

Know Difference between Public Service, Paid Ads

Fact: Television and radio can get your post's message to a large audience in a short time.

If you don't understand the difference between *public service* time and *paid advertising*, you're apt to become frustrated, and the misunderstanding could have a dampening effect on your relationship with the electronic media serving your area.

Broadcasters make public service time available, but public service time is not given to airing the announcements of the weekly dance or the annual fish fry. Sure, many stations have community bulletin board programs that will air such announcements for nonprofit organizations, but this isn't true public service time.

Public service time publicizes blood drives, clothing drives, Special Olympic programs, and other events and services that benefit the community as a whole. Public service time won't be given if the benefit is primarily for the organization.

Misunderstandings are apt to arise when those representing nonprofit organizations ask stations to run as public service something that doesn't fit the mold. When the station balks, there is a feeling that the station doesn't like the organization.

That isn't the case. Stations-just as any other business-are trying to make a profit. When you ask them to run something as a public service announcement that rightfully should be paid advertisement, they have every right to refuse.

Planners and leaders of American Legion Post activities and promotion efforts should take into consideration the difference between what constitute public service time and paid time when planning their various programs.

Your endeavors will pay big dividends for your post and The American Legion when local broadcasters support your efforts. Keep in mind that public service time generally will be given for programs that help the community and not primarily benefit the organization. Naturally, when you want to publicize the big fundraiser of the year you must be prepared to pay for the time just as any advertiser.

Proper planning will assure you success year after year ... and make relationships with the radio and TV stations much less frustrating.