

Getting Grassroots Publicity

AWS Section activity is newsworthy.
This is a guide to presenting news
that media can use.



American Welding Society

Introduction

All AWS Section events have potential for news coverage. The key to successful coverage is packaging the news to meet the needs of the media and working in advance.

This guide provides AWS Section leaders with some easy-to-follow tips on how to generate publicity at the grassroots, local level to help promote the Section and its activities. Outlets for this publicity can include local and regional daily newspapers and weeklies, selected newsletters, television, radio and Section publications.

To help develop your publicity package, we've included some suggestions and a few sample press releases and letters. Good luck!!

What Makes News?

Your Section engages in a number of activities that can be presented to the media for coverage:

- Meetings with prominent guest speakers -- including AWS District and National officers
- Social Events
- Educational Programs
- Election of Officers
- Section Anniversaries
- Section Awards
- Student Welding Competitions

But, be selective about the media you contact. Put yourself in the position of their

audience. The general public won't be interested in laser cladding or thermal spraying unless you can tell the person-on-the-street what these techniques will mean to them in their daily lives. Your local media are not professional or technical journals.

Social events, however, are newsworthy as are awards and elections of officers because these are "people" news items. Newspapers especially like to use such material, but only about people who live in their circulation area.

Writing It Up

You don't have to be a skilled reporter to pass on your Section news. Use the news release formats on succeeding pages. Just be sure you provide all the facts:

- Tell what will or did happen. Where. When. Who will or did take part.
- Spell names correctly. Be accurate about titles. And then double check.
- Don't abbreviate. (Spell out "American Welding Society" the first time you use it in a news release, but you may say "AWS" thereafter.)
- Make sure the information is typed. On one side of the paper. Double-spaced. With plenty of margin (at least 1-1/2 inches on each side.)
- Be sure to include a name the media can contact for further information.
- Always use a headline. Leave lots of white space above and below it.

- Always make your last paragraph the AWS official description: "The 30,000 member American Welding Society, founded in 1919 and headquartered in Miami, is dedicated to advancing the science, technology and application of welding."

- If you really want to go the extra mile with your news releases, get a copy of the Associated Press Style book at your local library or bookstore. It's a good guide. And media like to get material that conforms to their usage.

Developing Your Media List

Where do you send Section news releases? Develop a list of local and regional media contacts. This is a relatively simple task:

- Telephone Books -- The local Yellow Pages and White Pages provide you with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the news media. (Television and radio stations are listed alphabetically by their call letters.)

- Media Directories -- Look up local units of the Public Relations Society of America or International Association of Business Communicators as well as local press or publicity clubs. They may have media directories available at a nominal cost. Or ask any public relations people you may know.

- Telephone Survey -- Another good way to add names to your media list is to locate the writers of particular newspaper columns that cover local events. The writers' names often are in the by-line. Television and radio on-air personalities are

others you may want to send information about special events. Telephone the broadcast stations for names of specific reporters, editors, news assignment editors and talk show producers who might be interested in covering your event or interviewing your speakers.

- Section Publications -- Remember your own.

- Welding Journal -- Remember your national, professional publication.

Maintain your media list in this format, recording the data on typed sheets, file cards or computer disk in alphabetical order by the names of the media:

Newspaper

Mr. John Jones
Editor
DES MOINES REGISTER
715 Locust Street
Des Moines, IA 52808
515/284-8000

Deadline:

3 p.m. daily
10 a.m. Friday for
Sunday

Television News

Ms. Suzy Smith
Assignment Editor
KRCP-TV (Channel 4)
8181 Southwest Freeway
Houston, TX 77050
713/771-4631

Deadline:

2 p.m. for 6 o'clock
4 p.m. for 10 o'clock

Television Talk Show

Mr. Bob James
Producer
"Inside Indy"
WHMB-TV (Channel 6)
P.O. Box 55443
Indianapolis, IN 46275
317/884-0885

Deadline:

Two weeks ahead

Respect Deadlines

Deadlines are the latest possible times that media can accept any story prior to air or press time, and that applies only to hot news (fires, deaths, disasters). So don't crowd media on their deadlines. Give them time to fit you in.

Check your media to find out their deadlines. Weekly newspapers usually deadline about two days before the paper is printed. News sections of dailies will take stories up to a day or so before printing; specialty sections go to press sooner and generally need material at least several weeks in advance.

Radio deadlines are not so critical because many air newscasts every hour or so. However, television works at least 24 to 48 hours in advance (except, again, on the kind of hot news mentioned above).

Publicizing Special Events

Most of your Section publicity can be handled adequately by sending out news releases. But you may have a special event -- like a speaker of national stature, a Section anniversary or a welding competition -- that warrants more.

If you have such an event, prepare an advance news release to be sent to the media with a cover letter inviting on-site coverage. The release and letter should give all the relevant information and entice the media to attend and cover the event. (See samples on following pages.)

Be certain to mail or hand deliver these pre-event news releases for receipt at least three weeks before the event. Follow up your correspondence at least two weeks ahead on talk show producers and one week ahead for others.

Call the media -- newspapers, magazines, television and radio -- and ask whether the news release was received and to whom you should talk about possible coverage of your event. If no one seems to know about your release, offer to send it again. Offer to arrange an interview at the event with the most important participants.

To follow up on radio and television news departments, ask for an assignment editor. With radio, offer to set up interviews by telephone if the station can't get a reporter to the event. With television, be sure to emphasize interesting visual components of your program.

Important items to remember when telephoning the news media: the best time to call is mid-morning; before that is usually too early; later, you are competing with the day's "breaking news."

Servicing On-Site Coverage

When media expresses interest in covering your special event, anticipate their needs.

Develop a simple news kit that contains:

- Biographies and photos of the major participants
- The basic news release already sent, updated as facts may have changed
- Advance texts, if available
- Background brochures, if available.

Telephone the day before or that morning to confirm that media are coming. Be sure that someone at the registration table is alerted and another person designated as media host. The host should be sure that the media people meet the participants before and/or after the actual event. Ideally, major participants should be available for five to 10 minutes for one-on-one dialogues with media; alert the participants in advance to this possibility if you expect media to attend.

Offer media people a complimentary drink and meal, but don't be surprised if they insist on paying their own way (which may be their organization's policy).

Post-event Coverage

Publicity about events can be generated with media who don't attend, after the fact. Prepare a news release based on what actually happened. This release then should be sent to the appropriate media individuals; again, be sure what is said in the news release will be interesting to the general public or, at least, the business audience.

About Photographs

Sending photographs of people with news releases can expand media coverage. Use a professional or highly skilled amateur photographer. Generally send 8" x 10" black-and-white glossy photographs, but 4" x 5" head shots of a single person are acceptable.

For special events coverage, photograph participants in action, preferably with a banner or board showing the AWS logo. Avoid photographs showing people eating, drinking or smoking.

Each photograph must have a caption describing the activity taking place and identifying each person in it by name, business affiliation and Section title. Again, spell out "American Welding Society" the first time it comes up; AWS is too vague. The caption should be attached to the print.

For example:

"Speaking at the recent Nashville Section meeting of the American Welding Society in Nashville was construction expert Tom Johnson, vice president of engineering, World Wide Development Corp., New York City. Johnson, left, is pictured with Section President-elect William Radford, owner of Tennessee Welding Supply Co."

Merchandising Your Success

Watch for clips and air time to see how much coverage you were able to achieve. Send reports to AWS headquarters and put them in your local Section newsletter.

Sample Release Announcing New Section Chairman

For: Nashville Chapter
American Welding Society
250 S. Mountain Lane
Nashville, Tenn. 37022
Contact: Jim Nelson
613/477-5933

For Immediate Release

**Radford Elected Chairman of
Nashville Section, American Welding Society**

Nashville, Tenn., May 1, 1988 -- William Radford, owner of Tennessee Welding Supply Co., has been elected chairman of the Nashville Section of the American Welding Society. His term begins June 1.

Radford, who graduated from Nashville East in 1952 and from the University of Tennessee in 1956, previously was vice-president of the Nashville Section. He will succeed Dr. Jim Rivers, prominent welding consultant.

Radford and his family live in northwest Nashville.

The 30,000-member American Welding Society, founded in 1919 and headquartered in Miami, is dedicated to advancing the science, technology and application of welding.

Sample Letter Inviting Coverage of a Section Event

(date)

Mr. Alan Jones
Business Editor
NASHVILLE BANNER
1100 Broadway
Nashville, TN 37020

Dear Mr. Jones:

A new influence in the skyline of Nashville will be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the American Welding Society here.

Enclosed is a news release about the meeting. The speaker, Tom Johnson, is among the country's foremost experts in technically advanced forms of construction, including welding.

Johnson will speak to the Nashville Section of AWS on May 3, 1988 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Marriott Inn.

We invite the BANNER to assign a reporter and photographer. I would be happy to arrange an additional interview with Mr. Johnson or someone from AWS. I'll call you during the week of April 26 to see what you might want to arrange. Or, call me at 327-1512 if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

enc.

Sample Pre-Event Release

For: Nashville Chapter
American Welding Society
250 S. Mountain Lane
Nashville, Tenn. 37022
Contact: Jim Nelson
613/477-5933

For Immediate Release

How Welding is Changing Our Skyline

Nashville, Tenn., April 25, 1988 -- "How Welding is Changing Our Skyline" will be discussed at the next meeting of the Nashville Section, American Welding Society. The principal speaker will be Tom Johnson, one of the country's foremost experts in technically advanced forms of construction. He is vice president of engineering for World Wide Development Corp., New York City.

The meeting convenes at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 3 at the Marriott Inn, 2240 Longtree Drive.

Johnson will speak on how recent advancements in welding are extending architectural freedom while cutting costs.

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Sample Post-Event Release

For: Nashville Chapter
American Welding Society
250 S. Mountain Lane
Nashville, Tenn. 37022
Contact: Jim Nelson
613/477-5933

For Immediate Release

Welding Is Changing Skylines, Cutting Costs

Nashville, Tenn., April 25, 1988 -- Skylines are changing in new ways as a result of advancements in welding that extend architectural freedom, said Tom Johnson, one of the country's foremost experts in technically advanced forms of construction, at a meeting of the Nashville Section, American Welding Society, last night. Johnson, vice president of engineering for World Wide Development Corp., New York City, also pointed out that the advancements in welding are cutting costs.

"Welding is rapidly changing and improving our skylines," said Johnson. "We are seeing more unusual designs and angles on the tops and sides of buildings -- and most of these innovations are made possible by welding advancements."

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