

Effective Post PR Program Includes Understanding of Broadcasting 'lingo'

"Lights, Camera, Action." It's a common phrase, but is that all there is to television? As technology increases the capabilities of television stations to cover events as they happen, American Legion Post leaders and post public relations chairmen need to be aware of how they operate. Knowing their language will make it easier for you to cooperate with news teams and to receive the coverage you want for your programs.

Knowing the language of the television news reporter and producers will demonstrate to them that you care and will improve the relations you have with the television stations in your area.

Every night while watching the evening news you can see examples of the many different areas of news gathering and production. Being an informed viewer is important, but when it comes to getting the word out on Legion programs, being an informed news source is more important.

Today, more than any time in our history, television is a prime source of information for the public. Every station presents public service announcements, special community programs and newscasts to inform the audience about happenings within the community.

As Legion leaders, it is your responsibility to take advantage of those avenues to inform community leaders and residents about legion programs. To make television work for you and your post you need to know the language of the broadcaster. If you speak their language you will find it easier to work with them on presenting information concerning local Legion activities and programs.

What follows is a brief list of terms you should keep in mind when dealing with your local television stations. These terms cover a variety of topics within the production and news gathering areas. While this is not all the terms used by the broadcast industry, it will help you with the basic functions you may come across when working to get the word out about your programs.

The key to making these terms work for you is to translate Legion talk into terms or actions understandable to the broadcaster.

-) Ad-lib - Dialogue or action which has not been previously rehearsed. Conversations or simply answering questions would be considered an ad-lib.

-) Audio - The sound portion of a television program. Television is a combination of video and audio, the sights and sounds that make up a broadcast.

- \ Break - (1) Releasing a camera to move to another position or to obtain another shot. (2) Station break; local commercial and identification between programs or portions of a program.

- \ B-Roll - A film or videotape insert reel which is added into the program or story. Normally, this B-Roll is used to illustrate and support the story or conversation with additional pictures. Good, human interest, visual activities are of most interest to television stations.

- \ Bumper - (1) A slide or graphic used at the beginning and end of various program segments, often before and after a commercial break. (2) Additional tape or film footage following the primary program material as a safeguard.

- \ Character Generator - Device which electronically produces lettering and other graphic displays directly on a television screen for use in production. Most often this lettering will be used to identify the individual talking or appearing on camera (known as a "lower third super" because it's the name of a person superimposed over the lower third of the television screen). Many people in the industry refer to the character generator as the "Chyron" (pronounced KY'-ron). That is the company name of one of the most commonly used character generators and the term is similar to saying "Xerox" when referring to all copying machines.

- \ Chroma Key - Method of electronically inserting the image from a video source into the picture from another video source. The process utilizes a selected "color key," which, whenever it appears in the foreground shot, is replaced by the background image.

- \ ENG - Electronic News Gathering; the use of portable video cameras and portable videotape recorders to cover news events quickly. Most ENG units also contain a microwave truck or satellite truck, so live sound and picture can be relayed to the station for immediate broadcast. ENG is how events at your post are covered by your local television news teams.

- \ Floor Manager - Individual responsible for all activities on the studio floor and for relaying director's signals to talent during rehearsal and production. Also called "Stage Manager."

- \ Live - (1) A program broadcast as it happens, in real time. (2) A device or piece of equipment which is turned on, e.g. "live microphone."

- \ Location - A production site outside the normal studio. An example would be your post home.

- \ Microwave - The line-of-sight and point-to-point transmission of video and audio signals. Commonly used to feed live and taped signals from a remote production back to the studio for taping or broadcast.

- \ Prop - Short for property; anything used to dress the set but which is not structurally a part of the background. Includes furniture, pictures, and various items used by performers.

- \ Release Form - A standard form signed by all performers before appearing on a television production.

- \ Remote - A television production produced outside the studio.

- \ Sound Bite - A tape clip containing sound from a news story. Usually refers to an interview or a statement which is used in the news story.

- \ Stand-up - A news story delivered by a reporter on location talking directly into the camera. Also refers to the open and closing sections of a news story in which the reporter talks directly to audience.

- \ Talent - Persons who are on-camera. Both, the reporter and the person being interviewed are considered "talent."

- \ Teleprompter - Usually shortened to just prompter. A prompting device which uses either a long roll of paper or a closed-circuit television feed to display script copy to talent. It is usually mounted on the camera.
- \ Video - The picture portion of the television signal.

- \ Voice-Over (V/O) - Using an announcer or performer's voice over visual material, so that the speaker is not shown on camera.

Whenever you post endeavors to arrange television coverage for an event or activity, prepare yourself to speak the language of the broadcaster. You will find that understanding their needs will make it easier for them to cover your activities and thereby accomplishing your goal - getting the word out to the community about Legion programs.