

Media Communication - 7 Tips for Success

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1. **Build relationships with the media**
 - a. Have a well-defined media contact policy
 - b. Develop a list of the names and phone numbers for the managers and key reporters of each major media outlet
 - c. Reach out to them and make sure they have your contact information
2. **Be the first and most credible source of information**
 - a. Be proactive, not reactive when providing information in a crisis situation
 - b. Respond to all media inquiries as quickly as possible
 - c. Use Web site updates, text messaging and social media as a communication tool
 - d. Monitor for inaccurate information being spread through social networking
3. **Understand the media climate and how it affects your communication effort**
 - a. Learn the angle and focus of a story
 - b. If there is conflict in the storyline with your organization as the bad guy, address the issue to make sure this does not become a permanent label
4. **Prepare for interviews using a five step process:**
 - a. Gain control and establish ground rules
 - b. Determine your communication goals and develop messages to attain those goals
 - c. Covert into clear and concise statements
 - d. Anticipate questions and your response
 - e. Conduct the interview using bridging techniques
5. **Be vigilant when dealing with the press and in all public settings**
 - a. Don't fall for the dead air trap – state your answer, then your message and stop talking
 - b. Don't do impromptu interviews
 - c. Be careful of live microphones and cameras in any public place
 - d. Don't react to a reporter emotionally
6. **Be message driven**
 - a. They must be short and relevant
 - b. Include community action steps, if necessary and appropriate
 - c. Always express empathy regarding those affected
 - d. Never lie or mislead and don't be reluctant to say you don't know the answer to a question
 - e. Don't over reassure or make promises you may not be able to deliver
7. **Establish and stay in control**
 - a. Get information about the reporter, their focus and the media venue
 - b. Set the ground rules with the reporter prior to conducting the interview
 - c. Offer to "fact check" a story and correct inaccurate information and embellishments
 - d. If you can't answer a question, explain the reason rather than saying "no comment".
 - e. Flag your sound bites- for example, "What is important to remember is..."
 - f. Answer questions and bridge to message

IN A CRISIS:

Express Empathy Right Away
Be Timely and Accurate
Be Honest and Credible

- Set up a command post
- Set up a media staging area
- Address public safety concerns
- Articulate your desire to find the cause of the problem to fix it as quickly as possible
- Be prepared for likely questions (see box to right)

What the Public Will Ask:

- How are we affected?
- What can I do to stay safe?
- Who caused this and can you fix it?

What the Media Will Ask:

- What happened?
- Who is in charge?
- Has this been contained?
- How many victims?
- Are victims being helped?
- What can we expect?
- Why did this happen?
- Did you have forewarning?

Three Media Traps To Avoid

"I'm on deadline and need an answer now."
Don't bite. Tell them you're eager to cooperate, but that you need a time to prepare.

"It'll look bad if you don't tell me."
Reporters may try to infer that you will look guilty if you don't share confidential information with them. Avoid saying "no comment," and tell reporters why you can't go into greater detail on those topics instead.

Dead Air

Reporters will sometimes keep looking at you when you've finished talking. This may make you feel awkward and you may start talking again to fill the silence. Just remain quiet, or say, "That's the main point. What other questions can I answer for you?"