Working with the Media

Motor-Grader Operator Boot Camp

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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 may 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

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Tom Jirik
Communications Coordinator
Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute
(701) 231-9629
Thomas.jirik@ndsu.edu
WWW.ugpti.org