

Media Relations Training

Shawna Randolph Communications



PROTECTING YOUR REPUTATION



Welcome and Introductions

■ Facilitator – Shawna Randolph

- 32 years in PR/Journalism industries
- 15 years in T.V. news industry (10 with CTV Edmonton, formerly CFRN & 5 with CTV-Two's AB Primetime)
- 2008 and on - Owner of S.R. Communications
- 17 years with media relations for COE & then for EHS





Welcome and Introductions

- **Videographer** – Dave Foley (IC-Live Video Productions)
- Introductions around the room
- Overview of the session



MEDIA 101 – The Basics

What you will learn today:

- What makes the news media “tick”.
- How to effectively interact with members of the news media, to get your messages out (especially during a crisis).
- That YOU should be the one in control, not reporters.
(*informal survey*)



MEDIA 101 – The Basics



MEDIA 101 – The Basics

How it all works:

- Driven by advertiser's \$\$\$\$\$\$
- Television, radio, print (& digital)
- Higher ratings = higher commercial value



MEDIA 101 – The Basics

What makes news?

- Emotion and “drama, drama, drama”
- Great pictures and video and a good “human element”
- Scandals and cover-ups
- Emergencies, natural disasters
- Anything “new” and “current”
- Anything consequential to their audience (\$)
- Children and animals in stories



Basically, anything that creates a “buzz.”

MEDIA 101 – The Basics

Generating News:

- News releases
- Social media activity & viral videos on the internet
- Contact from their viewers, readers, listeners
- Inquisitive reporters
- Planned feature series
- Government announcements
- Reaction to an event linked to the region/province





Understanding the news media

Deadlines and pressures:

- Constant deadlines while used to people “hiding”
- Pressures from above for exclusives
- Competing with peers within same media outlet
- Competing with other media outlets in general, doing more with fewer resources
- ALL OUTLETS want to be #1 (exclusives)





Personalities to deal with...

- Type “A”s
- Very Impatient
- Want to make names for themselves ... but still have compassionate side.
It’s up to you to find it.



Controlling all dealings with the media

- The media does not make someone “look bad”. A person can make **THEMSELVES** look bad when they don’t conduct themselves well.
- The key is to control yourself and control all conversations with reporters – don’t let them take control – YOU set the pace.
(COE verbal example)





Crisis Messaging:

Key Messages:

- Concern, empathy, compassion
- Accountable
- Responsible - investigations & promises



Face the music if there's something contentious.



Controlling all dealings with the media

- Don't BLOCK!

(1) Tyler Shandro is a Master of Dodging Questions : alberta (reddit.com)



Controlling all dealings with the media



Controlling all dealings with the media

Preparing for the interview:

- Make sure you know what you can or can't say.
- Know your messages/key points.



Controlling all dealings with the media

When they reach out:

- Always respond ASAP (or at least have someone do it)
- Don't do a "cold-call" interview **ever!**
- Gather all the information you need:
 - Find out who they are, what they want, their deadline, and when the item will run.
 - Ask them what the story is and what angle they are working on.
 - Find out who else they may be talking to.
 - Comply with any reasonable request. Then put them on "standby".
- Contact communications personnel.



Controlling all dealings with the media

Preparing for the interview:

- Be honest...Your credibility and that of the corporation is on the line. *“You are better off telling the truth, because then you don’t have to remember what you said”.*
- Stay within your area of responsibility and expertise.
- Know the 5 “W’s” and 2 “H’s”
- Don’t be an unnamed source.
- Rehearse!



Controlling all dealings with the media

Paraphrase

- Reporter incorrectly paraphrases what you said.
- If it's wrong...correct it.
- “*Would you say*”... questions are usually paraphrased and could end up being a quote attributed directly to you.

Bait words



Controlling all dealings with the media



Unsubstantiated/hypothetical questions
Rapid fire questions



Controlling all dealings with the media



Silence Tactic

- Reporter does not respond when you complete an answer and you blurt something out that you regret.
- Ten seconds can seem like a lifetime.
- When you are finished with your statement, remain silent yourself.



Controlling all dealings with the media

The actual interview:

- Maintain good posture & visual distractions (*70, 20, 10 rule*)
- Be aware of your personal nervous habits.
- Be aware of distractions around you.



Controlling all dealings with the media

The actual interview:

- Talk to the reporter...NOT the camera (in-person interviews)
- Don't try to take the microphone
- Watch for "hand talking"
- No sunglasses
- Don't "dress up"
- Always assume the cameras/tape recorders are rolling
- Listen!
- Deliver key message statements up front – repeat. (*bridging*)



Controlling all dealings with the media

Bridging examples:

- *“Before I answer that, you should know ...”*
- *“It’s important for people to know that ...”*
- *“The key point to remember is ...”*
- *“My opinion isn’t relevant. We’re here to speak about...”*



Controlling all dealings with the media

Bridging video example:



Controlling all dealings with the media

Tips to remember:

- **NEVER** say no comment - *“When you say “No comment”, it means to me that you are admitting guilt, because if you’re not, you’d tell me what your position is”* - Wolf Blitzer, CNN.
- If you can’t comment, explain why and never say “no comment”.
- Don’t Lie
- There is no such thing as being “Off the Record”.



Controlling all dealings with the media

Tips to remember:

- Correct misinformation immediately.
- Avoid jargon or lingo.
- Be yourself.
- Don't say it if you don't want it used & also no joking.
- Don't argue or lose your temper.



Controlling all dealings with the media

Rocky Wirtz (former Chicago Blackhawks' Chair) example



Controlling all dealings with the media

STATEMENT FROM ROCKY WIRTZ

A personal statement from Chicago Blackhawks Chairman Rocky Wirtz:

“Tonight, at the Chicago Blackhawks town hall, my response to two questions crossed the line. I want to apologize to the fans and those reporters, and I regret that my response overshadowed the great work this organization is doing to move forward. We have the right leaders and right processes in place to create a safe environment for our employees and players.”



Controlling all dealings with the media

Types of interviews:

- One on one interview - let the reporter start (main messages out first!)
 - In studio (TV or radio); in person; over the phone; virtual
- In a scrum, take control from the start. Tell the group you want to answer everyone's question, but let's keep it orderly and ask one question at a time. Then give an opening statement before questions.





Now we practice.