



# A Media Relations Primer

How to Use the Media as Part  
of Your Public Education  
Campaign

June 12, 2013





## What Is Media Relations?

- Developing good relationships with reporters and editors who cover the work and activities of your organization
- Understanding the needs and interests of the media
- Providing the media with accurate and compelling information and knowledgeable individuals who can answer questions, enabling reporters, producers, and other media professionals to produce good stories



## What Do the Media Need: News

- The Unusual
  - Man Bites Dog
  - Something that has never been done before.
- Something with Big Impact
  - Large Numbers
  - Raising an issue that affects 100s of people
- Well-known people (local or national)
  - Leonardo DiCaprio, your mayor, Congressman, local TV personality
- Ordinary people doing extraordinary things



# What Do YOU Need: Messages and Stories

- Clear, compelling messages give you the best chance to get your story told right
- Messages are ideas that you want to convey
- Messages are not sound bites, but sound bites reinforce and help convey messages
- Messages must be repeated often to make impact
- Stories help drive your message home; put a human face on your issue, create an emotional connection
- Tie your issues into stories in the news



## Media Relations Tools

- Use the Web to conduct research:
  - about reporters and their interests
  - to add context to your own issues
- Press Releases/Press Advisories
- Pitch Letter; Email
- Press Kits (Increasingly online newsrooms)

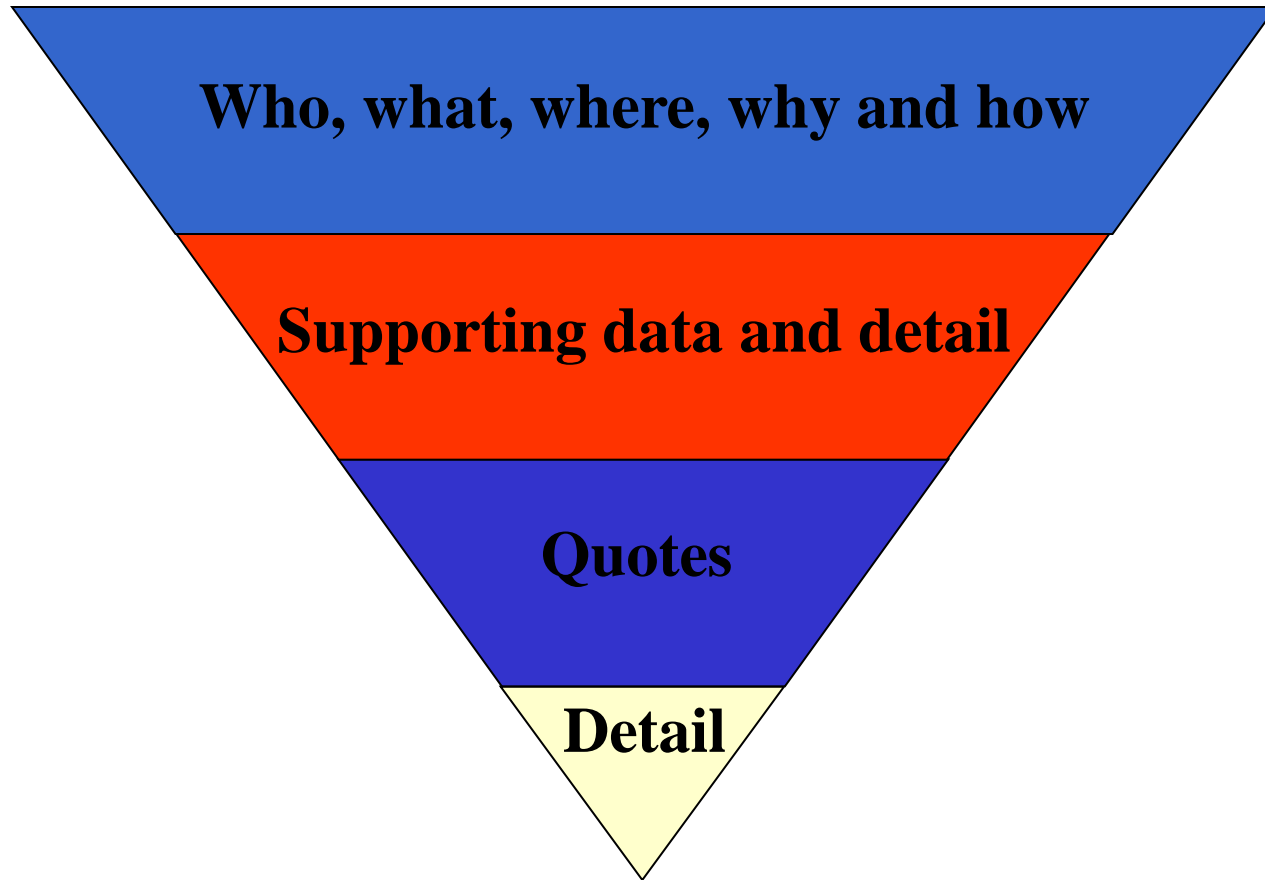


## Media Relations Tools: The Press Release

- Name and Contact Information at the Top
- Catchy Headline
- Dateline
- Compelling First paragraph
- Supporting information
- One to two pages maximum
- Boilerplate about your organization or national campaign

# Media Relations Tools: The Press Release

Use the Inverted Triangle to Organize





## Media Relations Tools: The Media Advisory

- Good tool to promote an event
- One-page summary of the event
- Written in bullet format
- Particularly useful for communicating with radio, T.V., or other digital outlets



## Media Relations Tools: The Media Advisory

- Contact Information at the top (bottom if online)
- Headline
- Who
- What
- Where
- When



## Media Relations Tools: The Pitch Email

- Short, two paragraph email designed to pique a reporter's interest in your story
- Accompanies a press release or advisory
- Allows you to target your story to a particular reporter's interest



## Media Relations Tools: Tips on Pitch Email

- Subject line needs to grab attention: “5,000 people to rally against homelessness” vs. “Homeless rally on March 1”
- First sentence should engage the reporter and make him/her think, “Now that’s an interesting story” or “I never knew that...”
- Short sentences that get right to the point
- No hype
- Give enough information to stimulate interest and make the reporter want more information
- Connect to issues that the reporter has covered or has a known interest in
- Let them know you’ll be following-up



# Pitching the Story

- Target the media outlets you most want to reach.
- Do your homework and identify reporters who are interested in your issues by:
  - Visit the outlet's website and doing a byline search of articles written by the report in the last 6 to 12 months.
  - Conduct Google News searches.
  - See if the reporter is on Linked In or Twitter or other social media site and see what they are talking about.
  - See if the reporter has a blog..
- Target reporters who have covered your issues in the past.
- Find out how reporters like to get information (email, Twitter).
- Develop a pitching script.
- Identify photo/picture opportunities.
- Be sensitive to reporter deadlines – pitch in the morning when reporters are less likely on deadline.
- Be persistent, but not a pain in the neck.



## The Interview: Preparation

- Establish your goals and objectives for the interview.
- Review your key messages.
- Think about what you want the audience to remember from your interview.
- Do your homework on the reporter—look for past stories they've written.
- Try to anticipate questions.
- Think about sound bites that express your messages and that you can have ready to use.



## The Interview: During

- Stay on Message. Repeat your key points frequently.
- Use the reporter's questions as a springboard to your message points.
- Bridge to your points: "Yes we are concerned about the cold weather and its impact but the issue we have to focus on is proposed legislation that would end homelessness...."
- Answer questions briefly and honestly.
- Stay true to your goals and objectives for the interview
- Stay cool and do not lose your temper
- Never disparage your opponents; disagree but do not mock



## The Interview: During

- Emphasize and prioritize what you think is most important.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand the question.
- Don't volunteer more information than was asked for.



## The Interview: Special Tips for Radio and TV

- Wear comfortable, business-like clothing.
- For women: avoid loud, bold plaids or heavy jewelry that might make noise or distract.
- For men: avoid white shirts (camera lights will make you washed out) and loud ties.
- Keep your answers short.
- When on television, sit forward and smile when you respond. It will make you look warmer.
- Befriend the camera man and sound engineer. They can help you look and sound good.
- Don't be afraid to say you've never done TV or radio. Ask where to look, how far you should be from the microphone.





## The Interview: After

- When the story appears, let the reporter know what you liked about the story.
- If there is a factual error, call the reporter, calmly explain what the error was and ask for a correction. Don't ask for a correction of a headline unless it's factually wrong. You may not like the tone but if it's not incorrect, leave it alone.
- Track and analyze media coverage to see how well your messages played, how the media framed them and where your story appeared.
- Update your media list.
- Stay in touch with reporters.
- Do not send reporters gifts.
- Do not ask to see a story in advance.