
Communicating with the Community

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No Monkey Business!



Communicating with the Community – it's no monkey business!

- **Developing a communications plan is important to the success of your team – it:**
- **will strengthen ties to community**
- **will generate public relations for team**
- **will increase buy-in from stakeholders**
- **expand market for potential sponsors and donors**
- **will increase brand awareness from other FRC teams**
- **will be used to communicate with judges at events**

You're Invited...



Who Should We Communicate With?

Think of your communications plan as an invitation to learn more about your team... And it's a Black Tie Affair so you want to put your best foot forward!

- **Parents** and other close non-members of team
- **School administrators** and **school community**
- Current and potential **sponsors**
- **Other FRC teams**
- **Judges**
- **Politicians**
- **General community**

Letting the Cat Out of the Bag



How do we Communicate?

Is your team the best-kept secret in town?

1. Where – prepare your **media contact list** ahead of time. **Have with you at every event.**
 1. **Newspapers**
 1. Local free papers
 2. Local newspapers
 3. School newspaper
 2. **Newsletter**
 1. Electronic and paper versions
 3. **Team Website**
 1. Explore the website awards criteria for ideas of what to include
 2. Blog, calendar
 4. **Press Release** – use template (see attached template from Marion Murphy, FIRST) – helps to get facts about FIRST straight
 1. Prepare one ahead of time with details about the team and event and have with you at event; if you should win an award you can send it out from hotel via e-mail or fax. Fresh news is best news.
 5. **Team marketing material** – brochure, wish list, FIRST marketing materials (available for download from the FIRST website), judge's book, scouting handout for other teams

Don't Be A Lone Wolf!



But I'm Only One Person!

•If a small rookie team, **ask parents** if anyone would be interested to help out with PR so that technical mentors can focus on that area. **NEM (NEMO)**

•Set up **PR committee** – involve creative writers from school; school newspaper staff; English majors; photographers, videographers

•**Create calendar** and include opportunities for demos – have someone be the **outreach organizer**

•Set up **website committee** – involve website people from school; look for student that likes to blog;

•Subscribe to **news alerts** – read them to see how other teams get in the news. Critique to see what can be improved upon.

•Ask to **proofread any stories going into print prior to their release** if at all possible – common mistakes are first instead of FIRST, name of program.

•**Be sure the PR team knows the FIRST facts** – what FIRST stands for, how many programs are in FIRST and what their names are and ages of participants; how many volunteers help each year; impact FIRST has on students; scholarships available to students; sponsor information (correct spelling!!!); correct name of event you are attending, contact info for event if prior to event; contact info for team. Use correct logos and do not modify them!

•**Use as branding opportunity** – all forms of communications should reinforce the team image – mascot, colors, logo, name should tie in to everything!

Smile, it's all good!



Reaching out to your community will reap many benefits!

FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) Team Press Releases

FRC teams are encouraged to issue press releases to local media about their participation and accomplishments in the *FIRST* Robotics Competition program. Below please find some tips and resources to help you incorporate appropriate *FIRST* messaging in your release.

Online Press Room

The *FIRST* online Press Room (www.usfirst.org/pressroom) has many useful resources, including published *FIRST* press releases and concise information about *FIRST* programs: how the program works, season statistics at-a-glance, game description, award descriptions, and links to event and team listings. Feel free to use materials from our Press Room or direct the media there for additional information about *FIRST*.

Content Elements

Your release title and two opening paragraphs should address the who/what/when/where/why/how of what you are announcing (e.g. forming a team or winning an award). The rest of the release can be used to provide background or backup information, such as:

FIRST and FRC description and scope (recommended)

Founded by inventor Dean Kamen, *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) was created to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology. The *FIRST* Robotics Competition is an annual competition that helps students discover the rewards and excitement of science, engineering, and technology. Working with mentors, students have just six weeks to design, build, and test their robots to meet the season's engineering challenge. Once these young inventors create the robot, their teams participate in Regional competitions that measure the effectiveness of each robot, the power of collaboration, and the determination of students. The 2008 season includes 1,500 teams competing in 41 Regional events and the *FIRST* Championship at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, April 17-19. Participants are eligible to receive over \$9 million in scholarships from some of the finest science and engineering schools in the country.

FIRST Boilerplate (required at the end of any FIRST-related press release)

ABOUT FIRST

Accomplished inventor Dean Kamen founded *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) in 1989 to inspire an appreciation of science and technology in young people. Based in Manchester, N.H., *FIRST* designs accessible, innovative programs to build self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology, and engineering. With the support of many of the world's most well-known companies, the not-for-profit organization hosts the *FIRST* Robotics Competition and *FIRST* Tech Challenge for high-school students, the *FIRST* LEGO(R) League for children 9-14 years old, and the Junior *FIRST* LEGO League for 6 to 9 year-olds. To learn more about *FIRST*, go to www.usfirst.org.

Game description (optional)

A FRC Kickoff press release will be posted on our website at www.usfirst.org/pressroom on January 5. It will include a brief description of the 2008 game that you can cut & paste into your release.

Other Tips

Be sure to acknowledge your team sponsors in your press release.

Include a quotation to add a personal touch.

For award announcements, include the name and a concise description of the award (available in the Award Descriptions document in the FRC section at www.usfirst.org/pressroom). Add details of how/why your team won the award.