

Mitzvah Day Publicity Pack

**Compiled by Simon Rothstein,
Ben Rich and Yakir Zur**

**Mitzvah
Day**



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Why we need publicity

**“Publicity is absolutely critical. A good PR story is infinitely more effective than a front page advert”
- Richard Branson**



A good communications strategy is not about 'becoming famous'. It is about communicating core values and attracting more volunteers and supporters who share them.

As well as raising awareness of your Mitzvah Day events and projects, and generating volunteers for this or future projects, good communications can help build and cement relationships with those from outside your community, such as your charity or interfaith partner(s).

It's also a lovely way generate kudos for the Jewish community and to thank your volunteers. After all, who doesn't like seeing themselves in the paper!

This pack is designed to help you attract media coverage for your Mitzvah Day project, along with some tips on how to use social media to further spread the word.

It includes press release tips, ideas on what makes a good news story and a guide to photography to help you get the best photos on the day.

Core messages



It's important to think about what your core messages are and make sure one, or preferably more of them are included in each communication you send.

The core messages for Mitzvah Day nationally, which you should try and include, are:

1) Mitzvah Day is a Jewish led day of social action that brings thousands of people together, worldwide of all faiths and none, to give their time, not their money, to make a difference to the community around them.

2) Mitzvah Day involves 40,000 volunteers in more than 24 countries helping hundreds of local charities in meaningful ways.

3) In the UK, where Mitzvah Day began, it is the largest multi-faith day of social action and provides an amazing opportunity to strengthen relationships with other faith groups by carrying out hands-on social action, side-by-side.

4) Mitzvah Day is confident, Jewish and outward facing, based on our willingness to reach out to neighbours and to make the communities around us better places to live.

What makes news

“News is anything that makes a reader say ‘Gee Whiz!’”
-Arthur MacEwen

Before sending anything to the press – whether it’s a local blog or a national newspaper – it’s good to think about what the media looks for. Every media outlet is different, so it’s important to read/watch them yourself, but here is a general guide to help you:

Innovation:

The media loves a first. What’s genuinely new about your Mitzvah Day? Is it the first time local faith groups have worked together or a new project for your area?

Celebrity:

A famous face can help broaden the interest in what you’re doing – that could be anyone from your local mayor or MP to a reality TV star to a bona fide celebrity.

Human interest:

Is there a good human interest story in why you chose you a particular project or charity? A personal connection always makes great copy.

Comment and opinion:

Is there an expert within your community or Mitzvah Day project who can comment on an issue of the day? Think about what makes our opinion stand out.

The news agenda:

Last year, Mitzvah Day achieved record press coverage as it chimed with the agenda of faiths working together. What can we tie into this year?

Timing:

Think about what else will be competing for space? If your main target is the Jewish press then maybe doing your Mitzvah Day early or late will make it unique.



Press release tips

Most newspapers will receive hundreds of emails and press releases each week, the nationals will receive thousands. Therefore it's important to make your press release easy to read; so that it can be digested in the few seconds a journalist may spend looking at it.

We would suggest sending one release a fortnight before your event, and another (along with pictures) after it has taken place.

Our Top 10 Tips should help:

- 1) Make sure the title of the release is clear and that the key element is in the very first line.

2) Give the journalist enough facts for an article, but try to restrict the release to one A4 page.

3) Outline your story clearly and concisely, keeping it simple and avoiding jargon.

4) Think how you'd explain the story to a friend in a pub – boil it down to those key elements.

5) Remember 'what makes news' and ensure you focus on the most newsworthy aspect.
- 6) Add context with a good quote, but make it engaging rather than puffy or clichéd.

7) Always try and envisage your release as a printed story. If you can't, then don't send it.

8) Get to know your target media and what sort of stories do they run. You can then tailor your story to fit their style.

9) Make contacts, as journalists are more likely to run stories from people they like and trust.

10) We can help with your release, simply contact Simon on simon@mitzvahday.org.uk

Template press release

Community logo goes here

Contact details to go here
Address 1
Address 2
Address 3
Email
Telephone

Headline goes here
Over 1 or 2 lines

Text to go here 10pt over 12pt. Sample latin text below:

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Click here to download a sample press release:

Letters to the editor

As well as sending press releases, many local papers welcome letters from community members – and this is often a good way to get your event featured and find volunteers or even other faith groups to team up with.

Your letter should be written in a personal style, by you, and make sure to mention any local or national issues that would make your event even more relevant. A draft letter, to give some ideas, is below:

Date

Full postal address of your organisation

Dear Editor

In a world where each day seemingly brings more news of hatred and intolerance, this year's Mitzvah Day – which takes place on and around Sunday November 19 – will be more important than ever.

For those readers as yet are unaware of this impactful event, Mitzvah Day is a day of social action and giving across a range of good causes carried out by a diverse group of volunteers of every faith, age, gender and socio-economic group.

Last year, an extraordinary 40,000 people participated nationwide, and around the globe, supporting numerous local charities and initiatives.

This year at [name of organisation/synagogue] volunteers will [describe your project]. [If this is a project with which members of the public can engage, for example Mitzvah Day shopping, say specifically what they can do to help.]

I very much look forward to welcoming your readers on [date of your project] to join what will be a meaningful experience and importantly, bringing a little joy to those less fortunate than themselves.

Yours sincerely,

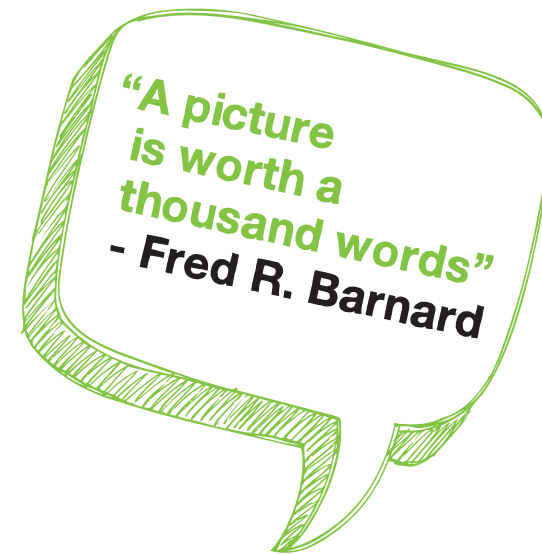
Name

Organisation

Contact Details

PS To find out what more they can do to support Mitzvah Day, readers should go to [website of organisation or www.mitzvahday.org.uk]

Basic photography tips



It cannot be stressed enough how key a good photo is to getting coverage for your Mitzvah Day project. A great picture will always lead to bigger and better press articles, as well as more shares on social media.

Think about the best photo. Who needs to be in it? Is it an action or posed shot? Are individuals wearing Mitzvah Day T-shirts? There is nothing better than lots of smiley faces of your wonderful volunteers actively taking part in Mitzvah Day. The newspapers especially love snaps of kids and pets!

Taking better photos requires a good camera – we would always suggest using a compact or DSLR camera rather than a mobile phone/tablet – and an understanding of the basic rules of photography.

DSLR cameras and most of compact cameras have several programmes for different type of photography:

M / Manual – You have full control on the camera. You can choose the preferred F-stop (the size of the opening in the lens when a picture is taken, usually between f2.8 – f-22), shutter speed (usually from 30 sec – 1/8000 sec in good DSLR cameras) and ISO (sensitivity to light).

A / Auto – If you're not confident with technical stuff, this setting lets the camera do it for you – automatically choosing the best combination of F-stop, shutter speed and ISO.

Portrait / Sports / Landscape – With these settings, often represented on the camera by relevant icons, the camera gives priority to the best combination for that shot.



Lighting and flash



Lighting

When photographing a subject using natural light, try to position yourself close to the direction of the light source, ideally at 45 degrees to the subject. When shooting outdoors, try to avoid direct sunlight, look for a shaded area, a tree or a under a canopy or a roof. Do not position your subject in direct sun. If there is no shade available, position your subject/s with their back to the sun at 45 degrees.

Shooting indoors

When shooting inside during the day, in a room with enough natural light, try to position yourself between the light source (a window) and your subject at about 45 degrees. If you have to shoot against a bright window – there are two things you can do to prevent your subjects ending up dark

and underexposed. One option is to increase the exposure manually; the second is to use a flashgun to add light to the subjects which will balance the light coming from the window.

Using a flashgun

Most cameras have a built-in flash, which gives a very harsh unflattering lighting but is better than nothing. If you do a lot of indoor photography for your community, it would be useful to acquire an external flashgun (£40 – £80 will get you a decent enough one). When shooting in a room with not too high a ceiling, aim your flash, by swivelling it around, at the ceiling behind you, at 45 degrees. The light will bounce; creating a more soft, flattering light. Make sure the ISO is at least at 400 or 800 and the F-stop is about f4.

Composition

One of the main elements in creating a good picture is the Golden Ratio, which has been used as a powerful composition tool for centuries. The Golden Ratio It is a design principle based on the ratio of 1 to 1.618, also known as the rule of 2/3.

The best way to apply the Golden Ratio is to divide your image in your mind into three equal parts vertically and horizontally. When placing your subject in your view finder, try to position it on the 1/3 – 2/3 line, horizontally or vertically, depending on your camera orientation. By positioning the subject this way, you will create an image that has a strong composition, which will attract viewers to your photograph.

The Golden Ratio applies both to portraits or landscape – when shooting a portrait you should aim to place the subject eyes about third from the top. The same rule apply when photographing a group – make sure to position the group faces more or less on the 2/3 horizontal line.



Social media tips and tricks



The more you and your volunteers post about Mitzvah Day on social media, and the more people that like and share your posts, the more buzz we can build. There is no exact science to getting your posts noticed, but these handy tips should help:

- 1) Make sure to tag Mitzvah Day into your posts, so we can share them. We are @MitzvahDay on Twitter and 'Mitzvah Day' on Facebook. Please also use #MitzvahDay17 on both.
- 2) Also tag in the charity you are helping, faith groups you are working alongside and any celebrities or politicians taking part. But don't overdo it.
- 3) Think about the times you are posting. More people look at social media over lunch, so that's always a key period to post on Twitter and Facebook. Test different times of day to find out when your followers are most active.
- 4) People love photographs, so make sure to post plenty of good ones. The tips about photography in this press pack should help. Research suggests that photos and videos are the most shared types of content.
- 5) If people reply to your messages in a positive fashion then make sure to engage with them. Similarly, if there's a media article about your event be sure to put it on your social media and tag in the newspaper/website.
- 6) Most importantly, ask your volunteers, friends and family to share and/or retweet your key posts, this is the quickest and easiest way to increase reach and spread the word.
- 7) Although we tend to focus on Facebook and Twitter, don't forget there are plenty of other social media platforms to experiment with and maximise interest.

Other communication channels

While coverage in the press, and across social media is key, never forget that the main way to get local people interested in your local project is by talking directly to them. There are so many ways to reach people, including:

- **Internal communications:**
e.g. meetings, community briefings, blog, website
- **Marketing materials:**
e.g. flyers, leaflets, brochures, letters
- **Email and text messages**
- **Word of mouth, telephone trees and third party recommendation**

And finally, if you have a good project then make sure to tell US about it too!

Email Simon Rothstein, who is in charge of Mitzvah Day's national PR and Comms on simon@mitzvahday.org.uk - he can help advise on your releases and letters, share relevant contacts and, with big projects, arrange a photographer and deal directly with the press on your behalf.

About the authors

Simon Rothstein

is a freelance public relations and social media expert, with 15 years' experience working in, and with, the media. He handles all PR and communications for Mitzvah Day, as well as working with other organisations including Liberal Judaism and Jewish Blind & Disabled. Simon was previously a journalist and editor, working for publications including The Sun and The Guardian. He can be reached at simon@mitzvahday.org.uk and simon@srxconsultancy.com

Ben Rich

is a trustee of Mitzvah Day and set up its media and PR operations. He advises community and faith organisations on their PR and communications, including Mitzvah Day, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Commission on Religion and Belief and Liberal Judaism. Ben is a regular columnist for the Jewish News and editor of the Jewish Chronicle's annual Power 100. He can be reached at ben@benrich.co.uk

Yakir Zur
photography

has been capturing amazing life experiences from behind his lens camera for over 30 years. His career started as an apprentice at a photographic agency in Israel, working as a journalist in a print and broadcast media company. It was there that he discovered a unique ability to photograph events and create pictures that would speak for themselves. He now lives and works in London, and has a vast portfolio which offers a variety of images depicting "people of interest", celebrities, publicity, and press shots. He is regularly commissioned to photograph charitable and corporate events as well as private functions, including weddings. He can be reached at info@yzphotography.co.uk



**Mitzvah
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