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Working With the Media: Strategies to Effectively Tell Your County’s Story

Speakers

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Working with the Media: Strategies to Effectively Tell Your County’s Story
What brings you here today?

- You want to learn tips about “handling” the media because of a poor or negative experience
- You’re not confident in your communication strategy or maybe you don’t even have one
TIP

Flying under the radar is not a communication strategy.
LET'S TALK ABOUT ME
DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR DEPARTMENTS

- Find your news (or make your news)
  - Community service
- Efficiencies within your office
- Honors or awards
- Reminders for deadlines, public notices

You have information about things the public wants to know about – trust me
DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY

- Email
- Websites
- Social Media
- Newsletters

CAN I TECH YOU TO DINNER
DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESIDENTS

- Find out what they want to know
  - Survey
- Share information you have that helps them in their daily lives
- Celebrate your residents and community
- Community Partners

GO LITTLE ROCK STAR
DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA

- Explain your office, tasks, responsibilities
- Give them background/information on what your office does
- Offer to be an SME for them
- Understand the reporter’s job and position / Understand what the public is interested in learning about or has questions about
DOES IT MATTER? REPORTERS GET IT WRONG ANYWAY.

- Reporters are people too
- Want to report accurately

THAT SAID, MISTAKES DO HAPPEN

- There is a difference between not liking a story and story that is factually wrong
  - Factually correct = good story. Even if you don’t like it.
Example: New Roundabout Project

Relationship with the Departments: Roundabout project (2nd for the county); begin this spring; impact commuters and employees.

Goal: Introduce roundabouts to county drivers and help them understand why they will start seeing more roundabouts in WC.

Relationship with Technology: website, social media, newsletter w/ subscribers; ability to implement emailed update alerts to a different set of subscribers.

Message: Roundabouts are safer than stoplights and signs; they save taxpayer dollars, and residents’ time, better for environment (than a stop light or stop sign when traffic numbers are high).

Relationship with Residents: Roundabouts are polarizing; new to the county and to county drivers; begin this spring; impact commuters and employees.

Strategy: Proactively start this discussion before we start a big project; acknowledge the newness of this traffic control device and share in their frustration – build a bond of commonality and “get through this together”.
Example: New Roundabout Project

**Relationship with the Media:** Send release alerting them to the project start and the communication plan.

Work with community partners and the municipality to share information about the project as well.
I don’t like roundabouts. Perhaps more accurately, I don’t do roundabouts. If I approach one unexpectedly, the nausea in my stomach causes my head to look haphazardly for a side street, or yes, parking lot to cut through to avoid taking it. If GPS directions forecast me taking one, I can’t hit the “alternative route” button quickly enough — extra travel time never factors into the decision — and if there’s no way to avoid one, I seriously consider if I really need to travel to my end destination. In the off chance I am forced to go through one, get ready for a heavy dose of complaining followed by my continual championing of the more traditional traffic control methods like the stoplight and stop sign.
Working with the Media: Strategies to Effectively Tell Your County’s Story

- Mine your stories; your county is working on projects the public would love to know about
- Find your message, your key points, your “why”
- Know your tools and understand how to use them
- Know your audience, who are they and how they receive information
- Each story you tell has a different communication strategy...but your communication foundation (the goals, the tools, the approach) is the same.
- And most importantly, remember it’s all about...
Working with the Media: Strategies to Effectively Tell Your County’s Story

RELATIONSHIPS

THX
When a reporter calls....... 

Keep calm. You’ve got a plan.
Before you answer questions. **ASK** them.

What to do when a reporter calls...

- What is their deadline?
- Who else are they talking to?
- What is the format? (TV, print, podcast)
- What type of story is it? (News, profile, investigative)
- What is the angle?
Before doing an interview, you need to know two things:

1. **The Impact**
2. **The Message**

**Good**
- It advances your priorities
- A chance to deliver YOUR message
- Tell YOUR side first – WINNING
- Be helpful/relationship development

**Bad**
- Doesn't benefit you
- You don't know the answers
- It doesn't reach your audience
- If you could go to jail
PRACTICE. PRACTICE. PRACTICE.

- Know it. Don’t Wing it.
- Say it out loud – hear it.
- Test it.
- Be Authentic.

"Have something to say. Say it. And sit down."
- Louis Howe

Want to be quoted? Be quotable.
Never ever say no comment - EVER

- On the record, Off the record (no such thing) & on background
- Print vs Video
- Quote vs Attribution
- What to do if you flub it up
Does anyone have any questions for my answers?
– Henry Kissinger

The interview isn’t about answering questions
– it is about accomplishing your objectives.

PERIOD.
Tips for the interview

Respect deadlines
Tips for the interview

Not too long
Not too short

STOP TALKING, STOP TALKING NOW.
Tips for the interview

K. I. S. S.
Keep It Simple Stupid
Tips for the interview

Don’t repeat the negative
Tips for the interview

Know who you are talking to
Know how to bridge...

• I can’t speak to THIS case, but what I can say is..

• I wouldn’t want to speculate, but what I can say is...

• The important thing to remember is..

• We remain hopeful.

• We are cautiously optimistic.

• We are disappointed in the outcome, but

• We look forward to reviewing the suggestions, but
Owing an ambush.....

1. Prepare
2. Stop.
   - Looking for the dramatic shot – don't give it.
4. Remove barriers – car doors, sunglasses
5. Watch your body language
   - It should be open and transparent
6. Delay Delay Delay or
   - Remember your bridge
   - What I can tell you is....
7. Short & Honest
NACo Media Relations: A Guide for Counties

- To learn more download NACo’s Media Relations Guide at www.naco.org/media
Questions?
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