



SIR PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM

by

Sir Carl Raaka

Growth & Management Committee Member, SIRinc.

60 Bates Blvd, Orinda, CA 94563

925-254-0482 <cajera@earthlink.net>

May 5, 2007

SIR PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM – PROLOG

Tom, I've been thinking about the SIR membership problem. There are really only two ways to recruit new members: either we "go to them", or we "get them to come to us."

Aha! Good thinking Damian, you have an uncanny ability to define a problem in it's ultimate simplicity.

The fact of the matter is, Tom, we haven't been able to sustain growth through the "go to them" approach. In the last ten years, membership has declined by about 7000, even though we have done an excellent job in member-to-prospect recruiting. We have to do more in the "get them to come to us" area.

Good thinking again, Damian. What do you have in mind?

It's obvious, Tom, we have to be more diligent in implementation in the "get them to come to us" area. Recent published data on California population and growth would suggest that there is upwards of 100,000 male seniors in the northern California area who would be potential members of SIR. Are our members acquainted, directly or indirectly, with all these potential members? Probably not. That's why we have a PR program. Our website is a form of PR. Right on the home page we've devoted two links to "get them to come to us". The first, "What is SIR", is all about us, and the second one, "How to join", is self explanatory. This is simply outreach - getting the word out about our existence. In the year 2006, we received over 40 website inquiries for membership and most of these resulted in actual membership. Also, one of our Area Governors placed a routine notice in the local newspaper covering SIR meeting data, Branch activities, etc. We have received numerous inquiries resulting in 10 new memberships.

Wow, Damian, you've hit the nail on the head again! Tell me more about this PR program.

Well first, Bill, we are putting a revised version on the website replacing the existing one. Here it is, in its entirety.

SIR PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM

SCOPE

Following Damian's wisdom, in its ultimate simplicity, the PR program consists of two basic parts: publication releases and fixed location releases.

FIXED LOCATION RELEASES

These are documents placed in a location where people (prospective members) meet, assemble or just pass by. Barber shops, stores, golf shops, public bulletin boards, etc. are such locations. Best results are obtained if the location can be monitored periodically, such as a Sir checking the status of the notice on each trip to his barbershop.

A suggested presentation is the use of a standard 8 ½ x11 picture frame into which an appropriate SIR document can be displayed. A wall mount is likely to be more permanent than table mounting.

These releases, for the most part, would be a description of SIR and its offerings to the retired man. A good example of such a release is "What is SIR" which is on the SIR website as noted previously.

Notices pertaining to a specific branch are also appropriate for this type of presentation, such as meeting place, location, day- and time.

PUBLICATION RELEASES

This primarily relates to newspaper publications but also applies to other civic, association, club, etc. publishings. They cover topics such as the aforementioned meeting information, the election of SIR officers, appointments to lifetime SIR membership, SIR involvement in public service, and other SIR newsy events.

If it is appropriate to publish general information about SIR, the website document "WHAT IS SIR" can be used directly, or modified for the occasion.

Sometimes getting things published is difficult. Here are a few tips that may be of help

1. Be brief and to the point.
2. Inspect the local newspaper(s). Note the editorial structure - namely the editor and who might be your logical contact person.
3. Look for routinely published sections or formats where your releases would fit in.
4. Make personal contact and develop a friendship with the editor and/or contact person.
5. Avoid the impression we are just looking for free publicity. Emphasize our member service side - the friendship, cultural, intellectual, health wise, recreational and other beneficial aspects that SIR offers retired men. Give each a copy of "What is SIR".
6. Know their required lead-time and press time. Work within their time frame.
7. Present a professional, polished typewritten copy of your proposed release. (They may wish to alter the format or wording, which is OK as long as the intent and content is not altered).
8. Do not appear to be demanding.

ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAM

Implementation is basically at the branch level. The Big Sir appoint a branch member to be responsible for administration of the program. This person should have a computer, and reasonable knowledge of its use and capability, such as in the word processing area.

Continuity within the program is of great importance. In selecting a person for the job, this factor should be a primary requirement. Look for a 3 to 4 year commitment. During the last year an assistant should be appointed, trained and be ready to "take over."

There should be no difficulty or complication in the administration of the "fixed location" phase of the program. Branches can operate independently of one another.

However, for the "publications" phase, there are complications. A given newspaper may distribute within the local of several SIR branches, areas and even regions. We must avoid stepping on each others toes, duplicating our effort, and, in particular, avoid a publisher becoming unhappy or uncooperative because of having to deal with too many contacts. Here is where Area Governor(s) must resolve any difficulty and coordinate the PR program as necessary.

Each public release should contain a reference to a contact through which SIR can be reached. In most cases the best contact would be the local Area Governor. In strictly local situations involving a single branch, a contact within the branch is ideal.

However there is another possibility for a contact.. State SIR maintains a SIR contact via the website link (sirinc.org) "HOW TO JOIN". The present contact is simply the email address cajera@earthlink.net. It may also be used as a contact on any release with the assurance that an inquiry WILL be acknowledged to the sender, and WILL be forwarded to a proper Sir for follow-up.

BRANCH PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of the Branch Public Relations assignment is to promote greater public awareness of the SIR organization, the activities available to retirees, and to intensify the local Branch effort to recruit new members. Statewide membership in SIR is presently declining and we must increase our effort, both internally and externally, to reverse this declining trend.

Towards achieving these goals the Branch PR assignee would initiate and sustain such endeavors as:

1. Issue releases as per the "fixed location releases" and "publication releases" sections.
2. Make monthly or periodic entries, relative to membership, in the Branch bulletin. Bring membership involvement to the fore to stimulate members to recruit.
3. Address members at Branch meetings, likewise.
4. Other approaches deemed productive and appropriate.
5. Follow up on all inquiries directed to your Branch.
6. Get your Big Sir's concurrence and approval prior to releasing documents outside the SIR organization. Avoid controversial statements or references.
7. Become familiar with other pertinent parts of the PR program.

PR PROGRAM - EPILOG

Looks pretty simple and complete, Damian.

Yes, Tom, but there's more.

What is that Damian?

Tom, have you heard about the three most important things in real estate?

No, Damian, I don't believe I have. What are they?

Very simple Tom, location, location, location.

Don't explain any more, Damian. I get it. Now it's

implementation, implementation, implementation!