

Basic Media Training

Reporter Relations

- Contacting reporters
 - Figure out who covers your specific issue
 - Usually best to start locally
 - Look for reporters with titles such as “Crime” or “Legal/Justice”
 - Use Google Alerts
 - Customize a Google Alert for your specific topic. By monitoring these alerts, it will help you to familiarize yourself with the reporters that cover your specific issue the most.
 - Recognize that once reporter is reached, you have a limited amount of time to sell him or her on your story.
 - Work on developing a concise (approximately 30 second) pitch which highlights the most pertinent issues you’re covering. Capture his or her attention quickly, and then you can expand and elaborate on key points later.
- Developing Relationships
 - Don’t try to contact every reporter every time – volume is not necessarily productive. Concentrate on developing strong relationships with a few key reporters.
 - Understand reporters
 - Reporters don’t tend to want to report the “good news” – it’s just not sexy. The media feeds on scandal and sensationalizing issues.
 - Reporters thrive on drama. Personal accounts will be important because they are inherently dramatic.
 - Help the reporter and they will help you
 - Become a resource for this reporter. While getting your story out is obviously a top priority, you must not make the reporter feel as if he or she is being “used.” Help to notify reporter of other important issues outside of your own. This way, you gain credibility by looking less like a selfish pitchperson and more like an individual concerned with the pressing issues.
- Be proactive, not reactive
 - Contact reporters early so you can get out in front of the issue and frame it as *you* want – this way, you don’t have to defend yourself against the way your opponents have framed the issue.
- Remember: You do not have to agree to every media request. If you don’t feel prepared or don’t wish to participate, try to refer them to an individual who can better address their questions.

Interviews

- Understand your medium
 - Newspaper, radio and television are all different mediums with different demands.
 - To gain experience, best to start off with newspaper and radio interviews.

- Newspaper and radio do not have as intense demands as television. You don't have to worry about body language or memorizing your talking points.
- Preparation
 - Talking points
 - Should be prepared with at least 10 talking points.
 - These talking points should seek to address some of the main points of the issue being covered.
 - Know the facts
 - Knowledge is power
 - Familiarize yourself with not only the facts surrounding your side of the issue, but also the facts the opposition will present as well.
 - Don't underestimate the value of practice
 - Practice reciting your talking points.
 - Try to anticipate the "difficult questions" and practice responding to these.
 - Prepare to be nervous
 - Ways to alleviate anxiety:
 - Preparation
 - Relaxation Exercises
 - Deep Breathing
- During the interview
 - Know how to "package the goods"
 - Shape the story in a way that not only affects you, but affects everyone.
 - "Packaging the goods" does not mean lie.
 - Don't lie – you will lose credibility.
 - Be transparent about the issue, but frame it in a way that best reflects your stance.
 - Answering questions
 - Be as clear, informative, and concise as possible.
 - Avoid too much jargon
 - Understand which vocabulary would be most effective for your target audience.
 - Don't respond to "opinionated" reporters with hostility.
 - Don't ever say "no comment"
 - Instead, try to provide a response that bridges back to one of your talking points.
 - Assume everything you say is "on the record"
 - This means that anything you say you can be quoted on.
 - Avoid becoming too comfortable with the reporter – that's when they can drag undesirable information out of you.
 - Don't overanswer and stray too far from the talking points.

- If you wish to address a question but do not wish to be quoted, request to go “off the record.” However, do not respond until it is clear that you are no longer “on the record.”
- Repeat the question as part of your answer
 - This shows that you’re listening and keeps you on topic.
- Use examples and anecdotes that humanize your story.
- “ABC”
 - Answer the question
 - Bridge question to talking points
 - Communicate talking points
- For television interviews:
 - Keep answers concise and clear (i.e. avoid rambling).
 - Be conscience of body language.
 - Good posture
 - Maintain eye contact
 - Use non-verbal gestures
 - Dress professionally
 - Do not wear white or plaid – bad for cameras.
 - Don’t smile or laugh when something isn’t funny, or fidget. This makes you appear nervous and potentially guilty.

Events

- Pick a time that is appropriate for your desired audience.
 - Try to avoid Monday’s or Friday’s.
- Event Notification Tactics
 - Calendar Listing
 - Posting in your local paper, etc., that lets the public know of the time and location of your event.
 - Media Advisory
 - Tool that only the media will see.
 - Attracts media to an event.
 - Press Release
 - Should be used the day of or after an event.
 - Documents what has happened/is happening – not meant for advanced notice.
 - Should have on hand at event to distribute to media.
 - Press release should:
 - Make clear the issue/article/event.
 - Address the major talking points and/or the questions that will inevitably be asked.
 - The first two sentences should be the hook – biggest news. Then the first paragraph should expand on that.

- Contain quotes from different sources.
 - Be no more than one page, if possible.
- E-Mail to Reporters
 - E-Mail subject should read “ALERT: [What is the BIG news?]”
 - Should not contain any attachments.
 - Certain media accounts will automatically batch E-Mails with attachments as spam. Copy and paste information to avoid this.
 - Should be sent about 4 days before event. Follow up call should be made about 2 days in advance and then again the morning of.
 - Try not to pester, but sometimes this behavior is a necessary evil.