



Audio News Conference FAQ's

What is an audio news conference?

An audio news conference (ANC), is a news conference presented over the phone. Reports, announcements or anything that can be presented to an in-person audience may also be presented via an ANC.

You must have a compelling reason to hold an ANC. For example, an ANC is appropriate for highlighting groundbreaking results of a project, new and innovative strategies, or an important event that impacts not only your organization, but also the public.

Why should you do an ANC?

An ANC allows you to reach a much wider audience in a relatively short period of time. You can talk with the *Akron-Beacon Journal* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *USA Today* all at the same time. There are costs associated with an ANC, but these are a fraction of what it would cost to hold a traditional press conference. Also, you are more likely to get reporters interested in an ANC than you are to get them away from their desks to attend a traditional press conference – and you don't have to feed them!

How does it work?

An ANC is an operator-assisted call. A telephone number and access code are assigned for the speakers on a call and another line is assigned for the listeners, usually reporters. The beauty of an ANC is that the speakers do not have to be in the same office, city, state or country for that matter. Each person dials-in from his or her location, provided it is on a landline. Reporters dial-in from their own locations and listen to the speakers deliver their statements.

The operator and a designated control person work the "comm line". This allows the controller to communicate with the operator without the speakers or reporters hearing them. They decide the order in which questions will be asked. For instance, if both the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Brand X Paper* wanted to ask a

question, the control person would instruct the operator to allow the WSJ to go first, since that is the more important paper.

As with a press conference, there is often a moderator or facilitator who opens the conference to give the overview of what the reporters are about to hear. That person introduces the speakers, giving a very brief bio of the speaker before she or he delivers her/his statement. The moderator can also put into context what each speaker says in relation to the issue or message of the host organization.

An ANC should last no longer than one hour. There should be no more than four scheduled speakers including the moderator. Speakers have 3-4 minutes at the most to deliver their statements. The point of an ANC is to give reporters ample time to get their questions asked and answered. If the reporters have more questions than time allows, they should be given the opportunity to continue the interview off-line. The controller will coordinate that.

When should we hold an ANC?

The best days to hold activities with the media are Tuesdays through Thursdays, with Wednesdays being optimal. The best time of day is between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. ET. This allows time for reporters on the left coast to arrive at the office. (They are used to having to make an early start.) Of course even when you have all your ducks in a row, if there's a breaking news story, your ANC may not attract reporters, despite all the preparation.

To produce a credible ANC takes at least three weeks lead time. This will allow for the preparation and vetting of the media list, distribution of the media advisory or invitation and follow-up calls to reporters. This does not include the time it takes to confirm a date that will work for all speakers. **Finding an available date/time that will work for all speakers must happen prior to the distribution of the media advisory.**

We do not recommended holding an ANC near a holiday.

How much does an ANC cost?

The cost of an ANC varies each time, usually depending upon how many phone lines you will use. For example, a one-hour call with 30 lines including an audio file (which can then be posted on your website so that people who missed the ANC can still get the information) and an attendance report would cost approximately \$580.00. This is a significant savings compared to a traditional press conference.

There are additional costs associated with the ANC, such as data retrieval for building the media list and phone calls to pitch reporters. If you use an outside consultant to pitch the media there will, obviously, be a charge for that service as well.

How do we prepare for an ANC?

You must have a compelling reason to hold an ANC. You should hold an ANC to highlight groundbreaking results of a project, new and innovative strategies, or an important event that impacts not only your organization, but also the public.

For more information about audio news conferences, contact Make Waves' account director Joan Grangenois-Thomas at 212-627-2404.