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**How You Can Use PR and Social Media**

**to Support and Market Your Chapter**

*ASHI Leadership Development Conference – 2019*

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# **Marketing your Chapter and ASHI**

## **Chapter Spokesperson or Communication Officer**

Your Chapter should strive to advance its mission by communicating openly and honestly using consistent messaging with its constituents, including the media.

It is important that one of your chapter officers be the chapter spokesperson, dedicated to communications, publicity, or marketing. The designated chapter spokesperson should be the only spokesperson for your Chapter to ensure the quality and consistency of information disseminated to media sources. The spokesperson should be the board liaison or chair to your PR and marketing committee if you have one. The committee members can assist the spokesperson behind the scenes and by helping with social media along with other PR projects. But there should only be one spokesperson.

1. The spokesperson should handle all media inquiries.
2. **Unless the requests pertain to ASHI** and then inquiries should be directed to ASHI HQ, to the attention of ASHI's Director of Marketing, regardless of who the media representative is, whom he or she represents, or how innocuous the request might have been.

The designated Chapter Spokesperson must be familiar with ASHI POLICY as well as your Chapter's Policy.

A professional appearance is required by all spokespersons, and the chapter spokesperson should be representing the Chapter, not their own business. The spokesperson should send press releases, reach out to the local media, including TV, video, print, and radio.

## **Chapter Marketing Must-Do List**

A bare minimum, your Chapter should do the following.

1. **Have a mobile-first (mobile friendly) website.** Over 60% of all web searches are from mobile devices. If your site is not mobile-friendly, not only do the search engines punish you, but visitors will not have a pleasant experience.
2. **Have a Google My Business Page.** Typically, this may require you have a real street address you can use for verification purposes.
3. **Have a Chapter, FaceBook Page.**
4. **Be an active presence in the community**
5. **Get creative with the resources around you**
6. **Alert ASHI HQ about meetings and any upcoming events so they can publicize on your Chapter's behalf.**
7. **Your Chapter should publicize ASHI HQ's events as well as we are all one big, happy family.**

## **Get on Social Media**

There's no excuse: If you want to effectively market your Chapter, you must be on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram at least. Or at the very least pick one platform and do it well. Better to do one well than to be fifteen places and do a poor job on all fifteen.

Promote your social media sites at all events and meetings. Have your members invite their friends to like and follow your pages.

Post regularly — find a schedule that works for you and stick to it. Share chapter news and events, maintenance tips, safety tips, and articles the public might find inspirational.

Outsource your marketing. Hire someone to spend 5-10 hours a week or use a company like Applica Solutions if you can dedicate the time.

## **Know your Market and How to Reach Them**

* Home Buyers
* Homeowners
* Realtors

Know the demographic you serve and appeal to your audience by building relationships. Identify your target audiences and foster relationships with all of them (Feeding people is always a great way to draw them in).

**Ideas for Marketing your Chapter**

* Do presentations at realtor's offices on a weekly and/or monthly meeting basis; educating them on why they should only be using ACI's
* Join local realtor associations as an affiliate member and get on the affiliate board
* Teach classes for your local realtor association
* Sponsor realtor event
* Have an ask the ASHI Home Inspector table at your local home improvement center
* Attend the housing industry alliance meetings if you have them in your area. If not, spearhead starting one. Housing Industry Alliance should include one member from every industry related to housing and real estate sales)
* Make sure your Chapter has a website, and it is mobile friendly.
* Find a niche tool that doesn't currently exist, but every home buyer or realtor needs and create it.

Think outside the box. Be strategic with the promotion of your Chapter. Personalize the message to ensure it has an impact:

* Get to know your local media by finding out what kind of stories they like to cover and sending different photos and stories to various newspapers.
* Promoting the value of hiring ASHI Certified Inspectors, find facts relevant to them (Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the importance.)
* Use language that everyone understands, and never assume anything — create messages for different audiences to reach them effectively

Use your chapter members as your No. 1 marketing tool. Never promote yourself, always promote your Chapter and the member.

# **Dealing with the Media**

ASHI is featured in national magazines, newspapers, blog articles, TV, and Radio. You can connect with local reporters in your area to specifically reach your target audience. This guide will help you talk to local reporters so that you can promote your Chapter and its members and convey important information about ASHI. Here's how to reel in an interview:

* **Pay attention** to real estate reporters in your area and follow the stories they cover.
* **Reach out** and make contact with the reporters, so they have you in the **back of their minds**
* when they are looking for an interview source.
* You can generally find reporters' contact information on their outlet's website. If you're having

trouble contact Dave Kogan ([davek@ashi.org](about:blank)) at ASHI for help.

## **Interview Best Practices**

* **Be prepared.** If the reporter remembers nothing else, what do you want it to be? This means you

have to prepare, prepare, prepare...

* Summarize **key points** for the reporter.
* Use consumer-friendly language and strong emphasis words like "This is very important."
* Keep the interview **short and concise**.
* **Use examples.** "People" examples are the most memorable and effective and don't be shy to

draw from your own firsthand experience on the job to illustrate a point.

## **Typical Interview Questions to Expect**

These are the questions that have been asked in many of the interviews done in national media outlets

by ASHI executive leadership.

1. Why are home inspections important?

2. What sets an ASHI inspector apart from other home inspectors?

3. What can homeowners/buyers/sellers expect from a home inspection?

4. Can you tell me more about ASHI?

## **Interview Tips**

1. **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO:** Select your primary message. Have no more than two (three at the very most) main points that you want to make.
2. **EQUALLY IMPORTANT:** Select examples that illustrate your messages. Use examples of real people in real-life situations that the audience will relate to (e.g., "I find faulty wiring in more than half of the homes I inspect...").
3. **EMPHASIZE YOUR MAIN POINTS:** Reporters and their audiences won't know what's important unless you tell them, "This is very important." "If there's one thing I think people should remember, it's..." The more often you make your point, the better it will be remembered.
4. **Think: What are the questions likely to be asked?** Reporters will generally start by asking, "What is this all about?" and then want to know WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and HOW. To get an idea what a reporter will ask, discuss your topic with a friend or neighbor who doesn't know much about the subject.
5. **Treat the interview like a living room conversation.** Be yourself. Be personable. Smile. Tell stories. Do all the things you would do if you were conversing with a friend.
6. **Remember, there is no such thing as "off the record."** Do not say anything you do not want to see in print, online, or hear on the air. Period.
7. **With newspaper and magazine interviews, slow down and know when to be silent.** Many print reporters take notes by hand and appreciate your speaking slowly and deliberately. Complete your thought and wait until the reporter prompts you to speak again. *Note: Your Chapter should have a list of specific talking points/facts that you can send (preferably of Chapter letterhead) to the magazine/newspaper ahead of the interview as prep.*
8. **On TV, keep eye contact with the speaker.** Forget about the camera and speak specifically to the person who asked you the question. If there are several of you on the show, look at the person who is talking.
9. **On radio, speak into the microphone.** You need to speak directly into the radio studio microphone rather than swinging your head to look at another person.
10. **Don't let your wardrobe overshadow your words.** Look in the mirror and make sure your outfit will not distract from the important things you have to say. For TV, dress conservatively in plain (no prints) colors. Do not wear black, white, or an all-red outfit.
11. **Watch nonverbal signals.** Eyes looking up, down and away look shifty and less informed. Hands that play with jewelry or clutch the arms of a chair look nervous. If you are nodding your head to indicate, "I hear you," you are also telling the reporter and the TV audience, "I agree."

# **Social Media: Why It's Important**

Social media has become important to people of all ages when they're making purchasing decisions or

need recommendations. More than **81 percent of consumers today** are influenced by their friends'

social media posts when making decisions, so you want to have a strong presence online.

You can use social media to **strengthen your member's and Chapter's reputation** as leaders in the home inspection industry and connect with potential new business contacts.

## **Social Media Tips**

1. **Reply** to posts and always keep it professional. Aim for one level of professionalism above the posts you're replying to as it signifies a level of respect for your customers and potential customers who are viewing your page.
2. Monitor **current conversations** on other pages and comment when you can add value to them.
3. **Respond** to questions and mentions in a reasonable amount of time. Aim to reply to posts on your page within 24-48 hours.
4. Acknowledge and/or leverage **current news and events** when appropriate. Share news stories related to home inspections, home safety, or other important home information.
5. **Share content** and give credit when it's due. Follow and "friend" local real estate agents and other professionals you work with and share their posts when appropriate. Build up a professional network.
6. Don't post anything that is **potentially offensive**. If something is questionable, it's better not to post it. You don't want to offend that next potential customer.
7. Don't be careless about **spelling and grammar.** People pay attention to this, and it can affect their decisions to work with you.
8. **Don't criticize** other inspectors, companies, or groups. Be the more professional person, even if someone is criticizing you.

More posts are not always better. Generally, we recommend not posting more than 7-10 posts per week. A good rule of thumb is to share posts that fit one of the following three descriptions:

• Funny or entertaining

• Educational or informative

• Surprising

The ASHI website and Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram channels are also great places to find shareable

content. ASHI's social media channels feature Postcards from the Field, videos, infographics, relevant

articles, etc., and you can share all of it with your followers. You can also find articles of interest in ASHI's Newsroom ([https://www.homeinspector.org/News](about:blank))

# **ASHI Messaging**

In any media interview that you do, ASHI members are asked to convey at least one of these main

messages:

* ASHI inspectors adhere to the strict ASHI Code of Ethics to make sure they conduct professional inspections. ASHI requires members to adhere to the highest technical standards and provide the best in customer service.
* An ASHI inspector can provide homebuyers and sellers with important information about a home before completing a sale. A home inspection helps protect buyers' and sellers' investments.
* For homeowners who have lived in a home for several years, a home inspection can be a good "check-up" to make sure everything is working properly. An ASHI inspector can help spot little issues before they require big repairs.

Exactly how you say, this is up to you. Put it in your own words so that it's genuine.

For example:

* For over 40 years, ASHI members have helped homeowners, buyers and sellers make informed decisions about their homes.
* As an ASHI member! Adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and make sure that I'm always providing the best in customer service.
* I'm proud to help homebuyers and sellers make smart choices about their investments. Safety is the most important thing to consider when buying and selling a home.

# **ASHI Background Information**

## **About ASHI**

• The ASHI Code of Ethics details the core guidelines of home inspection professionalism and home inspection ethics. Covering crucial issues such as conflicts of interest, good faith, and public perception, these home inspection ethics are central pillars of home inspection professionalism for the entire industry.

• Only an ASHI inspector can provide you with a professional, personalized inspection that combines more than 40 years of the highest technical standards, adherence to a strict Code of Ethics, and the very best in customer service. We call this "The ASHI Experience."

• No other professional society can match the credentials of an ASHI inspector. When you choose ASHI, you'll be working with a professional home inspector who has passed the most rigorous technical examinations in effect today.

• ASHI is the most respected professional association for home inspectors in North America. Through ASHI's continued efforts, ASHI's Standard of Practice—covering all of a home's major systems—is now part of many pieces of state legislation.

• ASHI's website, homeinspector.org, is the definitive resource for inspectors, homeowners, real estate professionals, and the media for information, advice, and resources dedicated to home Inspection. Here you'll find a wealth of shared ASHI home inspection knowledge at your disposal.

## **Conclusion**

If you receive media interest from your customizable news release, you will be able to share background information on ASHI and on your business. By speaking with media and helping build the public's knowledge about home inspections, you play an important part in keeping people safe and educated about home inspections.

# **Need Help**

If you have questions, please contact Dave Kogan at ASHI for help. You can reach him at [davek@ashi.org](about:blank) or (847) 954-3187.