

Working with the news media

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Working with the news media

- **Why work with the media**
- **Who are the media; what do they need**
- **How does news gets to the media**
- **Tips for working successfully with the news media**



Why work with the media?

- **Give public important, useful info – get your “key messages” across**
- **Involve public in decisions that affect them**
- **Market your brand**
- **Build trust and credibility**
- **Report threats to people and the environment**



Why work with the media?

The news media's limitations

- **Personal experience, family, friends are stronger influence**
- **Information is filtered**
- **No guarantees news will be used or reach audience**
- **Only one voice among many**



Why work with the media?

Direct public contact is still needed

- Use the news media wisely
- Use other information channels, too
- Build relationships with your key customers
- **HAVE A MEDIA AND MESSAGE PLAN AND USE IT**



What do all media need

- **Get the story**
- **Get it right**
- **Get it first**
- **File it by deadline**



What's newsworthy

- **Timely** - current, seasonal, “pegged” to a current event
- **Local** - nearby, brings larger event close to home, pertinent, relates to audience
- **Important** - affects readers, viewers, listeners
- **Editorial** policy related
- **Unusual** - outside the routine



What newspapers need and what reporters look for...

- Want INFORMATION (facts & quotes)
- Varied viewpoints
- Progress - something new
- Unusual - interesting, out of mainstream
- Human interest - story of a person, personal dilemma or success
- Can do interview on the phone



What Radio needs and what radio reporters look for...

- Want INFORMATION + VOICE on tape (actuality)
- Fast-breaking news
- No visuals
- Short statements and stories (be brief)
- Talk shows of interest
- Can do interview on the phone



What Television news needs and what Television reporters look for...

- Want INFORMATION + VOICE + VISUAL (a standup interview and video of the action)
- Discuss important problem/issue
- Break into simple, key points/messages that are relevant to viewers
- b-roll



Different media, different needs

- Print wants:

- INFORMATION

- Radio wants:

- INFORMATION + VOICE

- TV wants:

- INFORMATION + VOICE + VISUAL

Other media channels

- **Internet - Website**
- **Newsletters**
- **Magazines and trade publications**
- **Scientific and professional journals**
- **Cable or Satellite TV**
- **Today...e-mail, ListServ, Facebook, twitter, blog**



How your organization gets news out

- News releases,
- Responses to media reporter's calls, and written requests for information
- Editorial board visits
- Letters to editors
- Press conferences, briefings
- Speeches, tours, events
- Public meetings, hearings



Example:

How news about the DNR gets out

- **Reporter initiative**
- **Legislative news**
- **Governor's Office (speech or release)**
- **Interest & stakeholder groups, activism**
- **Internet (e-mail, blogs, twitter, etc.)**
- **Public calls (tips) to media**
- **Localization of national press coverage**

Example: DNR news policies

- News release approvals (*Nothing* moves without OC/PR approval).
- Media & legislative *contact policy enforced*
- Open records requests, public documents, drafts...*means everything is transparent*
- Public meetings...*everything is public*
- Enforcement, litigation, personnel, prelim investigation data, juveniles' names, other.

Example: DNR employee responsibilities

- **Staff authorized to respond to news media inquiries within their specific area of expertise (some exceptions)**
- **Respond promptly or get the person who can (Must refer to “spokesperson” if one has been assigned)**
- **Get help if you need it**
- **File media or legislative contact report if inquiry was significant or controversial**

Tips for working with the news media

- **Anticipate – prepare your speaking points**
- **Concisely share main points (be brief)**
- **Speak in a calm, reasonable tone**
- **Stick to the facts**
- **Speak in plain English, no jargon, acronyms**
- **Stay on the record (the camera is always on)**
- **Meet media's deadlines if possible**
- **Media's deadlines are not your deadlines**

More tips

- **You can frame the issue (brief reporter before interview starts)...**
- **“If I were asking me questions, here are some I’d ask...”**
- **Rephrase leading questions (bridging)**
- **Don’t speculate outside your area of expertise -- offer to connect reporter with more appropriate person**

Tips and techniques - 1

- **Have your 3 key messages in mind**
- **Listen, pause, think, answer**
- **Get most important facts & messages in at the beginning of the interview**
- **Keep your answers short (sound bites should be 10-15 seconds long)**
- **Repeat the question in your answer**

Tips and techniques - 2

- **Make a mistake? Ask the reporter to repeat the question or step away from the camera**
- **Stick with the facts/what you know- if you don't know the answer say so**
- **TV specific: Look at the interviewer, not at the camera, no sunglasses, don't forget to smile...and ladies, pull your hair back**

Tips and techniques - 3

- **Make it personal.** You're more believable if you use "I" or "we"
- **Be likeable.** Your acceptance and the acceptance of your message, depends more than we'd like to think on whether you're likeable
- **You have control over what not to say,** which is sometimes more valuable than the information that what you do say

Handling errors

- **Contact your Communications Manager**
- **Let error go if minor.**
- **Rare: Phone call to reporter or editor; letter to editor, editorial visit; press conference if errors serious and widespread**
- **Let reporter know fast if *you* erred**
- **Don't ask to see drafts in advance**

How your Communications Manager can help you

- **Planning, contacts, experience**
- **Key audiences, messages**
- **Right media, timing**
- **Coordination, follow-up**
- **Whether more info needed**
- **Professional editing,
writing, speaking tips**



How you can help your Communications Manager

- Regular updates on your program
- Background information
- Enough lead time
- To know about problems before they occur or as they develop...not after



Other resources to help you

- **Your corporate Mission & Strategic Plan**
- **Your written communications plan**
- **Media relations training**
- **Public information planning**
- **Written Crisis Management plan**
- **Experience!**



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