

Make Your Opinion Count: Write an Op-Ed for Public Relations Visibility

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An op-ed (opinion-editorial) is a form of writing that is used to express a personal opinion. It is an under-utilized and extremely powerful way to publish your opinion and to demonstrate your depth of knowledge on a particular topic. In this way, you are positioned as a thought leader in your practice area of expertise.

An op-ed is located in the opinion pages of a newspaper which is one of the sections most widely read. The op-ed submissions that get published deal with a topic of current interest, often controversial in the local, regional or national media, and take a stand. It is your opinion, so make it stick.

Since newspapers get countless submissions of op-ed letters, getting an op-ed published can sometimes be difficult. When writing an op-ed column you should follow some basic guidelines to ensure that it gets published.

Be opinionated. The more unique or controversial your opinion, the more likely the op-ed is to be published.

Write about one thing. If you cannot sum up your ideas in the headline then it's probably not the best topic to choose for an op-ed column.

Write in the active voice – it is easier to read.

Make a point that is unique. Prior to submitting your column research what the publication has recently published on your topic. You do not want to repeat what others previously said about the same topic.

Keep it around 700 words. Typically an op-ed column should consist of about 700 words although they can run longer depending on the outlet. Keep in mind that newspapers have limited space to offer, and most of the time, editors will not take the time to cut an article down to size. You can determine the exact parameters by obtaining the submission guidelines which are available in each publication and often on their Web sites.

Stay focused. Your op-ed needs to stay focused. Don't derail the train by trying to provide too much back up or deal as if during opening statements. It's the short, concise closing arguments that are the most memorable.

Be timely. If you are writing about an event in today's news then you must submit your column in a timely fashion – either the same day or a couple days later. Op-ed's deal with what's happening today, so don't get stuck commenting on yesterday's news.

Connect locally. Use the local approach when writing for a newspaper within your circulation area. Tie your commentary to what's happening locally and make sure you include your place of residence and why the issue matters to you. Many lobbyist and special interest groups write op-eds as part of their regular outreach strategy. Local papers are more likely to publish a column by a local author than a lobbyist.

Tips to follow when submitting your op-ed:

Know your audience. It is important to choose the right publication for submission of your op-ed. Only submit your piece to one outlet. Ask yourself who's reading the publication and why you want them to read what you have to say.

Define who cares. Explain why the publication's readers will care. As with all form of public writings, it is important to make sure the audience is engaged and has a stake in your message. The "who cares" factor needs to be included in your op-ed to provide the answer to the question "why."

Submit electronically. If possible submit your op-ed via e-mail. This will ensure that it is received in a timely fashion. It is also helpful to use the online commentary submission forms after you've drafted your op-ed in using a word-processing tool, edited it and spell checked it.

Offering your opinion through print outlets is a great way to get your name out there in your practice area of expertise. Don't be afraid to comment on what you believe in. You'll be surprised at how many people tell you that they have read you commentary. Once published, don't forget to order reprints from the publication to use in your business portfolio. The op-ed will then become a sales and business development tool. Make it last.

About the Author

Gina F. Rubel, Esquire is President/CEO of Furia Rubel Communications (www.furiarubel.com). A communications expert, attorney, author and publicist, Rubel has handled a wide range of legal communications from internationally publicized death penalty appeals to whistleblower matters. A nationally sought-after speaker, Rubel reveals the secrets to law firm communications success in her book, [Everyday Public Relations for Lawyers](#). Her public relations agency has a niche in legal communications. The PR agency provides expert strategic planning, marketing strategy, public relations, trial publicity and social media engagement programs to law firms and other service providers, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations in the U.S., U.K. and Canada.