



MEDIA RELATIONS 101 | October 201

Media Relations 101

Reporters and editors are always looking for news. You can make their jobs easier by developing and packaging story ideas. Be mindful of their tight deadlines and need for balanced stories.

WHAT DO 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 audio and visual opportunities (for radio and TV reporters, respectively)

BEFORE YOU APPROACH MEDIA OUTLETS

Before contacting reporters, identify your goals, audience and target outlets. You should also:

- Find what is newsworthy or relevant about your story: why should audiences care?
- Determine your key messages and anticipate questions.
- Recruit credible spokespeople.

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- Identify and research target reporters: have they covered the issue before? If so, from what perspective?
- Prepare background materials.
- Plan your pitch: is it the right time? Is there any recent news about this subject?

HOW TO POSITION YOURSELF AS AN EXPERT/SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

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

WHEN TALKING TO A REPORTER

When a reporter calls, get their name, contact information, and deadline. To better understand the context for the interview, ask the reporter 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 and anticipate likely questions.
- 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."

CONCLUSION

Positioning yourself as a trusted source of information is key to establishing and maintaining good relationships with reporters. They are usually crunched for time (especially in this era of shrinking newsrooms) so it's important to be targeted in your outreach. It also helps to:

- Do your homework—find the "news hook," identify your target, and plan your pitch.
- Pick the right vehicle or media outlet.
- Make it easy for reporters to cover your story by providing background information and reliable sources.
- Use plain English.
- Thank the reporter when the piece comes out—better yet, do it on Twitter, RT their article, and drive traffic to their story.