

Media Relations Tips

WHAT DO REPORTERS WANT?

- Something new: Reporters need a “news hook.” It’s your job to find and identify what’s new about what you have to say.
- Something surprising: Reporters are generally inquisitive people. You need to find a way to make your subject as compelling as you can.
- Something relatable: Your story will lose news value if it only applies to a very small segment of society. Figure out how it will impact lots of people, or why everyone else should care.
- Something that moves them: Their job is to make a connection with readers and make even the most complex story compelling. Let your passion show when telling your story.
- Something relatively easy to digest: This does not mean “dumb down” or oversimplifying your material. You need to point out the most interesting, newsworthy pieces of your 500-page report.
- Great visuals: Sometimes a great visual—either live and in person or captured on film, is all that’s needed to get the media’s interest.



WHEN PITCHING A STORY:

- Do your homework. Review recent coverage, determine most likely reporter prospects.
- Consider the competition. Know what other media events are on the calendar.
- Go to the outlets that matter. This means the ones that your target audience is paying attention to, whether it’s a green business blog or your daily newspaper.
- Review recent coverage. Reference stories to make your news feel relevant and timely.
- Choose your direction. Do you want to send a short pitch, long pitch, media advisory, press release, official statement or social media release? Go to <http://resource-media.org/files/may-feed-communications-workbook> to see a glossary of media outreach vehicles, and when to use them.
- Identify the right spokespeople. These can be local people who can describe real world impacts, like farmers and hunters; scientists; economists and other credible experts; and advocates who can offer solutions.

WHEN A REPORTER CALLS:

First ask questions:

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- When do you need this? Or, what's your deadline? This question lets them know you will get back in touch before that time.
- What's the story about? Don't be afraid to ask for more information.
- What do you need? Get specifics.
- Who else have you called? You may not get an answer, but this is a fair question. It can help reveal the "angle" of the story, how to frame counter arguments to your opponents, and who else they should call to hear support for your positions.

Next...do the following:

- If caught off guard, schedule the call for later, hang up and get prepared: This is key.
- Jot down some notes: What do you want to say? What do you NOT want to say?
- Ask for help: Call your communications consultant (externally or on-staff) to be absolutely sure of what you want to say, what your main message and supporting points should be.
- Do some research: Look up the reporter's name and check out past stories they've written. Search your issue to see if a late-breaking development has just occurred.
- Take a deep breath: Remember that reporters are busy people. They may not know very much about your subject. They may have just been handed the assignment. It's YOUR job to help them understand and then tell the story.
- Call them back: Email may be acceptable if you're more comfortable writing than speaking. Just be sure to meet their deadline.

During the interview:

- Be positive. Do not disparage anyone or anything—especially the media.
- Be comfortable with silence. Most humans will start babbling when they're uncomfortable. This is when you'll say things you didn't intend to say. Say what you want to say and then stop.
- If you don't know the answer, say so. Refer the reporter to someone better suited to answer the question.
- Don't assume any level of knowledge. In most cases, reporters know less than you think they do.
- Don't say 'no comment.' This instantly raises a reporter's hackles (and interest level). Instead, bring the conversation back to where YOU want to be.
- Don't agree to go "off the record" or "on background" unless you know and trust the reporter.
- Don't be disarmed by friendliness. This is not a casual chat; it's an interview. A reporter is neither your friend nor your enemy. Everything you say is fair game.



MEDIA RELATIONS TIPS

- Don't ask to see the story before it runs. It's unethical for the reporter to do this. Instead, ask to review your quotes. A good reporter will be happy to oblige.

MAKE YOURSELF QUOTABLE

Some sound bites are more memorable than others. A good quote is:

- Something you can picture
- Something you want to tell a friend
- Something anyone can understand with little or no context
- Something that avoids jargon

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Resource Media offers:

- Customized message development
 - Interview skills training
 - Audit and analysis of your previous media coverage and spokesperson quotes
 - One on one media outreach
 - Story enterprising
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