

Newsletters – Consider publishing a club newsletter to keep members informed and cut down on emails and phone calls. Include club events, a calendar, meeting minutes, stories about community partners, member profiles, announcements, whatever. You could print this, but it's a lot cheaper to just email it to members - you can make it really pretty and not have the expense of color printing.

**TIP:** Don't forget the photos! Take photos of everything – ask members to submit the ones they take at club events, too.

Community Organization Listings – Have your club listed in local and statewide organizations listings. You can get a lot of exposure from a simple listing like this.

**TIP:** Try one of the link indexing websites such as InfoMI (<http://www.infomi.com/>). For a small fee, they will list upcoming meetings and events.

## Printed Collateral

This type of PR will cost you more than just volunteer time to develop and write. You will eventually have to print it for distribution. If you have a talented club member and need a limited quantity, you may decide to have a member design the layout and color print the item. If not, try to think of ways to offset the printing costs (offer them advertising during your fundraiser, etc). Before you contract, be sure to mention that you represent a poor, non-profit organization doing good in the community (this is a good time to have that elevator speech in mind). Ask for a price break.

Brochure/Flyer – A brochure is like a sales sheet for a business. You can include as much or as little as you want. Be sure to include current contact information and always have your website and a current email address on the document.

**TIP:** If your club doesn't already have a club mailbox for sending and receiving emails, you might want to consider setting one up. Use an obvious name like "zontanews" so members can identify messages coming from the club. Have the secretary monitor it closely and quickly respond to inquiries.

**TIP:** Take your club and district brochures to membership recruitment events, fundraisers, and other major events so fresh faces will see them.

Invitation to Join/Membership Brochure – The information here could be rolled into your brochure or developed separately to include a membership application form and details of membership that might not interest just anyone (when the club meets, cost of dues, etc.).

**TIP:** Be sure to have your membership application online too. An interactive form is best so the club can receive applications right away.

**TIP:** Check out the district brochure developed for club use. This brochure provides an excellent overview of Zonta at both the district and international level – great for membership events and prospective new members. Find it at [www.zonta15.org](http://www.zonta15.org).

Business Cards – Club business cards can be a valuable way for individual members to remind friends and colleagues of their membership in Zonta. Including the mission, the club email address, and website makes sense.

**TIP:** Microsoft Word has a huge assortment of business card templates that can be edited with club information and printed on business card stock from an office supply store – a very affordable way for your club to provide business cards for each member.

Notecards and Postcards – A beautiful or unique design can be paired with a short blurb about Zonta to make a very functional notecard/postcard for your members to use. Every time they do, the recipient will learn something about Zonta.

**TIP:** Consider printing extra notecards or postcards so your club can sell them at workshops and other events.

## **Video**

Taped Broadcasts for TV/Internet – If you can arrange to be interviewed on the news or be a guest on a locally-produced television show, this is a great chance to advertise your club and its programs.

**TIP:** Be sure to prepare ahead of time, so you are not at the mercy of the host/interviewer. Have several statements ready to insert whenever you can – make sure you make your point and say “Zonta” and “women” and “service” and “community” *a lot*.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) – These are great for non-profits and widely used by government agencies. Short (20- to 60-seconds) broadcast announcements, PSAs are easy to write and can have a lot of impact since they can be shown often. They must be informational rather than an advertisement.

**TIP:** Work with your local community television station to produce PSAs and interviews. They can round up volunteers to help with filming, directing, editing and production – and air your PSA for free or a minimal charge.

Webcasts – This is a rapidly-rising publicity tool. Webcasts can be made of live events or archived (taped) material. As broadcasts go, they are inexpensive and, with a global reach, they deliver information instantaneously, and then you can have that material accessible on demand as well. There is software out there to help the adventurous try this approach.

Video News Releases – You can make your own videos, you know. You can even make a video with most phones. If you weren't aware of this, check out YouTube. An ad for your annual fundraiser could be posted to the Internet and reach millions!

## **Trade Shows and Business Organizations**

Trade shows and business organizations are good places to talk to a lot of already sort of informed people – at least, you probably have something in common with the attendees. Many communities have Women's Expos – think about how you can tell people about Zonta and about your club.

**TIP:** Share booth space with other partner organizations or ask neighboring Zonta clubs to participate with you and help staff the booth.

**TIP:** Consider joining your local Chamber of Commerce or other business association – sometimes members can attend events for free and be listed in all of their collateral publications.

**TIP:** Contact local women’s organizations (for example: the Lioness’ – The Lions club women) and ask to be a speaker at one of their club meetings. Share the Zonta mission and talk about your club and community involvement. Speaking at women’s organizations provides an opportunity to promote awareness of Zonta, consideration for service event/project partnering and membership recruitment. Don’t forget to use the resources found on the district website/member resources page and take some club and/or district brochures to pass around.

## **Special Events**

Even events for other groups can present great opportunities for advertising your club or an upcoming event – hand out flyers or make a speech. For your own club’s events, consider sending an advance press release and asking reporters to attend.

## **Social Media**

Developing an online publication or presence that allows you to have multi-directional conversations around issues is a way to put a “personality” on Zonta. Using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr can help an organization:

- Target messaging
- Seek and listen to the public
- Create connections
- Develop an organization persona
- Broaden the organization’s reach
- Improve chances that your website will come up in a search

**TIP:** Give some thought to your persona – check out the ZI Facebook page for guidance – then make sure your messages use the right “voice”.

**TIP:** Keep your messages timely, short, and sweet – it’s all about speed with social media. Only post current news. Don’t post too often and don’t post so infrequently that your “friends” forget you. Once or twice a week is plenty.

**TIP:** Ask people to “like” you on Facebook. Try sending an email blast with a link to your Facebook page and ask people to hit the Like button – a contest works well for this.

**TIP:** When you see an interesting Facebook posting from District 15 or ZI, share it on your club’s social media sites to make sure others see it.

There are other types of PR that may be better for a larger company such as media tours, press conferences, annual reports, community forums, and crisis management plans (yikes!). We won’t go into that.

## Resources

The following resources may be helpful for promoting your club:

Press Release Template – Fill in the blanks to create a news release that will get published (see Addendum).

**TIP:** If the timing is right, releasing your news on a slow news day will help the chances of it being published right away.

Public Relations Plan – This is the PR document for the current biennium that offers direction to clubs, and helps club that are looking for service project focus and alignment with District goals.

District 15 Brochure – This brochure is a perfect alternative for clubs unable to develop their own or a perfect complement to your own club brochure. For information on how to purchase, visit the D15 website at [www.zonta15.org](http://www.zonta15.org).

Membership Recruitment Presentation – This Powerpoint, found on the Member Resources page on the District 15 website, is a great tool to use when speaking at other service organizations about Zonta.

*The Bridge* – Current and archived editions of this D15 newsletter (on the district website) have a lot of great ideas for promoting events and clubs.

Public Drum – [www.publicdrum.org](http://www.publicdrum.org). Post your club's events on this website and they will appear (like magic) on the District 15 Club Events page.

## More Information

This document represents a compilation of best practices from Zonta clubs throughout District 15. Please submit your ideas and questions about promoting Zonta to the District 15 PR Committee by visiting the website at [www.zonta15.org](http://www.zonta15.org) or contacting the committee members directly.

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## ADDENDUM

(Press Release Template – Follow this format to develop an effective press release; use the bold text exactly as it appears, and fill in your specific information as directed)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Date:**

**Contact:**

**Contact Person:**

**Club Name:**

**Telephone Number:**

**Fax Number:**

**Email Address:**

**Web site address:**

Write Your Headline in bold next.

City, State, Date – Opening Paragraph (keep this to about 3 sentences and answer the questions: who, what, when, where, and why. Be sure to use your club name in the first sentence (and the name and date of the event, if it's an event you are announcing).

**TIP:** Editors usually begin cutting for space from the end of the release. Put the important stuff at the beginning and follow with details.

**TIP:** Write for a fourth grade reading level and make your paragraphs short (3-4 sentences). Readers want fast and easy reading.

Remainder of body copy – Give more details about the news. Include benefits to the community and those served and why your event or service is unique – try to sell it. Whenever possible, include quotes from club members, volunteers, clients, or industry experts. Try to write the quote like a testimonial or get people excited. Be sure to include your website address.

If there is more than 1 page, write **-more-** at the bottom of the page.

At the top of the page 2, start with an abbreviated headline (in bold) and follow it with **(Page 2)**.

Now, add in the rest of your announcement and details.

**For additional information (tickets, a sample copy, etc.), contact:** (repeat your contact information from the front page here)

Organization's History (give a brief background of your club or ZI here; keep this to about three sentences – let people know who you are; always include your website address.)

**TIP:** Remember that elevator speech?

**###**

This symbol signifies the end of the release – center it on the page.