



Tips for Making News: Traditional Media (TV, Radio, Print)

Pitching Your Story

- Be proactive. Determine what you want to publicize and when, then seek that publicity rather than waiting for the media to call.
- Make the reporter's job easy. They need:
 - Names and contact info for both experts and "real" people who are directly affected or involved in the story. All sources should agree to participate before hand, and ideally you will discuss with them the major points that they will make.
 - News hooks: an event, anniversary, growing trend, etc. that makes this story timely. It is almost always possible to find a news hook for a story, sometimes by creating an event such as a reading celebration. An authentic news hook will make it easier for you to pitch your story successfully. In some cases, it will be better to hold off on seeking publicity until you come up with a genuine news hook.
 - Statistics, research and other facts to bolster your points.
 - Perspective: putting this story in a larger context. For example, how does a community forum in Bangor relate to transportation/planning trends in the region, state, or country as a whole?
 - Show, don't tell. Visual ways to tell the story through photos, footage, archival material, etc.
- Some of the most memorable stories are small, human-interest pieces – the kind of story that people will talk about over the dinner table. Look for them and when you find a good one, pitch it to your local reporter.
- Maximize each good PR opportunity by giving reporters different ways to cover the same story and by publicizing different aspects of the story at different points- when it is beginning, in the middle, at the culmination, etc.

Building Relationships with Reporters

- Help reporters when they call you seeking information. Make yourself a reliable source and build relationships; they will help when you're seeking publicity.
- Make yourself available as an expert when reporters have questions about a topic, even if the story that he or she is writing isn't directly related to your project. That will help build your relationship with the reporter and enhance your reputation as someone who has expertise in that field.

- Treat reporters fairly. A reporter who works for a small media outlet today may be at a much larger outlet in a year or two. Some stories are better suited for a certain type of media outlet such as a weekly paper. Maximize your chances for coverage by sending press releases and story ideas to all of the reporters who cover your issue area, and even some who may not regularly do so. For example, you might be able to place an occasional story in the sports page or business page even if your issue is usually covered in a different section.
- Know the deadlines of the media outlets that cover you regularly and, when possible, respect them. If a weekly reporter calls you on a Tuesday morning, chances are they need the information right away to meet the deadline for Wednesday publication.

Nailing The Interview

- During an interview, if you are asked about some aspect of your effort that isn't going perfectly, it often is better to acknowledge that than to gloss over it. Admitting that you face challenges gives you added credibility and it keeps the public from assuming everything is hunky-dory when perhaps that is not the case.
- Prepare for an interview in advance by jotting down talking points. If you tend to get nervous, rehearse- or ask someone to role-play with you.
- If you don't know something or you can't talk about it, say so. If you are feeling uncomfortable during an interview, take a break or tell the reporter that you'll have to get back to him or her so you can consider your response.
- Don't try to go "off the record." That phrase means different things to different people. Assume everything that you say to a reporter is on the record, even if it isn't a formal interview.
- Avoid using jargon. Explain technical topics as simply as possible.
- Pay attention to how others handle questions from the media. You'll learn valuable tips, and lots of things to avoid.
- Have fun! Let your personality and enthusiasm shine through in interviews.

Following Up

- Don't take it personally if a story is negative or doesn't turn out the way that you would like. You're probably paying way more careful attention to it than others.
- It is inevitable that some coverage will include errors; but do call the outlets about any serious errors. If a reporter makes a significant error, contact the editor as soon as possible and ask for a correction.
- If a reporter does a good job covering your story, thank them!