

Your Savvy Guide for Dealing with Journalists

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Give Power and Resonance to the NonProfit Voice, Put Your Agenda on America's Radar Screen

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Make the Story Newsworthy:

- It should be timely and up-to-date and follow quickly after related stories.
- Your story should be a part of a larger trend.
- Add human interest by having real people tell your story.
- Add celebrities for sizzle.
- In general, venue is important -- the spokesperson should go to where the story is.
- Think visually -- make it visual for television.
- The story angle should be targeted to particular audiences.
- Tenacious pitching to cultivated media contacts is critical.
- Always answer media calls and requests right away.
- Track all media calls in writing.
- Cultivate the media -- be honest, forthright and friendly.
- Ask reporters about the stories they are writing, what are the angles, and who else is being interviewed.
- Ask the reporters about their deadlines.
- Always say the name of your organization -- twice.
- Find out about related stories that have recently been published.
- Always advance YOUR story.
- Memorize three or four key points.
- Anticipate a reporter's questions and formulate effective answers.
- Enhance the power of your answer with specificity.
- Have conviction and be confident.
- If you make a misstatement, re-state your answer correctly as you would have it recorded.
- Continue to try to conduct regular briefings with the media.
- Formal press conferences are normally only used for breaking stories, major announcements, national news and celebrities.
- Your press kits and publications should speak with a consistent unified voice.
- Use photos in your press kits.
- You should be thoroughly briefed and prepared for any surprises.
- In a diplomatic way, take charge in the beginning; don't wait for anyone's permission to begin.
- Say your name and title and begin speaking.
- Move quickly through your key points
- EVERYTHING you say is on the record.
- If you do not want it in the story, do not say it.

- Give positive messages to any negative questions.
- Formulate thoughtful, but quick answers to difficult questions.
- Explain all abbreviations and avoid jargon.
- Do not speculate, joke or be sarcastic.
- The interview is "on" as soon and as long as a journalist is there.
- Use good quotes with active verbs, complete sentences and positive phrases.
- Clear, simple, spoken sentences are superior to well-written prose.
- Do not make your story too complex or overloaded.
- Do not assume that a complex story will be reported accurately.
- Introduce your key quotes with: "The most important aspect of..." The key element of..."
- Do not accept hypothetical statements as questions -- make your own statement.
- Determine your own agenda.
- Use statistics but do not get mired in them.
- Immediate refute any untrue statements -- politely correct them in an informative way.
- Do not lose your temper, become angry or try to debate with a journalist because your story might be weakened.
- Do not fudge an answer -- "I don't know" can be an appropriate answer.
- Try to get in touch with the reporter with the answer by their deadline.
- If a reporter should interrupt you at mid-sentence and you are not able to finish, do not acquiesce. Do not fall into a question/answer/question/answer interrogation.
- Try to be short and quotable and say something like, "As I was saying..."
- If a reporter asks a rapid series of questions, select the question and answer that will strengthen your story. Do not attempt to respond to all the questions.
- If a reporter should ever use hostile or negative language at you, deliver only your positive message and say something like, "We should not get off the important message here..."
- Do not get angry and do not repeat the reporter's language.