

# Working with the Media

Motor-Grader Operator Boot Camp

*April 24 & 25, 2017*

*Bismarck, ND*

Tom Jirik

Communications Coordinator

Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute

## Why bother?

- Awareness and education
- Advocacy and positioning
- Accountability



## Awareness and education

- People need reliable information
- Programs benefit from publicity
- News can educate
- Help set the social agenda

# Advocacy and positioning

- You need to be an advocate: for your county, its people and their needs.
- Strategic communication affects change helps you reach the people you care about.
- Reputation counts.

# Accountability



- Public's right to know
- Impact

# What is news?

## *The compelling C's*

- Crisis
- Catastrophe
- Crime
- Conflict
- Corruption
- **Change**
- **Color (human interest)**

# What is news?

- Timely, immediate – not history.
- Affects many people in some way.
- Innovative – what we can do now that we couldn't before
- Interesting – unique look at life or new angle on old story
- What journalists decide is news

# Who are journalists



- Short on time.
- Friendly people who are not necessarily your friend.
- Smarter than you think.
- And less knowledgeable.

# What do journalists want?

- A good story – as many of the elements as they can capture.
- Good quotes.
- The feeling that they understand the issue after 20 minutes as well as you do after two years.

# What do journalists want

- Your respect, not necessarily your affection
- Recognition
- You to be open and honest
- To catch you in a lie

What do reporters *really* want?



## What's not news

- Most grant and award stories are not news  
– ***although they may make your local paper***
- Agency cooperation and people working together are not normally news.

## What's your news?

- What's your expertise?
- Why would anyone care about this?
- Can you tie it to a newsworthy issue?

# How do you get in the news?

- News releases
- Pitches
- Reporter queries
- Periodicals

## How do you get in the news?

- Usually **not** with a press conference
- When to call a press conference?
  - Complex issue
  - Time-sensitive concerns

# Get to Know the Media

*Building relationships for more effective  
media relations*

## Why build relationships

- It's an exchange of value. You want part of their publication or broadcast.
- Good relationship = better communication with your ultimate audience.

## Do your homework

- Watch/listen to the news and learn about special programs.
- Read the paper and identify special sections or columns you can tap.
- Learn the names of local reporters and the subjects they cover.

## Who is the reporter

- Don't assume the reporters know the subject matter or background.
- There is competition for the reporter's time and attention.
- Get to know other reporters.

# The first meeting

- Find out how a reporter likes to get news and tips.
- Tell reporters how you can help them.
- Bring resources.
- No agenda (story pitching) the first time.

## Follow up

- The best gift: call with story tips
- Invite reporters to an event where they can make contacts or get story ideas.
- Comment on a story they've written/produced.

## Products that add value

- Contacts in your county with areas of expertise.
- Fact sheets with basic background info.
- Photos or ideas for illustrating the story.



## Adding value

Consider inviting the reporter to an event or demonstration that highlights new technology, equipment or management.



## Professional courtesies

- Offer story ideas, rather than waiting for reporters to come to you.
- Learn the best time to call: newspapers, TV stations and radio stations differ.
- Honor exclusivity or advance notice agreements.
- Consider all remarks “on the record.”

# Make yourself media savvy

- Listen, read and watch.
- Find out what stories are being covered so you can offer related stories.
- When you see a story you can comment on, call to get into follow-up articles.

# Different kinds of Media

- TV
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Magazines
- Websites
- Social media

## How to prepare

- Prepare
- Is this controversial? What will critics say.
- Gather background for reporters.
- Think visual – photos, video, graphics.

## Buy some time

- It's OK to say you can't talk this minute.
- Arrange a time to call back within 15 minutes
- Use the time to prep – make a list of key points, prepare background.

# Your message

-- *know it, hone it*

- You can't tell 'em everything.
- Honing a message takes discipline.
- What do you want people to know.
- If you don't know your key messages, your audience won't.

Material for this presentation was adapted from

***Media Relations Made Easy in the Big Easy: A Training Guide***

published by

The Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Life and Human Sciences in 2003.

# Tom Jirik

Communications Coordinator  
Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute  
(701) 231-9629  
[Thomas.jirik@ndsu.edu](mailto:Thomas.jirik@ndsu.edu)

[WWW.ugpti.org](http://WWW.ugpti.org)