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What is NEWS?

- ✓ News is a business.
- ✓ News is what the media says it is.
- ✓ News changes from day to day.
- ✓ News depends on your market.
- ✓ News depends on what events are happening that day.
- ✓ News is a simplification of facts.
- ✓ News is competitive.
- ✓ News often is story-telling.
- ✓ News is a version of the truth that changes as information changes.

Tips for working with the media: How to Control Your Story

Dealing With Reporters

Reporters like sources who can provide:

- Hard news stories by deadline.
 - Colorful quotes.
 - Enthusiasm.
 - Authoritative comment.
 - Clear information.
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Build connections before your story breaks:

- Start building an informal, pro-active dialogue with your local reporter before the story hits. Reach out with email, phone calls and an occasional cup of coffee or lunch.
 - Ask your media folks how they want to be contacted when you have a story idea – most prefer phone or email over fax and mail.
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How to get ready once the media calls:

- **Be informed** of all media calls when they come into city hall.
- **Do your homework.** Research the reporter. Have answers to likely questions. Consider all the tough questions that could be asked.
- **Be ready.** When the media is working with deadlines, they usually can't wait for your schedule. Be ready to comment when they call.
- **Prepare key points – your purpose statements. This is critical to getting your messages out to the public.**
- **Before the interview,** practice attaching some bridging statements to your key points. (See next page for examples.)
- **Pictures and graphics stand out.** Provide them whenever possible.
- **Ask about the direction** of the story before the interview.
- **Remember that your interview probably isn't the reporter's story.** Several other people will probably be interviewed.

Source: National League of
Cities Leadership Training
Institute



Bridging Statements You Can Use:

- ✓ I think what the public really wants to know is...
- ✓ Let me just add...
- ✓ Let me put that in perspective for you...
- ✓ Let me answer you by saying that...
- ✓ Let me give you some background information...
- ✓ Let me give you an example...
- ✓ Another important thing to remember is...
- ✓ The bottom line is...

During the Interview:

- Listen to the reporter before you talk.
- Be honest. If the media thinks you're hiding something, they'll dig, and you'll look bad.
- Don't guess at answers.
- Never say "no comment" or go off the record.
- Be concise and to the point.
- Don't volunteer sensitive information.
- Use anecdotes.
- Never confuse a reporter's small talk with empathy for your issue.
- Don't answer a question that starts with a false premise. Go back to your purpose statements.
- Never restate a negative question. It just continues a train of thought you want to eliminate. Instead go to your purpose statement, and introduce it with one of your bridges.

After the interview:

- Never ask to review a story before it is run.
- When a story is run, follow up with an immediate and appropriate thank you (quick note or phone call is appreciated, and not often received).

How to educate the uninformed reporter:

- Educate through conversation.
- Answer the questions that should have been asked.
- Provide printed background material.
- Offer to be available to check facts.
- Follow the interview with a letter when possible.
- Continue providing background material for future stories.

How to survive a hostile interview:

- Do your homework and anticipate the aggressive questions.
- Don't try to throw aggressive questions back at the reporter.
- Keep your composure.
- Use your bridging phrases to regain control of the interview and transition to your purpose statement.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Smile and use humor if appropriate.
- Silence is okay during an interview. Don't be intimidated to continue talking if you're done answering a question.

How to Hold a Successful News Conference

Top Ten Mistakes

1. Failing to return a reporter's call or saying "no comment."
2. Entering an interview without your purpose statements (you think you only have to answer questions).
3. Making yourself unavailable after an interview.
4. Not catching, and failing to deal with an incorrect premise from a reporter.
5. Not anticipating questions on related and unrelated subjects.
6. Using terms reporters don't understand.
7. Not realizing how you look and sound is as important as what you say.
8. Thinking what you say in the interview is the story.
9. Attacking your interviewer.
10. Lying to a reporter.

Why a news conference/briefing?

- Lots of simultaneous coverage.
 - You control the timing and way you announce your news.
 - Educate many reporters at once.
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Logistical tips:

- Match your room size with your anticipate audience size. When in doubt, go small.
 - Provide media packets in advance.
 - Use a table for people taking the questions.
 - Don't hang signs behind the speakers...too distracting. Do make a place for graphics or props that is easily accessible to the cameras.
 - Keep the number of speakers to a minimum.
 - Run a practice conference with city staff asking questions.
 - Consider media deadlines when scheduling conference times.
 - Check to see if other events are scheduled that will conflict with your coverage.
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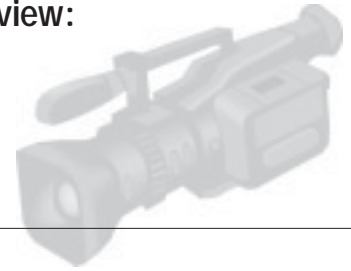
Running your news conference:

- State your purpose.
- Identify the speakers.
- Announce the subject each will cover.
- State that questions will be answered.
- Get your purpose statements in your opening remarks.
- Use notes. Don't read from text.
- Watch for non-verbal signs in the audience.
- Distribute materials after your opening remarks.
- You control the Q&A period. Remember that all remarks are on the record.
- Don't be distracted by cutaway camera shots.
- If you don't know an answer, follow up later.
- Keep the questioning on track. Always remember your purpose statements.
- End with "Thanks and we'll keep in touch."
- Stay alert during post-conference interviews.

TV Interview Techniques

Provide visuals before the interview:

- Video scenes
- Photographs
- Digital images
- Artwork



Your presence is usually more important than your message!

- ✓ Broaden the pitch and pace of your voice.
- ✓ Speak distinctly.
- ✓ Avoid “uh’s” and “you know’s”.
- ✓ Uncross your legs and lean toward the interviewer.
- ✓ Use gestures.
- ✓ Don’t swivel.

During the interview:

- Get your purpose statements in early.
- Begin answers with a strong statement.
- Remember that the end of an answer may lead to the next question.
- Refer to your city indirectly.

What you wear matters:

- Avoid plaids, checks, jewelry, bright reds and oranges, heavy stripes, shiny material, herringbone.
- Blue works best.
- Keep your hair off your face.
- Avoid heavy makeup.

Radio Interview Techniques

Before the interview:

- Give the interviewer your business card
- Whenever possible, before the interview provide a media kit with a fact sheet and most-asked questions.

When you’re on the air:

- Apply your television interview techniques.
- Answer broad questions with your purpose statement.
- Don’t go off on a tangent.
- Avoid statistics and numbers (you don’t have graphics to help listeners understand your message).

Tips for telephone interviews:

- Ask if it’s live or taped.
- Avoid time references if it’s taped.
- Turn off noise-makers (cell phone, radio, etc).
- Don’t refer to the interviewer by name (allows your segment to be used more often).
- Ask about taping an insert to the interview later.
- Pump up your energy level.
- Pretend you’re talking to three-four people.

