

Techlink Media Kit

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Vanessa Lai

Do you have a great student project and you think it would make an interesting story? Then it would be great for the student to get some recognition for their work. Media coverage can be a great way to celebrate your student's achievements and raise your school's profile. You would also be contributing to lifting the profile of technology education. What do you do next?

Three easy steps to get your story covered by media

Many of you have found success with getting stories published in local media. You probably have contacts you prefer to deal with and a system of informing them of new projects. If you haven't had much experience the following is what works for me.

So what makes an interesting story?

- A positive theme
- A unique or new project
- Happy and enthusiastic students achieving excellence
- A celebration (student excellence, local/national/international prize winning, community help or support, school event)
- If you are unsure you can either ring the journalist anyway, and get their opinion, or contact me and we can discuss it.

Remember, schools are at an advantage with the media; people love reading about bright and happy students, and kids make great photos. Remember that national newspapers often have pages dedicated to education or students' successes. These reporters are a great starting point. Community newspapers, which can distribute between 10,000 and 130,000 copies weekly, also love stories from school, especially when they can get a great accompanying photo. National newspapers scan for interesting stories published in community papers.

Step 1 – Before you call a journalist- summarise the key points

Write up a summary of your project and outline the key points. Layer the information so that the most interesting points are towards the top as journalists always want the most important details first. Your introduction should say why your story is so interesting and provide the journalist with the details about your project. This should outline the 5 W's of the story- Who, What, Where, When and Why. Once you have provided these details you can then go into more detail.

The core question for any media will always be how is this story relevant to our readers/viewers/listeners? This preparation will give you points to talk to when you contact a newspaper – having the information prepared helps you

stay focused and avoid missing any key points. You should be able to answer any questions they have quickly and confidently.

Hint 1 – How would you tell the story to your mum/husband/wife/friend? It's the same principle when you tell the story to a reporter. Bullet points are fine as you won't have to write the story, that's the reporter's job. Think about successfully conveying an interesting story idea.

Here is an example of the notes I made before contacting The Nelson Mail about a Garin College story:

Sierra King, Year 13 food technology student, Garin College, Nelson

- Excellent student
- Bright
- Business savvy
- Hardworking
- Wanted to relate her food technology project to her Maori heritage
- Food technology has progressed a long way from the manual days that many of us remember. Sierra has developed a new product that she is working towards introducing to restaurants.
- The paua bite (small paua and kumara pattie)
- Lots of hard work. Trial and error creation
- Dived for paua with brother
- Classmates loved the taste tests
- Sierra loved the class and how her project turned out
- She could be destined for a big future
- The class has worked successfully with a client.
- Sealord (Frits Hofman, Senior Technologist)
- Successful client/class relationship
- Student site visits to factory
- Student presentation of product ideas to Sealord staff

Contacts

- Jo Calt (<Email and Phone number>)
- Nick Maitland (<Email and Phone number>)

Hint 2 – Timeliness is everything so don't delay. A reporter may not be interested if your story happened yesterday. Contact local media early as possible, so the Chief Editor can diary it and do some planning. If a reporter is keen on the story they will want to see your students in action.

Step 2 – Give them a call

Telephone a journalist (if you have their contact details) or call the news desk. Briefly outline your story and ask who would be the best person to talk about it with. Let them know why you think it would make a great story. Education publications aside, it is likely that most of the readers/viewers/listeners will have a limited understanding of technology education. This is actually an advantage because media are continually surprised to find out how sophisticated our projects are.

Let them know that you are going to send some information through via an email. Most journalists receive a huge amount of emails each day so calling first helps bring attention to yours.

Step 3 – Email them your story summary

Here is your chance to make sure they have all the relevant information. I like to summarise the discussion making it as catchy as possible. You don't need to write the article for them but you do need to communicate the key points. You could probably send them through the story notes you have just used for the phone call. If you have a photo or two that supports the information include those as attachments on the email. If you can provide them with some quotes for the story you can also include these into your story summary.

Most important – include names and contact details for those relevant to the story so that the reporter can access more information (remember to get permission from your contacts to share their personal details)

The best tip I ever got about dealing with the media was from TVNZ Reporter Hadyn Jones. He said that you have to do as much of the work as you can for a journalist without them feeling like you are writing their story (they don't like that). What works best for me is to give them all the highlights and make it effortless for them to get more.

Example of an email following a phone call:

Hi Karen

As we discussed, here is an overview of what I believe would make a great story for The Nelson Mail.

It involves food technology in a Nelson secondary school. Gone are the days where home economics classes meant baking cinnamon pinwheels and bread cases. In today's food technology classroom, students are researching and creating food products alongside industry experts.

A great example of this is Sierra King of Nelson's Garin College who combined pride in her Maori culture with her school work. The Year 13 student is in the final stages of her NCEA food technology level three. Sierra's project resulted in a paua bite – a small sized paua and kumara pattie. She recently secured a local manufacturer to mass produce a prototype of her product which is aimed at local restaurants.

This all came about through Sierra's food technology teacher Jo Calt (<[phone number](#)> and <[email address](#)>) who created a relationship with Sealord and took the class to visit the Nelson site.

Jo says: "Our Nelson students have a natural link to the land and its surrounding resources. We have such strong local support that we can show them local and real examples of how food technology operates in a real world

environment.” The class has recently held a presentation for Sealord staff too, I’m told.

Sierra’s research included the guidance of Sealord food technologist Frits Hofman and paua and abalone expert Mark Gornall, diving for paua with her brother in the Marlborough Sounds, and offering taste test samples for her classmates (which were apparently very popular).

Jo informed me that Sierra’s work is excellent, she has shown a real entrepreneurial streak....perhaps she is the next Alison Holst...or even Martha Stewart.

I think it would make a great human interest story and I know that teacher, Jo Calt, would love to let you know more about it if you were interested.

Thanks Karen, if you would like to know more I am more than happy to call when you have a moment. Have a great day.

Vanessa Lai

Techlink Communications Officer

Techlink is an initiative of The Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand

Email vlai@techlink.org.nz

www.techlink.org.nz

And this is the resulting article. Sierra's story also featured in Taiohi magazine, term one 2007.

The Nelson Mail

www.nelsonmail.co.nz

NELSON MAIL STORY

Student praised for paua project

22 November 2006

By NAOMI MITCHELL

A Garin College student is hoping her taste for Kiwi culinary delicacies will get industry mouths watering.

Year 13 student Sierra King came up with the idea to make paua and kumara patties as part of a level three NCEA Food Technology course run by teacher Jo Calt.

But what started out as a bite-sized project proved to be a feast of an idea.

The patties - called Paua-iti - proved such a success with fellow students and teachers, she wants to make them commercially and sell them to restaurants

"People that had one quite liked the taste, and they are differer because a lot of people haven't had paua before."

She developed the recipe herself, mixing kumara with paua she collected while diving in the Marlborough Sounds.

Miss King said she was aiming the product at restaurants and cafes, to cut down on the packaging and costs associated with selling at supermarkets.

Food technologists at Sealord provided guidance with the project.

Upper Moutere company A and A Snacks helped her to manufacture 300 of the bites as prototypes, which she has since given to 10 restaurants and cafes throughout Nelson to trial.

She hopes to collect feedback from the trials when her exams

"I'm still developing now; they aren't perfect."

Miss King said she wasn't yet selling the Paua-iti so was exempt from regulations regarding the sale of paua, but she would have to investigate the rules and the pricing of the product further before hitting the market.

"If I can get around all that I would like to take it a bit further than this. It's pretty exciting."

She also hopes to have a stall of Paua-iti at the Wildfoods Festival in Hokitika in March.

Principal John Boyce said Sealord food technologist Frits Hofman had been impressed with the product at a presentation held at the school recently.

"I was just blown away by the product and the effort that had gone into finding out about the different ingredients and the experimentation with different tastes," Mr Boyce said.

He had "no doubt" Miss King could turn the project into a commercial venture.

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PATRICK HAMILTON/Nelson Mail

THE WORLD IS HER PAUA: Garin College year 13 student Sierra King has secured an Upper Moutere company's help to produce her Paua-iti kumara and paua bites. Fellow student Nathan Sidwell waits for his chances to sample the tasty treats.

Key Points

Developing a good relationship with the journalist/reporter can 'grease the axels' for further stories in the future. Even if they do not intend to publish your current story, ask if they mind if you call with other ideas in the future (they won't mind at all because they need the story leads). Let them know about interesting projects, even before they are finished (if you are comfortable with that) because it gives them a chance to plan. Also, invite them to any presentation or school celebration involving your class. I have found that reporters appreciate these relationships as much as I do and clear communication lines make their job a lot easier.

If you have asked me to pitch a story on your behalf what usually happens is I will call them and send a media release (which includes the teacher's contact details). They usually let me know if they are interested and that is probably the last I will hear about it until I see it published. Journalists call people in my role "gatekeepers" and, after receiving the story lead, would much rather communicate with you directly (they see "gatekeepers" as story sifters who only allow them the part of the story that best represents their requirements- and journalists don't like it). It all works fine if the journalists have access to the information required.

I have included (below) some notes from a John Bishop media communication presentation I attended (<http://www.johnbishop.co.nz>). He passed on comments from Bernadette Courtney, Assistant Editor of The Dominion Post. Not all of them are relevant to the types of human interest stories that come out of schools but other points do require consideration.

Ms Courtney's comments were:

What we (media) like

- Advance warning- it helps with planning of stories/features and allows us to have a better shot at proper coverage, not rushed reporting
- Access to the people we need to talk to
- If you have to invoke embargos ensure they are clear (embargo- ban the publication of (documents), as for security or copyright reasons; "embargoed publications")
- Basic information. It is amazing how many emails/faxes that come to our office have vital information missing
- Timing. News is news as it happens. Don't send us a release 2 days after the event
- Change of plan. Let us know if a late release is coming and, more importantly, if one isn't
- Let reporters/photographers do their job.

What we don't like

- Being played off against other media
- Being told what to write and photograph
- Being given poor access to the relevant people
- Promises of 'we will get back to you with that information', and then you don't

- Dropping media statements late at night with no warning
- Slipping information onto websites in the hope no one will notice
- Tactics to keep stuff out of the paper- we'll just go elsewhere and be more determined
- Expecting us to wait two hours on deadline for a statement to be typed, tell us down the phone or find someone who can
- Products plastered as background on photo opportunities- I have seen too many event photographs ditched because the sponsors name has been plastered everywhere

And that is all there is to it.

If you would like any help or have any questions I can be contacted on 04 495 1647 or email me vlai@techlink.org.nz

Good luck with those fabulous stories.

Vanessa