

Tips'n'tricks: Guidelines on How to Work with the Media

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INTRODUCTION

Y-PEER is a rapidly growing network that involves communication between many organizations and people around the world. It is very important for any Y-PEER member to have skills working with media, know how to announce and present the events.

You do not have to hire a communications professional or be a media pro yourself but there are some tips'n'tricks that will help you to make your public relations efforts more successful.

Work with media greatly impacts the credibility of the Y-PEER network, its member organizations, projects implemented, and individuals involved.

Communication with the public takes time and effort but it pays off as it helps to attract resources, including volunteers, sponsors, and funding. It establishes sustainability and success of your programme and informs people about your initiatives. Building a strong relations with the media representatives will strengthen the voices of those you represent: consider media as a reliable advocacy tool for your programme or initiative.

There are many types of media: TV, print press, radio, Internet, newsletters. But what you really need to consider is that not all of them are best for disseminating different types of information and messages to different target audiences. Keeping in mind that we are living in the information age and media is overloaded with information, you should be very careful about winning attention and standing out of the crowd. To do so, you need to develop a strategic approach and identify:

- Who you want to target? What are the perceptions and attitudes of your target audience?;
- What type of media are more often used by your target group?;
- What is your purpose?;
- What messages would you like to bring forward and what follow up do you expect;
- How to best formulate your messages for the audience depending on type of media.

This guide provides some tips and tricks on how to best announce, present, promote your services, programs, projects, events, and etc. in media.

The guide was developed by Y-PEER PETRI-Sofia fellow Malika Atasheva, under the coordination of Mario Balibago, International Coordinator in Charge of Media and Communication and Antonina Radeva, PETRI - Sofia coordinator,. Special credits go to International Coordinators board of the Y-PEER network and Rua Al-Taweel, Y-PEER PETRI - Sofia Fellow for providing feedback for the guide.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA

You can arrange special event to build relationship with the media, or have a casual meet ups with journalists to introduce your organization and its upcoming plans. In both cases it is a good place to distribute a media kit, advertise about upcoming events and include new contacts into your media database.

assigning new contacts into your media database

Assign one person to deal with the media. Ideally, this person should be well informed about the respective area of work, have good communications skills and be available and contactable.

Compile a database of all media contacts. When contacting media outlets, find out which writers are covering or interested in your area of work and follow up with them. It should include details of all media people who have contacted you previously regarding any events, the names and details of journalists whom you read, hear or see covering issues/cases well or sympathetically in the area of your work. The database should be kept up to date, noting when new journalists join or when a good journalist moves elsewhere.

Develop a communications plan. This plan should be a solid media strategy based on your goals, time, work plan, defining target audience, and etc.

Establish your credibility. Contact the relevant media and introduce yourself and the organization or program you represent to the journalist. Find out what kinds of stories are of interest to the paper and the individual, what stories they are working on and offering to send in material, making sure to share the organization's annual report, or any other publicity reports. The press officer could also create or suggest a story once a relationship has been built up. The relationship should be sustained, even when it does not appear immediately to have a 'pay-off' for your organization.

Start working with local media first: they are often more responsive than national media because they are more 'accountable' to local communities and more likely to be interested in local human stories and initiatives.

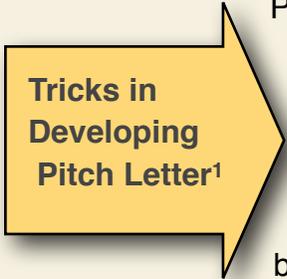
Be very sensitive and **respectful** to a local situation and/or culture.

✓ When you have a good news story, it is best to **approach a larger number of media representatives**. But be fair and let them know that others have been approached as well. If you do negotiate ‘an exclusive’, keep it exclusive to show you can be trusted in the future.

✓ **Recognize the contribution of media**, e.g. send letters of appreciation, etc.

TIPS ON PROMOTING EVENTS IN TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Mass media representatives are more likely to contact you if you attract their attention by announcing upcoming events. There are several ways to do so and in this part you can find some tricks that you should keep in mind when announcing or suggesting a story to reporters.



Tricks in Developing Pitch Letter¹

Pitch letter serves as a proposal for the future story and offers an interview with a key person, written to accompany press release. It is generally shorter than press releases and does not cover all the background details. Pitch letter is more like a “teaser”: something to catch the audience’s interest, and get journalists to write a story about the product. It is less formal and, unlike press release, can not be published as it is.

✓ **Target media individuals with your pitch letter.**

✓ **Start off with your best shot:** with a question or an interesting sensation that relates your article to your target audience. Give the story an interesting angle and do not focus too much on formalities.

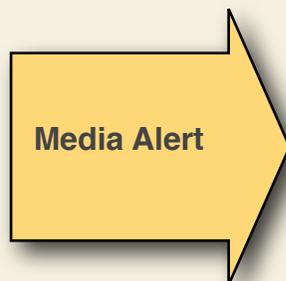
✓ **Back up your first sentence with facts and explanations** by getting straight to the point: be direct and clear, but do not go deep into details of the whole story.

✓ **Mention the opportunity to set up an interview with key people**, if appropriate. If you mention interviewees, you can also include their contacts (but make sure they’ve been notified before).

Make your letter no longer than one page: 200 – 400 words are recommended. You can eventually tweet parts of it or rephrase it for your twitter /Facebook followers.

Include your full contact information.

Follow-up your Pitch Letter by giving a call.



Media alert, also called a media advisory, serves to notify media of an upcoming event ahead of time. You can look at it as an invitation to an event. Usually, it is not distributed during the event, as all the reporters are already there with you.

Tell in your alert why the event is happening, who is attending and/or speaking, when and where it will take place, how long, whom to contact for more information.

Be brief but compelling and sufficiently informative. Only provide the basic information without giving out the whole story.

Make clear that there are visual opportunities for TV reporters, photographers.

Give the angle that will interest reporters: the event should be to a specific reporter or specific community. To do so, you can consider including a “local spin” on the story.

Reporters will give priority to stories that are timely. **Send media alert by fax or e-mail a week before your event and again a day or two days before.** Avoid nagging.

Send alerts to as many people as possible.

Tips of Writing a Catchy Press Release¹

A press release helps to communicate a news story to the media. It is sometimes called “news release”, as most newsrooms do not have press. You might want to send press release to media unaccompanied by events, and for media personnel who didn't make it to an event but would still want to cover it. Reporters are more likely to consider a story idea if they receive a catchy release. They can either be sent alone by e-mail, fax or snail mail or be part of a full press kit. Press release does not announce an upcoming event/press conference, it reports on the event/press conference.

Think of press releases as a way for you to write the article for a reporter, so the article can be made directly from your press release. News agencies received tens of newsletters every day, if yours requires a lot of editing, it will most likely not make it to the print edition.

☑ **Don't delay with press-release:** news should be new. Investigate the deadlines. If a newspaper releases in the morning, make sure you submit your press-release in time.

☑ **Keep it short:** preferably one to two pages.

☑ **Create a catchy headline:** it should be attention – grabbing, informative, and active. Write it in bold and with bigger letters than the text. The headline should include key words and provide the idea of the press release content. It should be in present tense and exclude "a" and "the".

☑ **Summarize all the important information in the 1st paragraph** of your press-release, with several sentences, which will **expand upon the lead**. Here reporters should find answers for all the W's questions: who, what, where, when and why.

☑ **Include human interest stories**, especially when sending press-release to a local media. People will be more interested in reading about how your initiative/programme/event affects a single person, rather than a bunch of statistics.

☑ **Avoid using very long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid repetition and over use of fancy language or jargon.** You may need to use some jargon or industry specific terms, but limit it to the minimum and define when needed. Spell out acronyms the first time they are used. Your press release is aimed at a general readership.

☑ **Use quotes.** Each quote should make one clear relevant point.

✓ Always **include the name, phone, and e-mail of your contact person** for more information.

✓ If distributing via e-mail, **send the press-release in the body** as e-mails with attachments often get bounced back. Do not make the subject line of your e-mail "press release." Get attention by making the **subject line your "grabber" headline**.

✓ Don't forget to **attach couple of pictures** of your event along with the press release.

✓ **Follow-up:** call the news desk and check if your release was received and whether the story will be covered, and is there any other information needed.

✓ If distributing a hard copy of the press release, **print it on high quality paper** using a good laser or inkjet printer. You only get one chance to make a professional first impression.

MANAGING PHOTOS

To add a human interest and to increase the chances of your story to be picked up by media you need to accompany it with pictures. A picture is worth a thousand words! Newspaper editors receive many photos every day and very few ever get published. If you have photos that you think may be of interest to newspaper then the tips below will provide you with an idea on how to proceed with this.

Note that some publications have limited space; if they don't make room for an article + a photo about your activities, you can offer to send a picture with a 2-3 sentences as caption to be published as a Standalone (photo with short description, no article).

✓ **Take each photo** in a way **so it tells a story with action** or movement on it. Don't simply ask people to pose for the picture.

✓ **Send only high quality pictures with .jpgs extension** of around 2mb at 300dpi.

✓ Before sharing the pictures with media, **check with people who appear on the photo if they don't mind its external wide circulation** and make sure they realize that they could be identified. Keep in mind that in some countries there are certain restrictions of publishing photos of children. Investigate other restrictions and etiquette of publishing pictures on a local level.

☑ **Be very critical of your own work** and only send the best images with different views. i.e. scene setting shot, close up, human interaction.

☑ When you send any photos, also **include explanatory captions and an accreditation line**¹.

☑ If you are sending a hard copy of photo to paper, **never send the last copy you have**. You may not get your photos returned.

PREPARING A MEDIA KIT

If you want your organization/network to be noticed by media you should develop a media kit. Media kit, also called press kit, media package, and etc., represent a folder of information about an organization or a network. There are no specific rules of what your media kit should include and it will vary based on what you want to promote and how. When compiling a media kit you need to think what you want the media to know about your organization.

The media kit might include such components as:

- Media Release
- Brochure
- Fact sheet
- Backgrounders
- Business card with all the contact information of your organization's media person.
- Pen and notebook

We have already covered what **press release** is and how to write it in this guide. The media release that you will want to include into your media kit may inform about the recent event or campaign your organization has implemented.

¹ For a sample of a caption see Annex 3

Brochure usually includes all the basic information about the organization, such as vision, mission, target groups, main achievements, section on how to get involved, contact information, and other relevant information.

Fact sheets and backgrounders provide additional information and insight, such as additional statistics, the history of a movement or organization, or other relevant details. Backgrounders usually are written in narrative style, whereas fact sheets provide information in “at-a-glance” formats (bullets, sections).

Here are some tricks to keep in mind.

Include the most current media release: do not pack your media kit with more than one press-release.

Do not overload your media kit **with too much information.** Include and structure all the main and recent information you want media to know.

Be sure to **make your media contact's name and contact info clear** and noticeable.

Focus on efficient distribution: media kits can be handed personally during the events or send through e-mails. Do not print huge amount of copies and randomly distribute your media kit everywhere. Spend some time on research and target those reporters that are interested in your cause/organization.

Monitor: find out what information reporters find interesting and keep updating and adjusting your media kit content appropriately.

PROMOTING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a key tool in public relations and marketing. For anyone who is concerned about effective communications, it is important to understand these new technologies and know how to apply them in public relation strategy. Social media helps you to reach wider communities and people.

Below are the main ways of how to use various types of social media to create a strong PR, credibility and establish dialogue with your target groups.



Choose the right way to start: create a fan page for organization, network, etc.; create causes for causes campaigns; and profiles - only for real people (not organizations or causes).

- Your organization's fan page name and description are both searchable, so **include acronyms** in one or both.

- Upload a good profile image** as it is the first thing potential fans see when they are on the page. Is yours bold and enticing or a boring waste of space?

- Link your facebook page to Y-PEER International facebook page** to increase your visibility. Check the Y-PEER International facebook page here: <http://www.facebook.com/YPEER.Network>

- Connect your blog(s)/twitter account to your Facebook page².**

- Link Facebook to your website**, Twitter account and other media tools you are using for your organization.

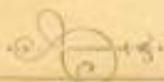
- Promote your events** by creating a Facebook event and inviting all your friends and fans.

² See Annex 4

- Start publicizing about your event in advance:** show to people that it is worth looking forward to.
- Follow up** – Don't leave your audience hanging; consolidate your new community after the event.
- Gather feedback on how to improve** – You want each event to build on the last one, learn each time. Social media is excellent for gathering feedback.
- Be consistent** with your organization's messages on Facebook.
- Encourage and support conversations, **interact with your fans**, ask about possible venues for events, speakers they would like to see. Suggest good films/books that tackle a topic related to your cause. Involve them by posing thought-provoking, open-ended questions to initiate discussions on your wall.
- Let pictures tell the story.** Create albums, post bright action pictures of the events. Do not post similar pictures, or pictures that can not catch the eye of a viewer.
- Include videos on your page:** short, real videos work better than a professionally produced one. If these can come from your fans, all the better.
- Special content** – Give your Facebook fans a little something extra they might not find on your blog or web site. Upload images from your PowerPoint presentations, articles from the local publication



- ☑ **Make sure your Twitter profile is set to public.**
- ☑ **Build your Twitter people community:** read to what people say in Twitter, learn what they find interesting and important, and find appropriate topics and discussions.
- ☑ **Follow people,** trend-setters, famous bloggers and accounts with many followers who are talking about you, your organization, activities, or same respective field that you work in. Make sure you follow Y-PEER International twitter (YPEER).
- ☑ **Provide interesting content:** people will not follow boring posts; they are there to find something they can't elsewhere, to read news the first hand.
- ☑ **Create a list of articles/videos/posts** related, both directly and indirectly, to your cause. Use the search engine in Stumble Upon. This will ensure that you have a constant content for your followers during phases when not much is happening. Also, tweets that are loosely related to your cause are likely to garner you more followers. Always remember that your followers will vary in how far they are committed to the cause, and you must be able to cater to all.
- ☑ **Do not push out your messages:** rather establish communication. Read what your followers have to say, reply to them with direct messages; mention them in your posts by using @. If you mention @YPEER in your posts it will increase your visibility.
- ☑ **Retweet (RT):** it is a key part of social interaction in Twitter. If you retweet, you will be retweeted.
- ☑ **Be visible and active:** tweet every day, between 6-10 times a day or your followers will forget about you or even unfollow you and look for a different interesting alternative.
- ☑ **Include hashtags in your tweets #.** Hashtags (#) is used as a way to label a topic, event or conversation so that it is easy to find all tweets about it. So when you tweet about an event you would put the hashtag at the end of your tweet. Example: The International Year of Youth has developed this hashtag - #iyy, the online platform Conversations for a Better World (www.conversationsforabetterworld.com) has the following - #youthchange.
- ☑ **Expand your relationship:** invite people to your blog, be helpful, and sustain communication with them outside Twitter on other social platforms.



Video Channels:

- Start up your account:** If your organization is holding an event, video is a great way to present it. There are many video sharing websites, and it is up to you and your organization to select which one is more effective to use based on your target audiences and goals. Some of the popular channels are www.youtube.com and www.vimeo.com. You can post interviews, share interesting videos. Do not forget about copyrights. As an example of how to keep video channel you can check Y-PEER International youtube channel here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/YPEER1> . You can subscribe to the channel and follow the videos.

- Identify interested people:** since YouTube is a social site; comments left by users can help show their interest in specific topics. Search throughout the site to find audiences that resonate with your core topics. These are the users you will want to engage in conversation with.

- Did you know that **YouTube profile pages could be customized?** To extend your brand on YouTube, enhance your profile page with the same look as your homepage. Users will begin to recognize your branded YouTube channel and associate it with your website's content.

- Share links of your videos** and pitch them on story ideas.

- Make the audience laugh: YouTube and other video posting channels provide enough space and informal and funny videos or PSAs have more chances to become viral.

- Make your videos catchy:** short viral videos have a growing audience on social networks - short, precise and catchy.

Blogging

- Link your blog to your social profiles** and vice versa.

- Consider your target audience**, geography, and other factors, and then choose the best publishing platforms. There are several options, such as WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr, Posterous and more.

- Create “grabber” headlines:** reading the headline a person will decide if he or she wants to read the post itself.
- Create interesting and catchy posts:** use simple words, limit terms and abbreviations, make your posts reader-friendly.
- Turn your blog into a social news wire.** Do not try to promote your organization in your blog, better cover the issues or share interesting news that are related to your organization’s field of work. People are not as interested in reading about organizations as they are interested in life stories.
- Do not make your post long:** be brief, do not flood. Divide the text in small paragraphs.
- Use pictures** in your blogs: do not overload your blog with tons of pictures; better choose couple of outstanding ones, which will be thoughts – provoking.
- Make clear if you are speaking on behalf of yourself or your organization.**
- Keep conversation:** if someone commented on your blog, you should reply to the comment and encourage conversation.
- Invite members of your organization to blog,** reflect on certain events or write personal accounts. Encourage them to use their bylines, with a small picture, and interact with their readers. Like Facebook and twitter, update it regularly so readers to grab readers.



Conclusion

The right approach to media will help to promote events and organization in the most effective ways. It is important to keep in mind some important moments when working with media: stick to the values of your organization and/or target group, be respectful to diverse people, and be professional.

You can be selective and flexible in using the tips mentioned in the guide as the situations might be different. Nevertheless, if you apply some or all of the tricks mentioned you will achieve success and accountability in the community.

If you have any more questions that were not covered in this guide, please contact Y-PEER PETRI-Sofia team at petri.bulgaria@gmail.com. We appreciate any feedback for improving the guide and will be happy to hear from you.

References:

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Annex 1:

Below is a sample of Pitch Letter that was developed for Youth Conference in Istanbul by UNFPA

Dear (name of person)

I have a story idea that would be of interest to your audiences at the time of the United Nations Population Fund's Regional Youth Conference "**Investing in Youth: Path to Accelerated Development**" which will be held in Istanbul.

First, the world will soon welcome its 7 billionth person, with most of the population growth occurring in poor countries. Second, many of those countries are witnessing "youth quakes", with long-term effects on development and poverty reduction.

What is to be done?

Here are the major elements for the story ideas:

More than 170 million young people live in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with 18.2 million living on less than \$2 a day and nearly 6 million underfed.

So, UNFPA is organizing a regional Youth Conference, "**Investing in Youth: Path to Accelerated Development**", in Istanbul **from 9 to 11 May** to deal urgently with youth concerns. The Conference, organized long before current youth-led tumult in the Middle East, will suggest quick actions on:

- How to make youth voices count in national policy debates and actions on jobs, education, health and development.
- How governments can build up the productive capacity of young people so they can build and push their nations out of poverty. What is already happening around the region is the best proof of the great potential of the young.

On 11 May, the third day of the youth conference, a high-level segment including national decision-makers will draw up strategic plans to deal with youth concerns raised in the two prior two days.

Dr. Osotimehin, who has brought a more urgent focus on youth, and other senior UNFPA officials will be available to talk to you or your representatives.

Please contact the following for more information or to arrange interviews:

Name of the contact person

Email:

Telephone:

Annex 2:

The sample of Press release that was developed by UNFPA for the Youth Conference in Istanbul.

<http://eeca.unfpa.org/public/pid/7708>

PRESS RELEASE

24 May

UNFPA Regional Conference Calls for Increased Investments in Young People : Addressing Youth Issues, including Rights to Sexual and Reproductive Health, Described as Priority

ISTANBUL

Government and civil society representatives from 27 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia agreed to take action on three priority areas to promote the health and well-being of the region's young people. The action framework, adopted today, calls for the integration of youth issues into national policies, the promotion of sexual and reproductive health of young people, and the improvement of sexual health education for young people across the region.

The decisions were taken at a regional Conference, Investing in Youth: Path to Accelerated Development, which was held here on 9-11 May to accelerate policy actions and national commitments to address young people's rights and needs across the region.

"We must provide all young people with the right skills and opportunities and promote their right to health, including sexual and reproductive health," said Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director, in his opening address to the conference. "The benefits of these investments go a long way in a person's lifetime, and for generations to come. Investing in young people is the smartest investment that we can make for our collective future."

Participants at the conference took stock of achievements, lessons learned and remaining gaps regarding youth issues, identified priorities for addressing the rights and needs of young people in line with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, and elaborated policy actions to advance the youth agenda in the region

“Investing in the health and rights of young people is an investment in national development and in our future. Too often, the needs of young people for information, education and services are not met,” said Thea Fierens, UNFPA Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, at the conclusion of the conference. “Eastern Europe and Central Asia is the only region where HIV continues to rise, and a third of all new HIV infections are among young people. Our greatest assets are our young people and we must together find ways to help them realize their potential as productive members of society,” she added.

According to the conference’s concluding document governments are:

To promote and accelerate development of youth-friendly Health Services based on assessment of youth needs and accordance with the human rights. Specific actions include to:

- Adapt international standards on Youth-friendly Health Services and establish comprehensive package of Youth-friendly Health Services (including counselling, medical and psychological support);*
- Assess and scale up effective models of Youth-friendly Health Services;*
- Integrate Youth-friendly Health Services into primary healthcare facilities;*
- Establish linkages among Youth-friendly Health Services and other services, such as HIV prevention, family planning, harm reduction programmes, where appropriate;*
- Raise awareness of communities to support access of young people to health services.*

Make the services and commodities affordable and available for youth: use various financing modalities to meet needs of all youth without exceptions. Specific actions include to:

- Advocate for better funding and allocation of national budgets for Youth-friendly Health Services ;*
- Ensure that Youth-friendly Health Services are included in national health insurance schemes, especially for most-at-risk young people;*
- Support resource mobilization for Youth-friendly Health Services including participation in Global Fund round 11;*
- Utilize capacity of private sector as a provider of youth friendly health services;*
- Establish social marketing program for youth focused on condoms;*
- Include contraceptives and condoms in national health programs budget.*

Increase technical capacity of health professionals working with youth

Specific actions include to:

- *Include training of health providers on Youth-friendly Health Services in national health and youth programs;*
- *support relevant institutions at different levels (national, regional, district) to provide continuous education on youth health and risky behaviors*
- *Create multi-professional teams to provide services for youth and establish referral system;*

Ensure comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Education is mandatory in all schools, delivered at all age sequenced levels, and is in line with characteristics identified in the Almaty Resolution on Preventive Education. Specific actions include to:

- *Develop a national strategy for human rights based and gender sensitive SRH education for all;*
- *Pass legislation to enact mandatory comprehensive SRH education;*
- *Develop quality national programmes based on international standards to incorporate SRH education within school curricula;*
- *Commit national financial resources to ensure provision of adequate materials, training of teaching staff and monitoring and evaluation of SRH education in a sustained manner*

For more information contact:

(name of person)

Email:

Telephone:

Annex 3:

When writing captions make sure you

- Check the facts. Be accurate!
- Avoid stating the obvious: “Alexandra Novikova smiles as she leads the training session.”
- Identify the main people in the photograph, if applicable.
- Avoid judgements: “Participants are happy with the training,” or “Young people are not interested in the event.”
- Avoid using terms like “is shown, is pictures, looks on, and etc.”
- Whenever possible, use present tense.
- Do not make the caption very long. Keep it maximum to two pages. Help the reader/viewer understand the story and situation from your caption and picture.
- Quotes can be effective when appropriately used.



Y-PEER members in Nepal perform street drama for children in Bhaktapur on occasion of the World AIDS Day

Annex 4:

How to Automatically Link Blog Posts to Facebook <http://writingontheweb.com/2011/02/18/connect-your-blog-facebook-twitter-linkedin/> **By AnnaLaura Brown**

Automatically linking your blog posts to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn can get you some great publicity and traffic but it can be challenging to figure out how to make it all work. Fortunately you have a couple of different options for each one.

Facebook

1. Use the **networked blogs application**. This is my personal favorite. To get started type in *networked blogs* into the search box and you will pull up the application.

You click on the **'register a blog'** link you see in the capture photo above and it will walk you through the process. The first time you will have a few extra steps to complete to verify that you are the blog owner but after that you can register as many blogs as you own. **Networked Blogs** also gives you the option to post to your FB profile, your fan page or fan pages or to Twitter as well. You can choose one or all of the options.

2. Use the **FB notes application**. It works the same way for both profiles and fan pages. You click on the **notes** application.

Then click on the **'write a note'** button in the far right hand top . Then you have to click on the **'my notes'** page which gives you this screen.

Then you click on the **'edit import settings'** link that appears in blue under the subscribe text.

You can then enter in the **RSS feed of your blog** into the box and every time you post a new blog post, it will be auto imported into the notes on FB and appear as a new FB note.