

## Navigating the Changing Media Landscape

Are newspaper delivery and the evening news hour going the way of the telegraph? These days, people are more likely to read the day's top stories on their smartphones than a printed page, and often check Twitter or blogs to learn what is happening in their communities. The change in consumer behavior has trickled up to the newsroom, of course, and reporters are busier than ever. To get their attention, you need a strong story and a tight pitch. We offer some tips below for recognizing and packaging news.

But you don't have to rely on reporters to get the word out about your program or event. The social web provides countless ways to reach and engage new audiences. To get attention in this information-saturated world, you still need a story that is timely, interesting, and relevant. Once you have developed a story, we encourage you to use every tool at your disposal to spread the news.

### PLANNING YOUR COURSE OF ACTION

#### *Get clear on goals*

Before you call a reporter, or send a press release or e-newsletter, take a moment to identify your goals.

- What do you hope to accomplish with this effort?
- Who do you want to reach?
- What do you want them to do?

Once you have answered these questions, you can zero in on the best channel to reach the desired audience, and also the best way to frame the story.

### MAKING NEWS: WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL MEDIA

#### *Know what reporters need*

- Stories that are newsworthy, interesting and relevant to their audience
- Accurate and timely information
- Access to credible spokespeople or sources
- Advance notice (particularly for magazine writers and TV reporters)
- Good visuals

#### *Learn to recognize a good story*

Facts are a necessary part of a news story, but they're not everything. Remember that reporters are storytellers, and that the human brain is hardwired to process information in narrative form. You can

### CONTACT

Nicole Lampe  
Senior Program Director  
503.719.5626  
nicole@resource-media.org



make your pitch more compelling by populating it with story elements: plot, setting, hero, villain, and victim. Effective stories also:

- Tap into core values, address things people care about
- Have human interest, are relatable
- Describe a problem/threat and a practical solution, or a call to action

### ***Do your homework***

Set up Google Alerts to track news and blog coverage on your issue, and search Twitter and Facebook for a snapshot of real-time conversations. Many reporters use social media tools to research stories and follow breaking news, so it pays to be up to speed. Also:

- Articulate what is newsworthy about your story: why should audiences care?
- Determine your key messages and anticipate likely questions
- Prepare background materials
- Recruit spokespeople that can localize or personalize the news, or offer an expert perspective
- Identify and research target reporters: have they covered the issue before? If so, from what perspective?
- Plan your pitch: is it the right time? Is there any recent news about this subject?

### ***Position yourself as an expert and a resource***

- Volunteer information—share a colorful story, interesting fact or breaking news
- Be transparent about your role in the process, or relation to the issue
- Get prepared—have informational materials handy
- Refer reporters to other useful sources
- Speak plain English

### ***When a reporter calls***

When a reporter calls, get their name, contact information, and deadline. To better understand the context for the interview, ask about their angle and plans for the story, including other people they plan to call.

Consider the politics of the reporter and outlet. Also:

- Be prepared—know your subject
- Be disciplined. Write down your key points, and stick to them
- Be honest. If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to get back to them with an answer (and then do), or refer them to another resource
- Keep in mind that you are never really “off the record”

## **LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA TO GET THE WORD OUT**

### ***Making the most of positive coverage***

When your hard work pays off, and you secure a good newspaper, television or radio story, don't just hope key audiences will see it—take matters into your own hands:

- Send the link out via email with a few lines of introductory copy

- Post to social media pages, and ask your supporters do the same
- Pay attention to online comments, and address substantive feedback and questions
- Consider writing or soliciting positive letters to the editor
- Keep the reporter informed as the story develops

### ***Creative content recycling***

Once you've done the hard work of developing a story, make sure you are using every channel at your disposal to maximize its reach. And don't limit yourself to the written word. Consider:

- Repurposing as a newsletter article
- Developing a website story on the topic that includes a link to relevant coverage
- Creating a photo slideshow or short video
- Blogging the news, either on your organization's blog or as a guest author

### ***Be your own publisher***

Hyperlocal blogs and community forums are increasingly popular, and many allow nonprofit organizations to publish content or event information themselves. Some to explore:

- [Indybay.org](http://Indybay.org)
- [YubaNet.com](http://YubaNet.com)
- [Patch.com](http://Patch.com)
- [NowPublic.com](http://NowPublic.com)