

How to Conduct a News Conference

A news conference is a media briefing or a gathering of editors (mainly trade press) for the purpose of explaining “news” such as a company acquisition, major restructuring or product introduction. Several approaches can be used if you decide to hold a news conference at the 2011 International Home + Housewares Show.

The first question to ask in planning a media event is whether what you want to tell the news media is actually newsworthy. While it may be important to your company internally, is it going to be of interest and of use to the publication’s readers? This is the question editors must ask before giving space to any story or news item, however small the space may be.

Deciding Newsworthiness

New product news usually belongs in a section of the publication devoted specifically to products. The exception is the introduction of a unique product. If your customer base and people in the industry will recognize the product as unique, the media should know about it. The function of the news media is to inform. The specific function of the trade press is to help readers become more knowledgeable about the housewares marketplace.

A media briefing that is called simply to talk about “routine” product additions may not turn out to the company’s satisfaction. When a company invests time and key personnel in holding a news conference, and if very few reporters show up, the company’s public relations staff and management are usually disappointed. This is not to say that news conferences aren’t important, but that you should think about the relevance of the briefing before spending time and energy to prepare materials and people for such an event.

If your news or product innovation meets the “newsworthy” criteria, then you must decide where to hold the news conference. Do you want to have a demo at the booth? Do you want to have a hospitality suite at a hotel and invite editors to come or do you want to sponsor a breakfast, lunch, mid-afternoon break, dinner or other social outing? The more elaborate events should be scheduled only if you have firm media contacts and if your budget allows for this type of event.

Publicizing the Event

After you have decided on where and what type of media event to hold, next you must publicize the event. To publicize your news conference, send a news release to the media informing them of the date, time, location and purpose. It is very important to follow up this

release with a phone call or email to the editor or reporter. During the phone call or in the email, you can provide more information about the event as well as find out who from the publication or station (for radio and TV) will attend. Also include details about the news conference in the pre-Show press kit that you send to the news media four to six weeks before the show.

Your on-site press kit also should include a notice about the event. You can bring a small sign or notice about the event to the News Center in N228 on Level 2 of the North Building, where it will be displayed on message boards for the media attending the Show. This is a good way to alert the media to your event, especially if it was scheduled just before the Show. News Center staff also will tell the news media about the event if they are aware of it.

To inform the Show News Center about your media event, complete the **Special Event/Product Demonstration** information in your **Housewares Connect 365** listing. More information on doing that is part of the Exhibitor Marketing Kit.

Remember, however, that the trade editors and reporters at the International Home + Housewares Show often have scheduled appointments on the Show floor, so their time is quite limited. The more newsworthy your event, the more likely it will pull the greatest number of reporters. Many times, a good news conference is determined by who is available and remembers to come.

Contacting the news media you want to attend well before the Show is critical to a successful news briefing. Written invitations to the news conference are a necessity, but don’t depend on that alone. Phone or email confirmation is very important. If your event is scheduled the first or second day of the Show, call the publications a few days before the Show to make sure your contact is coming and, if not, to invite another staff person.

Always, always have a handout at the briefing. Everyone should have a written confirmation of what you’re telling them. Slides or powerpoint presentations are often more trouble than they’re worth, but if you have a really interesting story and an in-charge speaker, they can be effective.

If you have questions about planning a news conference or media event, contact Debbie Teschke at 847-692-0110, dteschke@housewares.org