



How to Tell Your Story: *Communications Training Session*

**Healthcare Georgia
Foundation
Connections 2008 Conference**

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Many Minds. Singular Results.

A man in a light-colored suit stands on a wooden ladder in a lush green field. He is holding a large window frame that shows a city skyline with several skyscrapers. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The overall scene suggests a connection between nature and urban development, or perhaps a metaphor for reaching new heights in business or communication.

Planning for Communications



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What is “communications”?

- Marketing

- Paid outreach such as television, radio, print ads, direct mail

- Public Relations

- Earned outreach such as articles in a newspaper, television or radio stories, public speaking

Assess your organization

- Set the organizational mission
 - Who are you? Why have you come together?
What is the reason that this organization was formed?
- Establish long-term goals
 - What does your organization hope to achieve?
How will you know that your organization has been successful?
- Establish short-term objectives
 - What can you accomplish in the first year?

Assess the current market

- Define the problem
 - What is the problem you are trying to solve?
- Identify others in the marketplace with similar goals
 - Are there any other groups and/or people trying to address this problem?
- Assess recent media coverage
 - What messages are the media currently delivering to the community – positive, negative or indifferent?



Identify target audience(s)

- Whom you are trying to reach?
 - How old are they?
 - What is their income and education?
 - What kinds of work do they do?
 - Where do they go for information?
 - Who influences them?
 - Where do they live, shop and play?



Maximizing the Media



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Why media?

- Media can create broad awareness about a topic or issue
- Media can drive attention to an event or a resource
- Media can reach a specific audience
- Media can educate the public
- People trust the news more than any other source

What are the media?

| Media Outlet | Overview |
|-------------------------|--|
| Television | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watched by ALL audiences• Highest impact; visual stories |
| Radio | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• News with a community focus• Good for targeting very specific audiences |
| Daily/Weekly Newspapers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reaches opinion leaders• Appropriate for in-depth stories, promoting community events & highlighting community stories• Local angles, pre-prepared materials good for smaller newspapers |

What are the media?

| Media Outlet | Overview |
|-----------------|---|
| Magazines | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specifics vary by type• Opportunity to run “softer,” human-interest stories• Less time sensitive; 3 - 6 month lead time |
| Online/Internet | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Popular for reaching “captive” audiences• May accept prepared materials |
| Newsletters | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good for reaching very targeted audiences through a medium they trust• Concise and brief |

What makes a story news?

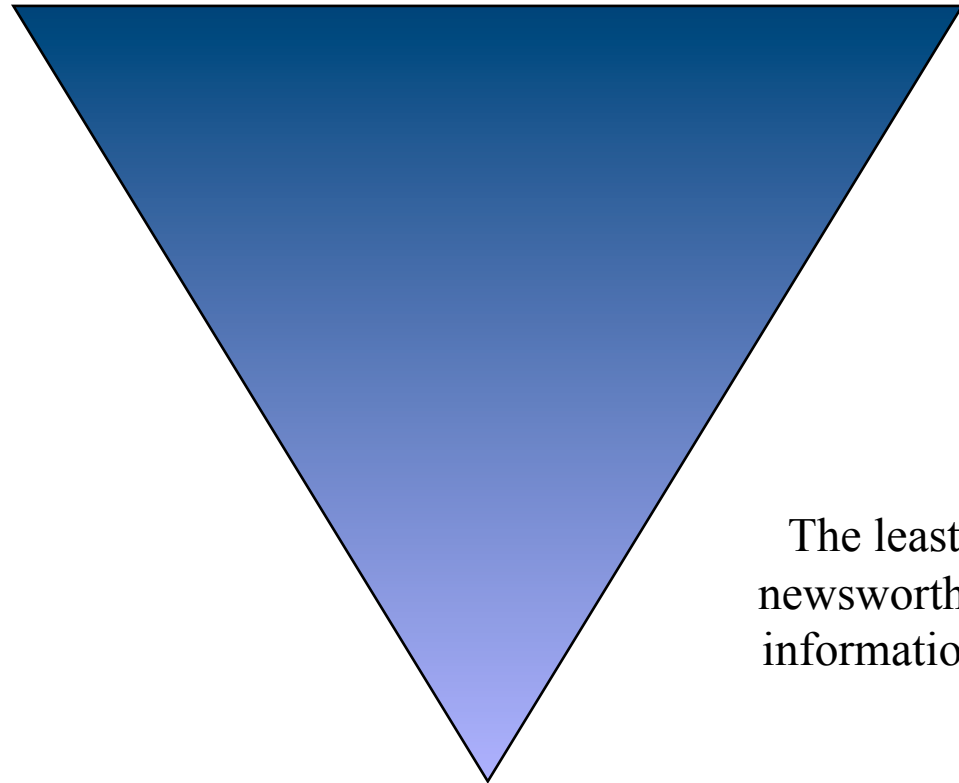
- Is it new?
- Is it “hard” or breaking news?
- Is it local?
- Is it a famous – or prominent – person?
- Is it a common problem?
- Is it visual?
- Is it personal?
- The wildcard factor.

Media tools

- **Media release** – a written statement distributed to the media, intended to gain media interest to write a story
- **Matte release** – a release that is written for the media to run with minor modifications, more common for smaller outlets
- **Media advisory** – an announcement of an upcoming event for media to promote and/or attend
- **Media Kit** – a tool to give a reporter containing recent releases, company or issue fact sheets or other background information for use in crafting a story

Writing for the media

The Inverted Pyramid



The most
newsworthy
information

The least
newsworthy
information



Building media relationships

- Do your research! Identify the right reporter and most appropriate media outlet for your story.
- Respect their deadlines.
- Be prepared. Don't waste the reporter's time.
- Time is of the essence...mention only the most pertinent information first.

Writing key messages

- Message platform
 - Foundation of what you want to communicate to various stakeholders
- Key message
 - Information about your organization, activities or issue that you want to communicate
 - Messages may vary by audience (e.g., elected officials, business leaders, general public)



Preparing for an interview

- Watch the program/read the newspaper/
listen to the radio program in advance
- Think ahead: have an agenda for your
interview
- Tailor information for the outlet's
audience
- Be prepared to provide information and
answer in-depth questions



Video Presentation:

Preparing for Media Interviews



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When media calls...

- Be responsive
- Ask questions about the interview
- Negotiate the agenda
- It doesn't have to happen right now
- Get prepared
- Identify key messages...think short soundbites
- Practice/role play...if time allows
- Realize you don't have to answer every question
- Relax
- Ask when the story will run



Lights. Camera. Action!

- Use simple sentences and active voice
- Maintain a moderate pace (watch your speed)
- Draw a verbal picture
- Focus on key messages and call to action
- Be brief – most soundbites are between 7 and 10 seconds
- Tell the viewers/listeners/readers what you want them to do

Handling tough questions

- You could be asked some questions that you don't want to answer – or that don't relate to your message.
- With practice, you can turn these situations into another opportunity to reinforce key messages



Bridging transitions

- That's an interesting question; let me remind you though...
- What's important to remember, however...
- What I really want to talk about is...
- What's most important is...
- That's not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is...

A man in a light-colored suit stands on a wooden ladder in a lush green field. He is holding a large window frame that shows a city skyline with several skyscrapers, including the Petronas Towers. The background is a clear blue sky with light clouds.

Beyond Media: Building Partnerships



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Building meaningful partnerships

- Define your need
 - What needs do you have that you cannot meet alone?
- Identify potential partners
 - What organizations have the resources and motivation to support this cause and this need?
- Make your case
 - How can you establish a “win - win” proposition?
What can you offer the organization for a mutually-beneficial partnership?

Engaging corporate partners

- Management focuses on the bottom line
 - What will it cost the company (capitol outlays)? How much money can be saved (short-term and long-term)? What is the return on investment?
- Management is looking for programs that would give them a competitive advantage
 - What will make consumers choose their product over competitors?

The opportunities

- The industry has seen a trend of increased corporate social responsibility
 - How can your organization advance their business objectives and position them as a community leader?
- Management is looking for administrative ease
 - How can they contribute effectively **and** efficiently?

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Group Exercise:

Key Messages



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Pulling it all together

- Communications planning helps establish goals and objectives
- Maximizing the media can help create awareness
- Building partnerships increases capacity and resources
- Different audiences have different needs and motivations: need to understand and speak to the differences