

News Media Relations Workshop

October 14, 2009

Today's presenters:

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ALL

Welcome: introduce selves; point out media experience!

Will have a break this morning, but if you need to leave anyway, go ahead...

CLICK

Why are we here?

Our purpose today:

- To enhance your understanding of the media
- To provide opportunity to talk with people who have media experience
- To offer hands-on training
- To teach you skills no matter where you go from here...

SHELLEY

Our purpose today:

To enhance your understanding of the media

To talk with people who have media experience

To provide you with hands-on training

To teach you skills no matter where you go from here...

So why is the media important enough to have a training about?

#1: because Americans use the media...

Who uses the media?

- 64% of Americans get their local news from...TV! (all age groups)
- 41% get it from newspapers, even younger
- 17% get it from internet; 18% from radio (all age groups except 65+)
- Americans are critical of the media...but they still rely on it for information...heavily!

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For local news, TV is where most of the public turns:

64% say they get most of their news about issues and events in their area from television. It's the main source of local news for ALL AGE GROUPS.

41% get local news from newspapers --- even among those younger than 30, more get local news from newspapers (39%) than from the internet (21%)

17% say the internet is their main source of local news; 18% radio (except for those 65+)

Even though favorable opinions of local TV news, the daily newspaper and network TV news have declined since 1985, majorities continue to express favorable opinions of local TV news (73%), the daily newspaper they are most familiar with (65%), and network TV news (64%).

SOURCE: Pew Inst for People and the Press, Sept. 13, 2009 report, "Press Accuracy Rating Hits Two Decade Low: Public Evaluations of the News Media: 1985-2009"

Why are the media important?

- *Everyone* is our customer...
- It's a great opportunity to tell our story
- We can anticipate the issues

When we're properly prepared, the media present us an excellent opportunity to show Oregonians how we work for them!

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Perception of the state of Oregon and of our agencies influences how the public and legislators react to our initiatives.

- We're a public service agencies and everyone is a customer
- The media provides a great opportunity to tell our story
- The media can be an "early warning system" of complaints or issues that are surfacing

When we're properly prepared, the media present us an excellent opportunity to show Oregonians we work for them!

AND THAT'S WHAT THE POINT OF US BEING HERE TODAY: TO SHOW YOU HOW TO BE PREPARED.

We don't want to turn away an opportunity to tell Oregonians what a good job we are doing!

So let's talk about how we do that!

Print news is . . .



SALLY

Print news includes:

- Newspapers
- Magazines and other periodicals
- Books and...
- the Web

With print media, it's **written** down and could be **around forever**. News articles are often **referenced in other works**, so it's especially important to be accurate.

And with the **Web**, there is a **potential worldwide audience** for any story.

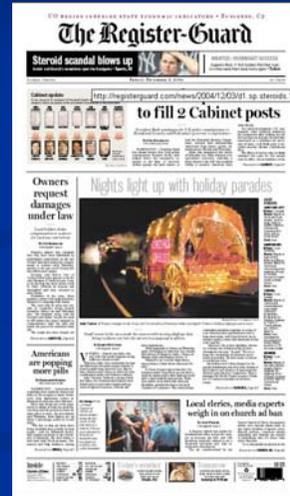
More and more, "print news" is not the traditional newspaper but a combination: reporters at the Oregonian now carry video cameras with them so they can also have visual to post to their Web sites...

Advantages / Disadvantages

- Provides most details
- Can “last” – serve as reference
- Versatile

However

- No moving visual, no sound!
- Quickly becomes “old”



SALLY

Advantages of print media:

- Provides **details, depth**
- Can take **more space** for in-depth coverage, graphs, photos, etc.
- “Reach” – distribution is set, with **large circulation** numbers for an area
- Lasting – becomes reference** for opinion leaders, other sources
- Newspapers are **versatile**. A reader can:
 - Glance through the headlines to get the gist
 - Take more time to read the details
 - Come back later, check facts, re-read sections, study the graphics and pictures to better understand

Disadvantages of print media:

- Static** – no sight/sound; which is why reporters are beginning to carry video recorders...
- Can be “scooped”** by broadcast media coverage
- Stale** – “yesterday’s news”

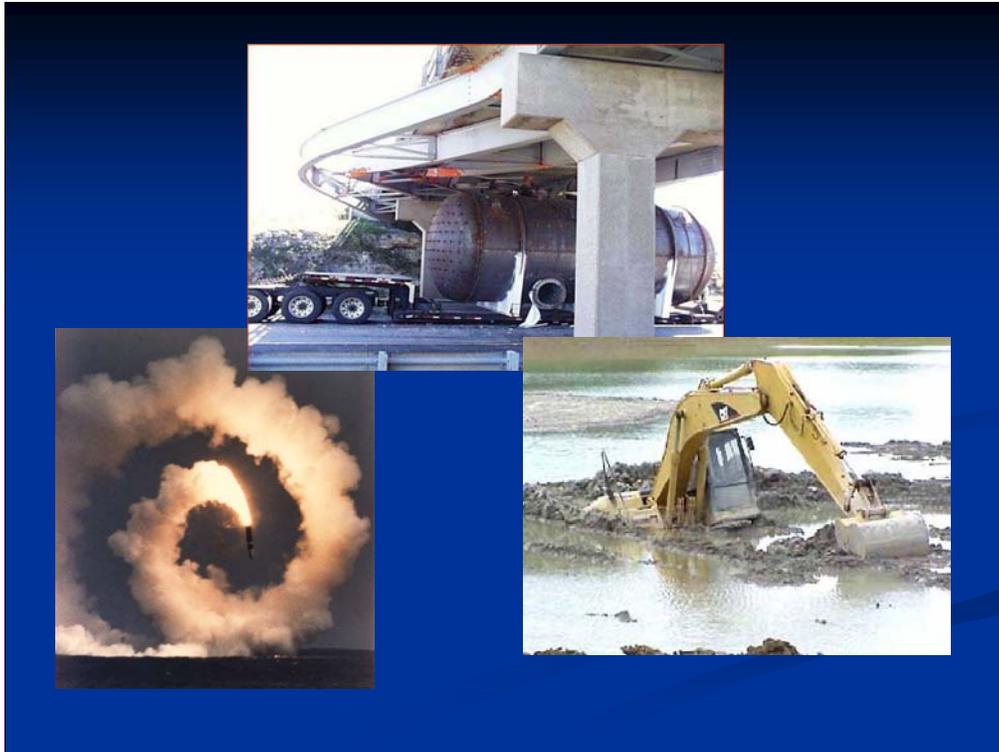
But newspapers can still have visual power...



SALLY

A good photo illustrates a story. A great photo tells a story.

When working with reporters or photographers, try to think of a picture that could illustrate what you're trying to say.



SALLY

One caveat: be careful, because photo ops have been known to go awry, such as:

- 1) This tanker getting stuck under a bridge when ODOT touted how much we are doing to help maintain mobility; or
- 2) Not being as successful as possible in dealing with inclement weather...or
- 3) The “infallible” missile.

Print media success

- Find out deadline – may or may not be urgent
- Few reporters still have “beats”
- Never agree to an interview without being prepared!
- Keep your message simple, clear

SALLY

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PRINT MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Deadlines for newspapers are important

Not quite as tight as with some of the other media. They can “hold the presses”

After your interview, it’s OK to call the reporter back with new or additional information—but call back promptly

Reporters rarely have “beats” – but some do.

They sometimes get to know their subject matter better than other media reporters.

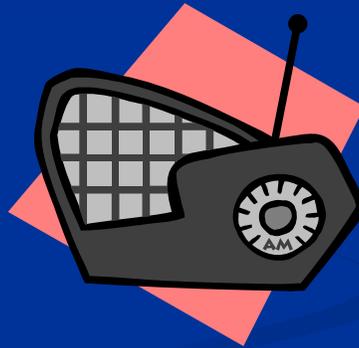
It’s important to establish a good relationship with print reporters because they tend to work regularly on the same subject areas

They may cover several beats, so remember **they aren’t experts!**

When you have an interview:

- Be prepared; might even have some **fact sheets or handouts** to help w/their story
- Keep your message simple and clear; let the reporter decide if he/she wants to delve deeper, and then still have your message ready, simple and clear...!

Radio news is . . .



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RADIO NEWS IS....

Radio brings you not only the cold, hard facts of a story — it also captures its sound and feel.

Of course, in the 1950s, radio began to lose much of its audience to television, except at two distinct times of the day: morning and early evening.

- News/Talk format, where the news is constantly being updated and presented several times per hour
- Music Station format, where you have an hour of music with perhaps one 4-5 minute break for news. In drive times, morning and afternoon, this could be two brief breaks for news per hour and a quarter-hour weather and traffic segment.

What that means for us is that when a radio reporter calls, they are probably pretty anxious to get a recording, and **may even already have the tape rolling when you answer the phone!**

Advantages/ Disadvantages

- Everywhere, available, accessible
- It targets certain audiences
- It can reach people in their cars

However

- Very little time to tell the story
- Lacks visual aspect
- People must “listen” to hear...

SHELLEY

- Everywhere, available, accessible: more radios than TVs
- It targets certain audiences; there are radio stations for every subset of Americans!
- It can reach people in their cars – great for emergencies.

However

- Very little time to tell the story; 30 – 45 seconds is whole story (except for NPR)
- Lacks visual aspect
- People must “listen” to hear...

The main disadvantage to radio is that you usually just don't have time to tell the whole story. So you have to pick your words with care and boil the material down to one or two main points.

Characteristics of radio news

- Tight deadlines – 30 minutes or less
- Most immediate but least detailed
- Stories are short and to the point
- Audio from different voices important



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Radio has the tightest deadlines.

It's most immediate, but least detailed.

In order to keep the interest of the audience, a variety of voices is important. People tend to tune out one voice doing a series of stories. If the news is punctuated with audio from different voices or sources, people generally will stay engaged for a longer time.

Watch out for the "cut and run" – reporter got what he/she needed and already hung up on you so they could produce their piece.

Radio news success

- Negotiate time – push back!
- Conversational but compressed
- One or two main points (10 seconds!)
- Be mindful of their need to rush (because they have pressing deadlines!)

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Because their deadlines are so tight, radio reporters may at times seem 'pushy' about getting you to go on tape with them to talk about a story or issue.

But you need to resist the temptation to 'wing it,' even with subject matter that you know well. Here are a few tips:

- If you are called by a reporter, always ask "What's your deadline?"
- Even if it's only five or ten minutes away, ask the reporter for the time to organize your thoughts and notes. Then call back.
- What the reporter is looking for is a 'sound bite' or two to give the story another voice. Usually a sound bite is 10-12 seconds.
- In talking for radio, be conversational – you don't want to sound like you're reading.
- But also be compressed. Make your point in 10 seconds if possible.
- Stick to one or two main messages. Radio is brief and direct.
- Your audience is anyone with a radio, so also keep the language and ideas simple.
- It's likely the reporter will get enough material for one or two sound bites and then be gone. That's why you make the main point first AND Often, a radio reporter will just start the tape and ask for you to talk. When you're done with the points you want to make, don't just keep babbling in order to fill silence. The reporter may have dropped the phone. Wait for the next question.
- CLICK



DAVET

TV News is...VINEGAR AND WATER AND OIL, and even some spices thrown in for good measure.

But does it taste good?



TV + News = vinegar + oil



No matter how much you
shake or stir,
they don't really mix

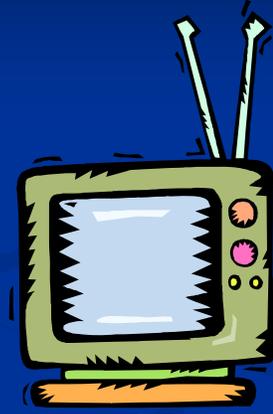
- TV = drama, entertainment
- News = facts, perspective

DAVET

You decide...

Advantages of television

- Illustrates a story
- Conveys emotion
- Is immediate
- Reaches a broad, diverse audience
- Covers a lot of news in a short amount of time



DAVET

TV News is the most “used” media – more people watch TV news than read the paper or listen to the radio or get their news online.

TV News must have 2 ingredients:

1. Sound

Background sound

Your on-camera interview (sound bite 5 to 20 sec)

2. Pictures

The more the better

ADVANTAGES:

Can illustrate, take the viewer there

Can convey emotion

Is immediate

Reaches a broad audience

Covers a lot of news in a short amount of time

Disadvantages of television



- Needs a picture!
- Reporters have little time
- Reporters are often generalists
- News is driven by rating points/sweeps week
- They are very competitive!
- Doesn't do well with complex, non-visual stories

DAVET

Needs a picture

Reporters have little time to tell a story

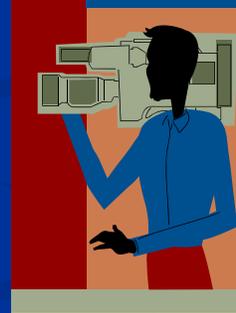
Reporters are often generalists

News is driven by Nielsen rating points and sweeps week; the stations are very competitive.

Doesn't do well with complex non-visual stories

TV news success

- Maintain eye contact with reporter
- Tape is ALWAYS rolling
- Speak clearly, concisely
- Appearance should be professional
- Do over if you need to!



DAVET

Maintain eye contact with reporter: try to forget about the camera...

BUT REMEMBER: tape is ALWAYS rolling...

Speak clearly, concisely

Dress professionally, and no non-agency logos or apparel!

Ask for a do-over if you goofed up – the reporter wants to look good, too!!!

RUN BAD INTERVIEW WITH ROGER/HESS

Preparing for *any* media interview

- You have rights: ask!
- Ground rules: try to be accommodating, but also be smart
- Do your homework: practice!
- Then say what you want to say. Period.



SALLY

You have rights: don't be afraid to ask...

Who is asking for an interview?

What is the topic?

What is the angle?

Who else is being interviewed?

Interview Ground Rules:

You can often determine the time and place of the interview, but try to be accommodating.

You have the right to know if you are being recorded.

You have every right to have your statements used without distortion or editing that changes the meaning of what you say.

PRACTICE WITH A CO-WORKER OR YOUR PIO THEN...

Say what you want to say

Ignore the camera, tape recorder or notepad

If your tang gets tangled, start over

If you don't understand the question, just say so

If you don't know the answer, say so and offer to get back to them later with the information.
No points for guessing!

Relate your message to the people reading, listening or watching, not to the media or your peers.

RUN GOOD INTERVIEW (SALLY'S, OR JIM'S)

Developing your SOCO



- Always, always, always: DEVELOP A SOCO!
- Make it clear and brief and focus on positive
- Reinforce message over and over
- Use “flagging” and “bridging” to stay on message

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Develop Your SOCO — Single Overriding Communication Objective

Figure out ahead of time what your main message is and how to say it in one simple sentence, sometimes known as your “key message.” This is your guarantee that no matter if the interview is friendly or not, you always are able to clearly state your main message.

- Make sure your message is clear, focused on the positive, and brief.
- Remember that a colorful sound bite that tells how people will be affected is the one that reporters are most likely to use. But, beware of being too flip.
- Use flagging and bridging to work your Single Overriding Communication Objective into every question you’re asked.
- To reinforce your SOCO, follow up with a short list of facts and information.

FLAG:

When answering a question, point the reporter to your Single Overriding Communication Objective by saying, “If

there’s only one thing you take away from today’s interview, it’s this: . . .” and then tell them what it is.

BRIDGE:

Respond directly to a negative question, continue with a brief transition statement, and then end with a positive conclusion by restating your SOCO.

EXAMPLE: The reporter said, “So it looks like you are discriminating against illegal immigrants.”
“That would be incorrect to say that. What anyone can do is bring in one of the many other kinds of documents the law allows for proving Oregon residency.”

HERE ARE SOME SAMPLE SOCOS:

CLICK

Sample SOCOs

- “ODOT is working to get the road open as soon as possible – our priority is the safety of workers and the traveling public.”
- “At DHS, we care about our clients and the community we live in – our goal is find a way to make it work for both groups.”

SHELLEY

“ODOT is working to get the road open as soon as possible, with a priority on the safety of workers and the traveling public.”

“ODOT’s deicing measures allow the agency to take preventative steps to protect travelers while also protecting the environment.”

THINK ABOUT A CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAM OR PROJECT OR ACTIVITY IN YOUR AGENCY --- WHAT SOCO – OR SOUNDBITE – COULD YOU COME UP WITH?

Reporter tactics

- The machine gunner
- “Words in your mouth”
- Hypothetically speaking...
- The “lesser of two evils” ploy

*BRING IT ALL BACK...
TO YOUR SOCO!*

DAVET – and roleplay

Reporter tactics you may need to overcome:

Most reporters are just trying to do a job under pressure. Some may have already come to conclusions and just need you to confirm, but if that's not your SOCO...then beware!

The Machine Gunner

When you are asked several questions in a row, machine-gunstyle:

- Pick the question you're most comfortable answering and bridge back to your topic.
- Or, toss the questions back by saying, “You've asked me several questions. Which do you want me to answer first?”

The “Words In Your Mouth” Play

- Reporter: “Looking at the poor budget performance, isn't this clearly a case of mismanagement?”
- If the statement is offensive, don't repeat it — even to deny it.
- You: “Our primary concern is fiscal responsibility. That's why we use these protocols to assist with budget tracking . . .”

The “Hypothetical” Game

- Reporter: “What happens if the advisory commission doesn't take action?”
- Don't play this game, aside from labeling the situation as clearly hypothetical.

The “Lesser Of Two Evils” Ploy

- Reporter: “Which does DAS prefer, continuing to allow budget decisions that go beyond approved levels or hiring more people to supervise and manage the budget staff?”
- You: “Neither one.” Then bridge back to your SOCO.

BRING IT ALL BACK TO YOUR SOCO!

RUN GOOD INTERVIEW (SHAWN'S)

Practical Exercise

Work as a team to develop your SOCO.

Discuss dealing with reporter tactics...

Practice interviewing!

Instructors:

Have group choose a scenario, any one of the ones on the sheets handed out. Choose as a group. Then as a group, decide on the SOCO; help them hash it out. Then, group should discuss how to deal w/reporter tactics and instructors should listen in and advise. Here you can also do some practice interviewing.

THIS IS MOST IMPORTANT PART OF WORKSHOP: save at least an hour for this, and have students practice!!!

Wrap-up

- PREPARE...develop your SOCO.
- Practice keeping your message simple.

Remember:

**You are in control of
your interviews — why not take
advantage of the opportunity to tell
your story?**

Take time to prepare...develop your SOCO

Practice --- and practice keeping your message simple!

Remember:

**You are in control of
your interviews—take advantage
of the opportunity to tell your story!**

Thank you
and be safe out there!

