

Meet the Press (More Effectively)



Four Elements of Media Success:

1. **Messaging:** Create a positive message for the media.
2. **Managing:** Improve and manage relationships with the press.
3. **Packaging:** Strategically package messages for greater impact.
4. **Presenting:** Acquire interview skills and media savvy.

Messaging:

1. Prepare for the media interview, even if you haven't scheduled one yet. Have talking points and fact sheets prepared.
2. Five W's: Who, what, when, where, why. Sometimes there is also a story in "how" or a call to action.
3. Solid quotes that sum up or provide a useful metaphor.
4. Is it newsworthy to anyone but you? If so, make sure you explain why this is important to the average reader or listener. Don't cry wolf! If you do, a reporter may not read your next release or answer your next phone call.

Managing:

1. Remember, reporters are people, too.
2. Make their jobs easier. Send them useful background information to help on upcoming stories, but don't send them a flood of paperwork. Help put them in touch with other useful sources for their story, even those on the opposite side of the issue. Remember, it is a reporter's job to cover both sides of an issue.
3. Maintain credibility by being accurate, timely, selective and as open as possible. Become a source of reliable information and create a relationship.

Packaging:

1. Use good judgment in how you package something. Should it be a release, an advisory, a letter to the editor, an op-ed or simply a phone or e-mail tip?
2. By writing in journalistic style, double-checking your facts for accuracy, and sending it their preferred way, your story has a better chance of being printed.

Presenting -- 10 Ways to Get the Interview and Story YOU Want:

1. Approach the media and don't wait for them to approach you. Set up background interviews with reporters and editors who will be reporting on social services, energy, or other pertinent beats in your community before news breaks.
2. You don't have to begin an interview immediately. When reporters call, find out story angle, deadline and others they are interviewing. Tell them you will call back in a few minutes or in ample time for their deadline. Always meet or beat the deadline!
3. Use a few extra minutes to organize messages and look up pertinent facts.
4. Have a one-page fact sheet prepared in advance. E-mail any supporting information ahead of time to save giving a background lesson during the interview.
5. Create three main ideas and practice stating these succinctly, clearly and creatively.
6. Don't be afraid to say I don't know. Suggest another source for more information.
7. Never say "no comment," which sounds as though you are hiding something. A better response is, "I'm not prepared to discuss that at this time." Let them know up front you will not be commenting on questions of politics.
8. Don't allow reporters to put words into your mouth or lead you down a path you are unwilling to go. Know your core messages and own them.
9. Use "bridging techniques" to bring the interview back in the direction you want. "However, the important thing to remember is POINT A;" "That's a good point, but the main point is POINT B;" "That may be one argument, but I think the strongest reason is POINT C."
10. It is not your right to review copy before it goes to print. Instead of demanding to proofread the article, simply make an offer to quickly help clarify facts, figures and spelling before they send it to their editor. Be timely, considerate of their writing style and angle, and grateful when a reporter complies with a request to preview an article.