



## News and Media Training

### Relationships

Establishing good relationships with the local media is the first step.

Media relations entails more than answering questions when a journalist calls. It's important to establish and maintain relationships with local media.

- Find out who your local journalist is (media outlets generally assign a journalist to a particular area) and call them to introduce yourself and offer any available resources and story ideas.
- A good, trusting relationship means the journalist will call if they need a story. Journalists often have quotas and if it's a slow news day, they will be calling their contacts looking for possible stories. Be the person they call.
- Host a 'Media Day' and invite local media to visit your organisation for a guided tour and overview of your activities, programs and purpose.
- Do not abuse your relationships with local media by trying to convince them to cover stories of little interest. (Every story needs an angle and if a journalist is doing their job correctly, they can find a newsworthy angle in almost anything but you need to provide them with as much detail as possible.)

### Newsworthiness

News can be defined as "Newsworthy information about recent events or happenings, especially as reported by news media". But what makes news newsworthy?

There is a list of five factors, detailed below, which are considered when deciding if a story is newsworthy. When an editor needs to decide whether to run with a particular story, s/he will ask how well the story meets each of these criteria. Normally, a story should perform well in at least two areas.

Naturally, competition plays a part. If there are a lot of newsworthy stories on a particular day then some stories will be dropped. Although some stories can be delayed until a new slot becomes available, time-sensitive news will often be dropped permanently.

#### 1. Timing

The word news means exactly that - things which are new. Topics which are current are good news. Consumers are used to receiving the latest updates and there is so much news about that old news is quickly discarded. A story with only average interest needs to be told quickly if it is to be told at all. If it happened today, it's news. If the same thing happened last week, it's no longer interesting.

#### 2. Significance

The number of people affected by the story is important. A study course in which 50 people enrolled is more significant than if only a dozen enrolled.

### 3. Proximity

Stories which happen near to us have more significance. The closer the story to home, the more newsworthy it is.

### 4. Prominence

Famous people get more coverage just because they are famous. If you break your arm it won't make the news, but if the Queen of England breaks her arm it's big news. Plan ahead – if you have a Minister, CEO, or 'someone' famous visiting – this is newsworthy.

### 5. Human Interest

Human interest stories are a bit of a special case. They often disregard the main rules of newsworthiness; for example, they don't date as quickly, they need not affect a large number of people and it may not matter the story takes place.

Human interest stories appeal to emotion. They aim to evoke responses such as amusement or sadness. Television news programs often place a humorous or quirky story at the end of the show to finish on a feel-good note. Newspapers often have a dedicated area for offbeat or interesting items. So, remember, things don't need to be serious to be newsworthy. A dress-up day might make its place at the end of the television news.

### **Quality**

Spelling and grammar matters.

Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS) – don't overthink it.

Proofread, proofread, proofread – establish a buddy system where your buddy proofreads your news submission. Fresh eyes and fresh ideas help.

### **Your submission**

There are many ways that you can present your story to the media.

- Media release – this is a formal, detailed one pager of the who, what, when, how, why. It often includes quotes and photos help.
- Media alert – if you have something coming up, like an event, this is to alert the media of what's happening and when – similar to an invitation.
- A phone call – it's not only your job to write an article. Sometimes, you can pick up the phone and speak to a journalist about your story idea.

### **Interviews**

Remember, these are most often pre-recorded so there's room to move. If you make a mistake, you can re-do or the media can edit it out so don't be nervous.

Journalists often always have the background information to your story so they only need some 'short grabs' to fill the gaps. They often only ask around 1-2 questions for radio and 2-5 for television.

You can ask the journalist to send you the questions prior to your interview to help you prepare.