

TIPs for Good Media Relations

I. Media Tips

- ***Be Prepared for your Interview***

Prepare your media spokesperson ahead of your event by providing them with key messages and practice questions. Journalists will generally not provide their questions ahead of time, as they want the interview to be conversational in nature. It is therefore best to develop media questions and answers based on your best guess of questions about your event, the story behind the event, and facts supporting your event objectives.

- ***Use Visuals***

For live media interviews or when taking photos for the media, plan to have a visual backdrop that is linked with the topic of your event. For instance if your event is focused on sport, have the interview take place in front of the field while the game is going on or have the spokesperson stand in front of your organization's banner.

- ***Provide Access to your Event Participants***

The media may also want to interview some of the event participants to get their impressions of the event. Plan for this request and prepare some of your event participants to speak with the media.

- ***Talking with Media Representatives***

When talking with media representatives, keep in mind the following good practices for an effective interview:

- Avoid using jargon and acronyms. Keep your language simple.
- Try to maintain a positive tone.
- Try to keep your answers short (if the reporter keeps re-asking the question in a taped interview, it is possible that your answer needs to be tighter).
- Rely on the key messages as much as possible (it's easy to have them right in front of you for a radio interview as they won't be seen). If you find that you are just answering the questions and aren't conveying the key messages you want to share, try using one of the bridging phrases listed below. Remember it's YOUR media interview.
 - ✓ I see that, but ... (key message)
 - ✓ What's more important is ... (key message)
 - ✓ I'm not here/able to comment on that. What I would like to say is ...
 - ✓ I'd also like to add that ...
 - ✓ Just to put this into some context ...
 - ✓ What's absolutely critical to remember is ...
 - ✓ That's very interesting, but what I believe is ...

- ✓ The point is ...
- If the question is asked is loaded with negative words, don't repeat the negative words in your answer (for example, former president Richard Nixon was asked by a famous reporter "Are you a crook?" and his answer was "I am not a crook").
- Remember, nothing is ever "off the record".

II. What Makes Something Newsworthy?

There are five factors that tend to influence media to consider your story as newsworthy. When an editor needs to decide whether to run with a particular story, they will ask how well the story meets each of these criteria. Normally, a story should perform well in at least two areas.

Competition can play a part in the likelihood of your event getting media coverage. If there are a lot of newsworthy stories on a particular day then some stories will be dropped. Although certain stories can be delayed until a new slot becomes available, time-sensitive news will often be dropped permanently.

- **Timing**

The word *news* means exactly that - things which are *new*. Topics which are current are good news. A story with only average interest needs to be told quickly if it is to be told at all. If it happened today, it's news. If the same thing happened last week, it may no longer be considered interesting by media outlets.

- **Significance**

The number of people affected by the story is important. If your event is part of something bigger, then highlight that significance. For instance, mentioning that your event is part of the Welcoming Ottawa Week Calendar with over 70 events may enhance chances of coverage for your event.

- **Proximity**

Stories which happen near to us have more significance. The closer the story to home, the more newsworthy it is. That's why community newspapers can be very interested in events taking place in their neighbourhoods.

- **Prominence**

Famous people get more coverage just because they are famous. If you break your arm it won't make the news, but if the Prime Minister breaks his arm it's big news. So if you have a celebrity at your event, let the media know. Or if your event links to something that has received a lot of previous coverage, then highlight the connection. Tie your story to a current or upcoming event to make it even more timely.

- **Human Interest**

Human interest stories are a bit of a special case. They often disregard the main rules of newsworthiness; for example, they don't date as quickly, they need not affect a large number of people, and it may not matter where in the world the story takes place. WOW events have so many, compelling human interest stories with very interesting angles!

Human interest stories appeal to emotion. They aim to evoke responses such as amusement or sadness. Television news programs often place a humorous or quirky story at the end of the show to finish on a feel-good note. Newspapers often have a dedicated area for offbeat or interesting items.

Shape your story idea around the people involved to make it a human interest piece. Consider the personal challenges and triumphs of the characters in your story. What was the universal lesson learned? The key is to find the part of your story that will have the most emotional impact, and focus on that.

If you're not sure where to start, find a relevant media outlet and check out the stories they've already written. What types of stories do they normally feature? Which of the newsworthy factors are most prominent in their stories? What kinds of stories are most popular with readers? This will give you a better understanding of what that particular media outlet finds newsworthy.

This content was adapted from:

<http://www.mediacollege.com/journalism/news/newsworthy.html>

<https://bitesizepr.com/what-makes-a-story-newsworthy/>