Working with the Media – Tips for Success

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Futrell, J. and Seelman, P. (September 18, 2003). Everything You Always Wanted to Know about the Media – Presented in One Hour! UW-Extension.
Responding Effectively to Media Inquiries

When a Reporter Calls...
✓ Get clear information about the story
✓ Collect your thoughts
✓ Develop your message
✓ Use a Media Prep Sheet

Crafting Your Message...
✓ Factual, informative and important
✓ Determine your top three talking points
✓ Develop a brief fact sheet

During the Interview...
✓ Wait for the complete question
✓ Make sure you know what is being asked
✓ Think before you speak - take a moment to compose your answer
✓ Turn negatively posed questions into a positive
  ○ Ex) “That certainly is a common misperception, however the facts are...”
✓ Avoid using technical terms and acronyms
✓ Do not assume reporter has extensive knowledge of your area of expertise
✓ Be brief – use short to the point sentences
✓ Stick to the facts and your talking points
# The Do's and Don'ts of Working with the Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON'T</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Respect Deadlines</td>
<td>✓ Ramble</td>
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<td>✓ Make yourself accessible</td>
<td>✓ Fidget</td>
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<td>✓ Return calls promptly</td>
<td>✓ Say &quot;no comment&quot; – reporter translation &quot;they're hiding something, time to start digging&quot;</td>
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<td>✓ Tell the truth</td>
<td>✓ Become defensive</td>
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<td>✓ Prepare for interviews</td>
<td>✓ Guess at answers</td>
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<td>✓ Keep answers brief</td>
<td>✓ Lie, mislead or cover up</td>
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<td>✓ Stick to the facts</td>
<td>✓ Speculate on other's motives or possible outcomes</td>
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<td>✓ Admit when you don't know the answer</td>
<td>✓ Give personal opinions</td>
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<td>✓ Avoid jargon</td>
<td>✓ Let reporters put words in your mouth</td>
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<td>✓ Be aware of your audience</td>
<td>✓ Be intimidated</td>
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<td>✓ Remember there is no such thing as &quot;off the record&quot;</td>
<td>✓ Talk down to the reporter</td>
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<td>✓ Thank reporter when they do a good job</td>
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<td>✓ Remember that rumors fill the void – it is better to get out front with accurate information</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Avoid &quot;what if&quot; scenarios</td>
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Building Successful Media Relationships
(Getting Your Story Covered)

Get to Know Them . . .
✓ Introduce yourself to people working in the media
✓ Deliver a really good story idea to them
✓ Be familiar with the media outlet – read the paper or listen to the station
✓ Help them understand your role in the community
✓ Be warm, polite and professional
✓ Consider individual as a peer and colleague

Learn their Ropes . . .
✓ When are deadlines?
✓ How do they like to receive information – phone, paper, email

Sharing Your Story . . .
✓ Daily papers need a week to ten day to schedule a reporter’s time and arrange for a photographer (weekly papers need about a two week advance notice)
✓ Remember reporters are looking for – who, what, where, when and why?
✓ Don’t assume that the media already knows about your good news
✓ Offer suggestions about how your story could be presented – people to interview, pictures to look for – but don’t make demands
✓ Make the reporter’s job easy by having all of your facts together

What if They Say No . . .
✓ Respect the “no” and be prepared for it
✓ Ask what it is about the story that doesn’t seem right for their audience
✓ Offer to adapt the story to their needs
✓ If the story is rejected don’t take it personally

What if there’s an Error . . .
✓ Call the editor or news director as soon as possible
✓ Keep in mind there is a difference between advertising and public relations

Follow-up . . .
✓ Ask if they need more details
✓ If you send a fax, letter or email be sure to follow up with a personal phone call
✓ Thank them for covering your event, program et cetera
Writing Effective Press Releases

Press Release...
✓ Remember the timeliness of your submission
✓ Use standard 8 1/2"x 11" paper typed on one side only and leave wide margins for editors to write notes in
✓ Make sure it hits the mark
✓ Always list the name and number of the person who can provide additional information or answer questions
✓ Indicate the desired print day/week of the release
✓ The headline should be ten words or less and should summarize the information in the press release in an exciting and dynamic way
✓ Lead with why the reader or viewer should be interested – what issue/concern does it address, what is the "occasion", why is it newsworthy
✓ Get the facts and most important information up front – stories are trimmed from the bottom up when space is limited
✓ If release is greater than one page, type "-more-", centered at the bottom of the pages
✓ End a press release with either 
"###" or "-30-" typed across the center of the page, three lines below the end of your text
✓ Proofread and check facts and spelling
✓ Spell out acronyms and explain jargon or technical terms
✓ Use short words and sentences
✓ Determine how the media outlet would like to receive the release – fax, mail, e-mail

Photos...
✓ Try to avoid staging something
✓ Find a photo idea that really shows what a program will do in the community
✓ The fewer folks in the photo, the better
✓ Do not put the photo in the press release; attach it as a separate document. If sending via e-mail, send as a separate JPEG file.
✓ Remember that your picture will be reproduced in black and white in the newspapers
Working With The Media: Be Proactive!

Media Prep Sheet and Follow Up Record

When you're first contacted by the reporter, get this information:

Interviewer's name: ____________________________________________

Publication/station: ____________________________________________

Interview date: ________________________ Interview time: _________

Interview location: ________________________ Deadline: ______________

Date or time for story publication/broadcast: ______________________

How/why did you identify me as a resource? (If applicable.)

What issues do you want to cover?

What is the news hook?

What kind of interview is it? (Single story or series? Weekly column?)

Prepare before the interview:

Anticipated questions:
1. __________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________
4. __________________________________________________________
5. __________________________________________________________
My talking points:
1.
2.
3.

Bottom line quote:

Follow-up and after the interview, record results below:

What were the issues covered?

What were the key questions asked?
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

When did the article/interview run? Keep a copy for your files.

Do you believe you were quoted accurately?

If you could, would you do anything differently regarding the interview?