

KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING

Notice the moment. Shape the story. Share it with purpose.



Question

"We have a lot of fans post things to Instagram Stories about their experience at shows (or often reshare our content if they see themselves in a photo). I can already think of a few fans I'd be interested in DMing and asking them to share more about what brought them to Levitt, what they enjoyed, etc. How would you go about getting consent via DM communication? Could I just ask if they're okay with me asking a few questions about their experience to potentially share in marketing materials, and if they're okay with Levitt using their first/last name? Thank you!"

Response

Yes, a DM is a great way to start. It's also a great way to encourage them to follow your account if they haven't already. Depending on what you ideally want to gain out of the interaction, decide where to start. It could be simply permission to publish, or it might be broader: asking whether the person would be interested in answering a few questions, and explain that you may want to share their story in Levitt communications.

Someone can be happy to talk with you without agreeing to have their words, name, or photo used publicly. So that's where we need to be explicit.

A first message might say:

Hi [name]! We loved seeing your post about the show. Would you be open to answering a few questions about what brought you to Levitt and what you enjoyed? We love to share audience stories in future Levitt communications, but we'd check with you before using yours. No pressure either way.

If they offer up details, you might reply:

Thanks for telling us about your experience. Here's the quote we'd like to share:

"[quote]." May [organization name] use this quote on our website, social media, email, and fundraising materials? May we identify you by [first name only / first and last name]?

Save a screenshot of the exchange with the story and note any limits the person gave you. A reply such as “Yes, you may use that quote on your website and Instagram with my first name only” is obviously much more useful than a general “Sure!” So I’d spell out any specifics you have. You could also ask to take the conversation out of DM, into email or contacting the individual by phone if they were more comfortable. If the story changes substantially, or you want to use it in a new way the person did not agree to, check back with them.

This question tied back to a conversation during the Q&A regarding consent, so I want to share some additional details.

Does consent have to be on paper?

Often, no. A clear, retained electronic exchange can provide a written record. The key is that the person understands the proposed use and affirmatively agrees to it. Requirements vary by state and by use, so each organization should have its release language reviewed for the places where it operates, particularly for advertising or fundraising uses.

What about consent given on audio?

You can ask someone verbally whether they are comfortable being interviewed and record their answer (using a Voice Memo or similar app), provided you first follow the recording-consent rules that apply to everyone in the conversation. At the start, say that you would like to record, explain why, and get an audible yes before continuing. For public use of an identifiable person’s story, name, image, or voice, a follow-up DM or electronic release is a stronger practice: it gives both sides a clear record of the exact use they approved. In some states, written consent is required for particular promotional uses.

Does event signage count as consent?

Posted signs give attendees notice that photography or filming is taking place. Place them where people will see them before entering (near outer perimeter sidewalks, etc.) and tell people how to raise a concern or avoid being photographed when you can. This might mean a designated area to enjoy the show that would not be filmed. It’s best practice **not** to treat these signs as a blanket release for a featured testimonial, a close-up of an identifiable person in a campaign, or use of their name and personal story. Ask that person directly.

A few related considerations

Children are more protected. If the attendee is a minor, seek permission from a parent or guardian before featuring their story, name, or image.

Also permission from the person in a photo does not necessarily give you permission to reuse a photo or story created by someone else. Typically people are more than happy to share, but it’s best practice to check with the creator as well.

The easiest repeatable habit is: invite, listen, show the proposed use, get a specific yes, and save the record. That protects the relationship you're building while making it easier for your team to share the story with confidence.

Best of luck!

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "Sara Shookman". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Sara" and "Shookman" being capitalized and prominent.

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