Agenda

- Name
- Local Government/Title
- Tell me how often you currently interact with the media.
- Media – Friend or Foe?
- Valentine’s Day – Dine in or Dine out?
Welcome & Introductions

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Media – Friend or Foe?

Self-Awareness

Greater self-awareness positively impacts your media interactions.
Self-Assessment & Examination

- Do my personal views of the media impact my professional relationships with local media?
- How can I improve my relationships with media covering jurisdiction?
- Did I help contribute to the reporter “getting it all wrong”?

Individual Activity

List at least 1, but no more than 2, things you believe you need the most help with when dealing with the media.
Group Discussion

What are the most challenging aspects or issues in dealing with the media?

Better Understanding the Media

What is the media?

- Watchdog – one of the oldest principles in journalism
- Business – dependent on revenues from advertising
- Influencer – reach & access now helps form opinions more quickly than ever
- Fast, free distribution network – this is why relationships are so important!
Traditional Types of Media

- Print (daily & weekly newspapers)
- Television
- Radio
- Magazines (print & digital)
- Digital news outlets

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Media Type Differences

- Deadlines
- Interview styles
- Use of visual support
- Use of background materials
- Final products
- Audiences
- Content guidelines

What drives media coverage?

**Timing**
*Is the story active or unfolding?*

**Significance**
*How many people are affected?*

**Proximity/Location**
*Is it close to home or close to the heart?*
What drives media coverage?

**Prominence**
Does the story involve high profile or noteworthy individuals?

**Human Interest**
Can people connect to this story and will it draw them to read, listen, or watch?

What drives media coverage?

**Consequence**
Is something expected to happen as a result of some action taken?

**Oddity**
Is the situation unusual enough that it would drive interest?

**Emotion**
Is this a highly emotional issue with people showing emotions like anger, fear, distress, etc.?

What do you see?
Common Characteristics of Reporters
College degree
Usually given general assignments
Trained to work under tight deadlines, but often working under high-pressure situations
Don’t always have the basis facts or understand your perspective
Not familiar with government jargon or acronyms
Don’t usually have decision-making power

Know the Ground Rules
• Understand the purpose of journalism is to inform
• Reporting is fast-paced – return calls promptly; respect deadlines!
• Always tell the truth
• Develop positive relationships with your local media

Know the Ground Rules
• Don’t play favorites!
• Be timely, honest, open and accessible
• Tell it all. Tell it early. Tell it yourself.
Additional Considerations

- Appreciate that the purpose of interviewing is to develop the news
- Recognize an event becomes news when it is reported
- Be prepared to be photographed or quoted in any public setting

Additional Considerations

- Embrace proactive communication strategies (keep them informed, both good and bad)
- Release your own bad news first. Don’t attempt to hide the facts or spin; it will look like a cover-up.

Off the record?

Don’t want anyone to know about it?
Don’t do it!
Don’t want to be quoted?
Don’t say it!
Building Better Media Relationships
Like any relationship, this one takes work too!

Managing Media Relationships
Identify media outlets and key reporters who cover your community
Assess existing relationships (Nonexistent? Positive? Strained? Damaged?)
Work on ways to establish a relationship
Build on those existing relationships
Repair strained or damaged relationships

Assessing Relationships
Nonexistent – Covering your local gov but no real relationship; just sitting through public meetings...

Positive – Actively covering your local gov & regularly engaged with PIOs, department experts, local officials...
Assessing Relationships

**Strained** – Covering your local gov, may have gotten the story “wrong” a time or two, you may have missed a deadline...

**Damaged** – Trust issues on either side (worse, both sides), you played favorites, reporter misquoted you, personality conflict...

It’s good! How do I maintain it?

Proactively contact local reporters about upcoming meetings or events.
Help the media fill up space or air time by providing releases on programs, services and/or events.
When a reporter calls to get information on a story, take time to pitch other story ideas.
Thank a reporter for good coverage!

Uh oh! It’s damaged. Now what?

Make a phone call/Send an email
Invite the reporter to lunch
Acknowledge past mistakes (if applicable)
Express a SINCERE desire to improve the relationship
Ask the reporter for feedback on ways you can improve
Commit to mutual respect
Tips from 3 Local Reporters
Advice from those we rely on for covering our local government.

1. “One of the biggest issues I run into when working with government officials is a lack of communication. Even if I ask a question that you can’t answer immediately or at all, please keep me updated. I’m on a deadline and have editors who want updates, so even if I tell them “they’re working on it,” it still helps. And if you’re not the right person to answer the question or give me quotes, please pass it along to whomever is and also let me know.”

2. “We aren’t out to get you. I know sometimes stories are negative or may be “bad” for someone or a city, but it’s our job to report those instances. I promise you we aren’t sitting here waiting for you all to trip up. We like to do happy stories, too! But don’t be rude to us because we’re trying to get the full story for our readers. We’re people too and often live in the community we’re covering so it’ll impact us as well.”
3. “When we’re interviewing you, **don’t use government/legal jargon.** If you start talking in acronyms or refer to something we may not know about, it’ll probably **cause us confusion or lead us to having to ask more questions.** Don’t do the opposite either, where you just answer yes/no when it’s an open-ended question. All we ask is that you **help us** by explaining the item almost in layman’s terms because **if we don’t understand, chances are our readers won’t either.**”