

Module 13

Nonprofit Organization Public Relations and Use of Media Managing Your Organization's Image



Managing Your Organization's Image

Managing Information and Publicity

Imagine you are the publicity coordinator for your organization. You have a vital and challenging responsibility. By following a few basic steps, your efforts will be more rewarding for you, your organization and interested persons in your community. A top-notch performance can mean much to the achievement of your organization's goals.

What is the image of your organization?

What is the image of your organization from the inside?

What is the image of your organization from the outside?

What is the image of your organization with the stakeholders in your future?

Organizational Image: Different Perceptions?

This offers basic guidelines for planning publicity and working with key contacts on newspapers and radio or television stations. No attempt is made to turn you into a professional newspaper reporter or editor, a radio or television announcer, or video or digital camera operator.

Be aware of the many ways you can keep people informed. You will probably find that you can use several ideas discussed here. After a self-assessment of your needs and potentials for publicizing your message, you will choose approaches that best fit



your program. Do not become overwhelmed by the alternatives. Make only commitments that you can fulfill. Remember to tailor your publicity program to your own background and the time you have available.

Keep in mind that the work around newsrooms is “no news is bad news.” However, a poor job of planning and reporting also may be “bad news” for your organization’s public relations.

In some situations you may work alone with the title of reporter, information officer, or something similar. If publicity needs are extensive, you should be chair of a publicity committee. Try to find committee members with experience and interest in news and publicity work. Make assignments that will best use their capabilities.

As publicity representative for your organization, You will want to remind all other members that everyone is a public relations delegate for the organization. An accumulation of many small and favorable experiences brings understanding and good will.

What is Newsworthy?

Newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and magazines aim to provide coverage that will interest and affect the largest number of readers, listeners, or viewers. Look for and offer items that will attract general attention. You do not have an audience until they select you?

List Newsworthy Items that Went Unreported Outside the Organization in the Past Year:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Look for information that is newsworthy to persons outside your organization. Avoid writing routine reports with few details. Build a reputation for providing newsworthy material. Research studies indicate that “knowing news value” is the key to getting news releases used. If your media outlets develop faith and confidence in you, they will get in the habit of using your material.



Your releases should follow two basic approaches — spot news of timely happenings, and feature items that treat a subject in depth and with warmth.

Promptly providing the facts is the key to successful spot news reporting. News quickly becomes history. Use most recent developments first to catch attention.

Feature material can be developed over a period of time, often in close cooperation with a reporter. Features stress the “story behind the story.”

If your organization becomes involved in some unflattering news, work with your key leaders to provide facts promptly, frankly, and completely to your media contacts. Although many things are better left unsaid, most reporters will treat a delicate situation with discretion if they are fully and honestly informed.

Here are some events and activities that are likely to be newsworthy:

- Advance information on prominent speakers
- Follow-up of basic points given in talks
- Key organizational or policy decisions at meetings
- Resolutions of matters of public interest
- Pertinent anniversaries and milestones
- Visible progress on community projects
- Information on fund-raising or membership drives
- Election of officers
- Announcement of awards
- Annual report details of general interest
- Representation at national and regional meetings
- Recognition programs and special awards received or given
- Special entertainment
- Special interest and hobby shows: craft, fashion, bazaar
- Participation in parades
- Dramatic presentations
- Field trips
- Group outings
- Poster contests

Know Your Own Organization

Start your job by becoming thoroughly familiar with your organization — its membership, its objectives, and its past accomplishments. You have been acquainted with all of this as a member, but take a serious look from the standpoint of your new responsibilities. A deeper insight into your organization will make you a better publicity chair or coordinator.

Arrange to get copies of the meeting minutes and important committee reports. To make your job easier, suggest to officers and committee chairs that they might use committee work charts. If available, get copies of recent annual reports. Find out from previous publicity chairmen what successes they have had and problems they have encountered.



Obtain a list of members with their complete names and addresses correctly spelled. You may wish to go a bit deeper than this. Each member's responsibilities and special assignments might be noted. Biographical sketches on key members should be available. It will be helpful to have several 2- by 3-inch head-and-shoulders glossy photographs of each. This basic information about your organization can be most helpful. You may find it practical to put material you have gathered into a loose-leaf notebook. Make notes of any ideas gained while gathering the material, so they can be developed later.

Your notebook will give you readily available background material. Weave this information into reports of organization accomplishments. Look for tips on other aspects of activities and plans that can be expanded. Use it as valuable background data in any of your stories.

Learn about Potential Outlets

After you have learned all you can about your organization, the next step is to study media outlets in your area. Find out who in your organization has been in contact with the media representative. Determine who the two contacts were previously. The outlets include daily and weekly newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and cable outlets. Look for additional potential outlets. Plan to find out why these have not worked with your organization previously.

When you have determined your media outlets, plan to visit each local office. If a particular person on the staff has been handling news from your organization, contact him and make an appointment. Otherwise, arrange an appointment with the person you should see.

Get to know what kind of material each outlet is using. Learn about their policies and general needs by asking questions and listening to persons with experience. Know what you have to offer that will interest the outlet and be prepared to discuss it. Planning ahead will help you get maximum mileage out of your visit.

While discussing possibilities with your media contact, learn how you can best meet his needs. Learn when material should be submitted to meet deadlines. You will find that some outlets want your information provided in a form to fit their procedures.

Be sure to find out whether

you should phone in spot news, provide notes on a preprinted outline sheet, work with a reporter on the scene, or write copy that can be finalized in the newsroom.

Learn how pictures should be supplied. Before you leave, obtain the full name of your outlet contact, exact title, telephone number, and mailing address. Provide your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address to the representative of the publicity committee. Limit the number of people from your organization who approach the outlets. It's confusing for reporters when several persons from one organization are calling with different points of view and possibly conflicting information.

When making plans for a major event or an informational campaign, consider including



some media representatives on your planning committee. They can provide sound advice on effective approaches and will serve as liaison with their own outlet.

When you are thoroughly informed about the specific needs of the daily and weekly newspapers, radio stations, television stations, cable TV units and magazines in your area, Organize and summarize this information. Get it down on paper for future reference, and add it to your loose-leaf notebook. Are there outlets outside your immediate area that you may serve? Regional, state, and national magazines particularly devoted to your organization's type of activity may offer a good opportunity. For major events or outstanding features, approach regional television stations and major circulation newspapers distributed in your area.

Prepare a Publicity Plan

Use all of the information gathered and digested to prepare a comprehensive and workable plan for your term of office. Carefully consider newsworthy material you have, media outlets you can use, public relations needs of your organization, schedule of activities, and people you want to inform. Consider the time you and fellow committee members will have for the job. Blend all of this together. Plan realistically so you can obtain maximum value for time devoted to the work.

Decide on the advantages and disadvantages of each outlet for different public relations purposes. Consider how to rotate news stories fairly among media outlets. Be sure you are following suggestions of the contact at each outlet so the unique requirements of each medium are satisfied.

Your publicity plan may include other activities as well as working with the mass media. You might look into potentials of direct mail to selected persons and the use of window displays and exhibits, posters, handbills, outdoor advertising, publications, or speaker for your organization. These activities might be part of your committee's responsibility or be handled as a special assignment.

It's your job to plan what can be done. After you have organized your ideas and put them down on paper, review these suggestions with your president, secretary, program chair, meeting manager, and key committee chairs. Discuss specific potentials with media contacts. Work out the most practical ways of carrying out the plan.

When launching an ambitious program, you should discuss with the leaders of your organization the possibilities of help from other members.

Take into account the potentials of using material from a regional or national headquarters if your organization has one. Establish and maintain contact with appropriate persons in headquarters. Available materials can lighten your burden and help you tie in with approaches your audience can readily recognize.

Consider continuous evaluation as part of your plan. Do not be satisfied just to have your material used. More important is asking whom did it reach and did your effort accomplish its intended purpose? See how your material is polished. Check with those in your intended audience. Finalize your publicity plan, write it down, put copies in your notebook, and distribute copies to officers and key chairmen.



Remember that this plan is only a guide and you should feel free to adapt it as the need arises.

Gathering Facts

Selecting the information requires more self-discipline than any other part of the writing job, because you must think selectively and make decisions. You have to consider fully what is going to be of greatest interest to your audience.

Frequently, the information in your notebook will provide you with a sound start. Then You will need to dig into facts related to your specific item. Be sure to answer the fundamental points — who, what, when and where. More and more emphasis is now being placed on why and how. Your audience appreciates these facts.

**Opinions should be direct quotes.
Be sure the opinions are significant to your story.**

Do not be afraid to ask questions to be sure you have all the facts and that they are accurate. Urge club officers and members to volunteer useful information. Plan to have additional background information to provide reporters upon request.

When you are using information provided from a national or regional headquarters, be sure to adapt it to your local situation.

If you are alert to possibilities, you can anticipate needs, and have ready most vital information for follow-up coverage while an event is taking place. Effective publicity chairmen often obtain highlights of a talk from the speaker in advance. You can have your story ready early and send it to outlets under a specific release time or date. Or you may want to hold the story to circulate after the event. Then if some- thing does not happen as planned, you can adapt your story accordingly.

Whether you are writing the material yourself or providing the basic information for someone else, never forget the **fundamental** questions:

- Who is the person or organization concerned?
- What happened or will happen?
- When did or will it happen?
- Where, exactly, did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- How did it all come about?

(Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11)

Feature Articles

Features go a bit deeper than spot news. You can elaborate, particularly on the why and how. look for facts with human interest. Be sure to saturate yourself with pertinent



details so you or whoever prepares the copy will have more than enough information to provide an accurate, complete, and interesting feature.

Be very careful with names. They are personal property. Double-check the spelling. Be sure that persons, organizations, and places are fully and accurately identified. Do not confuse Mrs. Robert N. Jones with Mrs. Robert A. Jones, Mrs. Robert N. Jones or Miss Roberta N. Jones.

Readable Writing

Worthwhile writing takes effort, but it is rewarding. You know from your writing experience that there is no formula for a successful story. There are many things to avoid, but there is no one right way to write (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11).

If you have followed the necessary planning steps, either formally or informally, you should now be ready to write. There are several things you can keep in mind. Have a thorough idea of your specific audience. Tailor your writing to the unique requirements of the medium. Use basic facts that will fulfill the needs and interests of readers or listeners. Help longer items flow smoothly by having an outline with points developed in logical order. Plan your approach to get desired action from your target audience (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11).

Use plain language — “so” rather than “for this reason.” Keep a conversational tone — “let’s go” rather than “it is agreed that the organization depart now.” Selective active verbs — “members planted flowers,” not “flowers were planted by the members.” Go easy on adjectives and adverbs, especially in spot news.

Make every word work for you and your reader. It is not enough to write so you can be understood. Write so you cannot be misunderstood (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11)!

You must get your reader’s attention. So, put considerable effort into getting a strong start. Arouse interest and curiosity in your message. Put the most important points in the lead paragraphs, elaborating as your message develops. Although feature stories are designed to work toward a climax, they still begin with an attention-getter. News stories that have to be cut to fit into a newspaper will most often be cut from the bottom, so facts should be arranged in order of descending importance (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11).

Try to get your first draft down with as few interruptions as possible. Temporarily pass over information that is not at your fingertips. After the draft is completed, add specific details that were by-passed, check for complete sentences and correct spelling. If possible, put copy aside for a while. When you go back, it will be easier to see flaws that you overlooked. Read copy aloud. What you hear may show the need for some refinement (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11).

Now polish rough spots. You may add a few thoughts to round out your message. See that the copy flows from one point to the next. Test your article on others whenever time permits. Best of all, pretest it on a person from your audience. Others may see where you have written over the heads of the audience, explained things from your



point of reference instead of the reader's, or insulted your audience by over-simplifying. All of these pitfalls should be avoided (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11).

Be sure you have adequately considered your reader's interest in the message. Will your story get the reader's attention and hold it until the finish? This is basic no matter how long or how short your message is, or which medium you use. For maximum effectiveness in different media, apply what you learned from your media contacts about specific adjustments in content, approach and style.

Pictures Add Impact

Remember the value of pictures in telling your story. You can use pictures to illustrate, clarify or document your material. They are vital in helping attract attention.

When cameramen from media outlets are able to give you coverage, work closely with them. Advise them on potentials, help them get storytelling shots, and write down detailed information about the photographs or video tape they are taking. Be sure to provide left-to-right identification of any persons in the picture.

Whether you take pictures or hire a photographer, get the shots that will be most interesting to persons outside your organization. Your contacts at media outlets probably suggested that you pose no more than four persons in a picture. Arrange believable situations that will attract interest. Beware of cluttered or distracting backgrounds; they can make a photograph confusing. Move in as close as possible to your main point of interest. Focus carefully to be sure your pictures are sharp and clear. When taking pictures while an event is in progress, avoid interruptions. Often you can set up a better picture by waiting to pose subjects after the actual event.

Never settle for one shot when you have a camera and good subject matter at hand. Try both vertical and horizontal shots. Take several angles and arrangements. Place the object in the center of the shot.

Tape or paste picture captions or other information to the bottom or back of any photograph you submit for publication. Never use paper clips or staples, because folds and scratches will reproduce. Do not write on the photo, because impressions will show. If it is necessary to make marks, use a grease pencil on margins. Most outlets prefer photographs with a glossy finish. When possible, provide pictures that can be cropped to the column size of the newspaper or magazine. This makes it easier to prepare photographs for printing (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11).

Potentials in Mass Media

Newspaper and Magazine Tips

Newspapers. Timely news stories for daily and weekly papers will be a major outlet for most of your information. If dailies get your stories first, try to give weeklies a new angle. Explore possibilities with Sunday papers distributed locally. Investigate potentials for newspaper feature articles. Most papers have special sections that will focus greater attention on your organization's activities. If your organization is involved in something with a broad impact, discuss the possibility of an editorial



with your newspaper contact. Follow the editor's suggestions. Letters to the editor can be another way of reaching readers. Many media interviews are with members of the print media—editors of and reporters from local or metropolitan newspapers (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Advantages: The medium allows for in-depth coverage. The interviewee has time for full explanations (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Disadvantages: Coverage is not immediate. It may appear in the next day, or it may be held for several weeks. Several editors revise the typical copy (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Reporters/editors work throughout the process of developing several different kinds of stories:

- Hard news: These are timely, breaking stories (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).
- Issues and trend pieces: These are stories that stay in the news for a period of time. They are bigger than a single story or affect many fields (e.g., medicine, education, psychology, religion) (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).
- Often reporters search out experts from many different professions and perspectives to get background information for these kinds of stories. Sometimes the quotes are used, sometimes not. It is beneficial to be positioned strongly in these articles because it builds the nonprofit's reputation as an organization of recognized experts in a specific field (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).
- Roundups and features. Features look at the news from a more personal point of view. Roundups focus on a general activity within a certain field or geo- graphical area, sometimes written on an annual basis (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Tips to keep in mind when working with print media include:

- Be aware of deadlines. Different stories have different kinds of deadlines. While the newspapers and other print media work on somewhat less stringent deadlines than the broadcast media, they are still under time pressure. Hard news has the fastest deadline. Reporters need immediate responses (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).
- Trend pieces and features tend to have longer lead-time. Often, however, the reporter does not realize a vital piece of information is missing until he or she is in the writing process. For the nonprofit's spokesperson, that means quick deadlines, again (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Ask the reporter for the deadline and make sure it is met. There is no quicker way to turn off a reporter than by promising information and failing to deliver on time (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).



- Know the media. Before an interview, read the publication — several issues, if possible. Find articles written by the reporter and analyze his or her reporting style. This provides a basis for the interview and can be something interesting to talk to the reporter about in the beginning (i.e., “I noticed in your piece on . . .”) (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Reporters note that they never hear from their readers unless they are calling or writing to complain about a story or want them to cover something. It does not hurt to contact the reporter to comment positively on a story, especially if the nonprofit is mentioned in the article. This rapport will prove helpful when the reporter needs a source in the nonprofit’s area of expertise (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

- Know the kind of story being written. If it is hard news, the reporter may want only a comment or two. If it is an issues piece, brush up on the latest developments. A trend piece requires a broad perspective, with some local insight and examples. Features provide the opportunity to project your personality to a greater extent (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).
- Know the subject. Be prepared. Review, if necessary, and prepare potential questions and answers. Plan for the print interviewer to spend more time and delve deeper into the subject matter than the television or radio reporter. Be careful to answer questions thoroughly and completely. Make sure that the interviewer understands the context in which you are taking. Avoid being quoted out of context (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Radio Tips

What Characterizes Radio?

Radio Stations. Provide material to your radio contact as you were asked to do when you visited the station. Your outlets pride themselves on being alert to community needs and are on the lookout for worthy items. Possibilities include lecture stories, spot announcements, guest interviews at the station or on beeper phone, discussion programs, and on-the-spot coverage of events by station reporters or announcers (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

Advantages: It is timely and events are often reported live or taped and aired within the hour (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

Disadvantages: Presentation is audio only. Coverage is extremely brief (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

Radio news operates on even tighter schedules than television. The average radio interview lasts just a few minutes and, of that, less than a minute will probably be used on any one newscast. Quotes should be in 15-20 second news nuggets (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

Radio features or talk shows (which would be more appropriate to nonprofit expertise)



tend to run somewhat longer, usually from ten to 15 minutes. Even so, brevity and clarity are important (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

Most radio interviews are conducted by telephone. For engineering reasons, the interviewer sometimes has to tuck the mouthpiece under the chin, so his voice sounds somewhat remote. Resist the impulse to speak in a half-shout as with a genuinely bad connection (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

Do not be concerned about the sound of your voice. Speak clearly and concentrate on making interview sense. A benefit to phone interviews is that the format permits having research and key messages spread out in front of you in your office (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

How To Meet the Needs of This Medium

- Be brief. Responses should be no more than 30 seconds or about 120 words on any subject (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).
- Emphasize the main point. Editing is the rule. So isolate the main point at the beginning of your answer. Expect everything to hit the cutting room floor unless it is especially exciting or entertaining. “The most important point is ...” (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).
- Do not overlap the interviewer’s questions. Start to answer only when sure the interviewer is finished. This lets the editor cut the interviewer out and insert another reporter’s voice (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).
- Be relaxed and natural. Avoid jargon and speak enthusiastically and persuasively (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).
- Stand up. To help keep in mind that this is an interview where being alert is important, try standing during telephone interviews (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:3).

Television Tips

How Does Television Differ from Other Media?

Television Stations. Possibilities may be limited, but do not neglect local television stations or cable TV outlets. Be ready with specific facts and workable ideas. Accept suggestions from persons in the medium. Newsworthy events are your best bet, but features and spot interviews also are possibilities. Films or slides provided by a national headquarters may be localized (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

Advantages: It is visual. Coverage is immediate (live or taped and usually aired the same day) (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

Disadvantages: Coverage is brief. There is no time in which to correct a false statement or impression (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

According to a Roper poll, television is the primary source of news for the majority of Americans. But television news people say many businesses, government, and



community leaders simply do not know how to take advantage of the visual impact and intimacy of the medium to expose their viewpoints to the American public (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

With the proliferation of various cable channels, the opportunities for television news coverage are greatly expanding (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

Pre-Interview

While waiting for the cameras to roll, be active. This is valuable time to spend with the reporter. During this period, which usually lasts between five and 15 minutes, try to accomplish three things:

1. Get acquainted with the reporter and give him or her a business card. The reporter now knows both the correct pronunciation and spelling of your name and organization. This is especially important with television because programs often place “supers” with your name and the organization’s name on the screen.
2. Ask about the interview. This is allowed. Make sure the reporter knows where the nonprofit stands on the issue and what the facts are. It is also permissible to ask where the reporter would like to start the interview. Often he or she will not mind telling. Find out how many minutes the interview will last (three minutes? ten minutes?). Is it fitting into a larger news piece? Who else is being interviewed?
3. Check visuals. If visuals have been provided in advance, discuss them with the producer to assist the narration. Arrange any visual aids before the interview for easy access. Ask about angle and camera position (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

If the interview is to take place at the organization, determine in advance where the camera should be placed. Put up a banner so the organization’s name will be displayed. Think through any activity or visual and set it up in advance (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

During the Television Interview

- Be relaxed and natural. Give your personality a chance to come across. Be neither too stiff nor unnaturally outgoing (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
- Speak in a normal, conversational tone, with good modulation. Make certain not to use “uh,” “well,” “you know,” “whatever,” or any other irrelevant or irritating habitual phrases. Do not drop your voice at the end of a sentence. Be wary of casual comments. Today’s microphones are highly sensitive. Most stations use the clip-on mikes that attach to lapels or ties. Never touch the mike (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
- Be aware that television is a personal medium. Talk to the interviewer and not the camera. Remember that the audience is most likely an individual relaxing at



home. Movements and gestures are magnified on television, so try to keep them to a minimum. Sit still in a relaxed manner. Watch unconscious actions or nervous behavior. Finishing speaking does not mean you can mop your brow. The camera is always candid. Remember you're on (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

- Be brief. Build planned remarks into “news nuggets.” State the main point in 30 seconds or less. Keep the words simple and avoid jargon (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
- Be conversational. An interview is a conversation, not a speech. However, be sure to have your main points organized so they can be discussed easily. Always fit these statements in despite any detours the questioning may take (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
- Handle tough questions. When asked a question that places you on the defensive, turn it around and state the nonprofit's position in the positive vein. Should a reporter include a misstatement in the question, correct the misleading portion before answering the questions (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
- Dress appropriately. It is important that clothes do not get in the way of the message. Television exaggerates clothing flaws. Therefore, it is especially important to wear conservative colors and clothing. Avoid harsh contrasts in colors, patterns, and styles. Clothing should be well cut and understated (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
 - For men, do not wear plaids or flash. Pinstripe shirts vibrate on camera. Avoid shiny blacks or dazzling whites. Lower third supers (your name and title) get lost on patterned clothes. A medium gray or navy suit, blue shirt, and subdued tie are usually most effective (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
 - For women, simplicity works best. Solid color dresses or suits and blouses in color are fine. Skirts should be slightly below the knees and will be more comfortable if they drape easily rather than hike up. Avoid frills. Wear a minimum of jewelry (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).
 - Special makeup is not necessary these days, although some stations do prefer to give guests a light dusting of powder to avoid facial shine (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

In short, when being interviewed by representatives of the media, the key things to remember are

Be brief.

Be prepared.

Be honest.



Once the spokesperson learns, “I’ve got 30 seconds to make my mark, to get my point across,” he or she has acquired a valuable media interview skill (Harrison in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:2).

Tips on News Releases

When to Send A News Release

The most widely used communications tool, the news release, is also the most abused. It should be written in a news style and carry a newsworthy message or story. Nonprofit groups have many occasions for sending out news releases (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).

- Report when the nonprofit expands, introduces new services, moves, or opens a new office (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Announce accomplishments in fund-raising over a certain time period, emphasizing the number of donors or the amount raised (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Announce an especially large contribution from a generous donor or a large grant from a foundation or government agency (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Report the number of people served, healed, fed, or educated over a certain period (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Provide a timely public service message, such as how clothing is needed by homeless persons before winter or how to recycle cardboard after Christmas.
- Present the group’s position on critical issues. This may accompany a recent speech or testimony that details the position (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Describe the history of the group or its constituency when it reaches a milestone, such as ten, 25, or 50 years. This is a good time to summarize accomplishments.
- Contrasting the current state with conditions 25, 50, or 100 years ago often serves to accentuate the progress and value of the group. Juxtaposing photos of the old and new can provide a vivid illustration (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Describe a moving story that illustrates in human terms the work of the group, such as how a life was saved, a family brought back together, urban youths give career direction, a problem solved through innovation by an individual, group, or company (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Announce the election of new directors, trustees, or officers (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Announce adoption of a new organizational mission that changes or broadens the nonprofit’s services or focus (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).



- Report the establishment of an advisory council of constituents to help the group continue its tradition of good service (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Publicize the nonprofit's receipt of an award, recognition, commendation, or accreditation from another organization or government or community agency (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Congratulate a member of the group who is honored for outstanding performance or named to a leadership position in a community, government, or charity group (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Announce that the nonprofit group has presented an award recognizing someone who has made exemplary contributions to the ideals represented by the group. For example, honor a generous donor or a government official who has supported the group. The nonprofit could establish an annual award in the name of a distinguished member of the founder of the group (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Notify the community that the group is sponsoring a major community event that is open to the public, such as a festival, fair or demonstration of valuable skills (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- Report the findings of a new survey the nonprofit conducted of consumers, constituents, or community residents (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).
- In December, comment on the progress made in the year just ending and the goals for the year ahead (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).

By sending a news release, the news media are advised of the nonprofit's existence and a recent accomplishment or event connected to the group. It is generally not a good idea to follow up by phone after sending a release unless the story is extremely important and timely. Many reporters feel harassed by follow-up calls and are likely to resent people who call with marginal leads on a regular basis. Do not despair if a release does not immediately generate a story; it may lead to a story at a later date. A steady stream of well-written and well-conceived releases can help establish a group as a reliable source of news, and reporters will start calling the organization on a regular basis. As the coverage increases, so will the volume of calls (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).

Many nonprofits render services that make conspicuous contributions to the quality of life. News releases need only to document the contributions in a descriptive and factual manner (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).

Facing eviction from its 40-acre home in southern New Jersey, the Avian Rehabilitation Center publicized that fact it treated 2,000 injured birds in 1993—including 35 of endangered or threatened species, such as peregrine falcons, least terns, ospreys, and herons—and returned over 40 percent of its patients to the wild. Such publicity



may prove crucial to its campaign to find a new site for operations by the summer of 1994 (Smith, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8).

Newswriting Style

Just as important as the content of the news release is the style in which it is written. The prevailing approach is based on the idea that people are pressed for time and want to learn the point of the story quickly. Newspapers are designed to be read or scanned during a 15-minute breakfast or train ride. Most broadcast stories are shorter than two minutes (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).

All the paragraphs in news stories are short; the first one is usually one sentence and the rest generally have no more than two sentences. They deliver the information first and the source second: instead of “ABC Charity President Joe Smith announced today that contributions tripled in 1997,” write, “Contributions to ABC Charity tripled in 1997, announced President Joe Smith today.” The most important part of any news story is the beginning: the lead paragraph and the two to three paragraphs that follow. The first few paragraphs should provide a synopsis of the story or so intrigue readers that they feel compelled to read on (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).

The story that provides a synopsis is called hard news. The reader should be able to learn the essential facts by reading only the first few paragraphs. The second style is soft or feature news; this approach often tries to hook the reader with a human-interest angle. A hard news story may begin in this manner (Wilbur, Finn and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).

CHICAGO, IL, JAN 5, 1998—The Air Ambulance Service saved 732 lives in 1997, more than double the number in the previous year, with most of the increase coming from the blimp explosion over Soldiers Field.

“The record number of saves makes us very proud,” said Air Chairman Jack McFly. “We’re thankful that the special training in dirigible accidents helped us respond to the Soldiers Field tragedy.”

In 1997 the service saved 312 lives in the blimp accident, another 270 from drownings, 23 from fires, and 27 from other incidents (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).

The service was founded in 1958 and currently employs 12 full-time workers and operates four helicopters. A nonprofit group, it is supported by public donations, along with contributions from area hospitals . . . (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).



A feature story on the same topic might read like this:

When Bruce Leonard first heard about the plan to receive special training in blimp rescues, he scoffed. “We haven’t had one of those since the Hindenburg. You’ve got to be crazy.”

Leonard’s opinion changed drastically less than two months later when he was holding his chopper 50 feet above a blazing blimp and rescuing 18 terrified passengers—an act of valor that earned him a recommendation from the city of Chicago.

The service rescued 312 people in all from the blimp accident over Soldiers Field. This one incident accounted for nearly half of the 721 rescues in 1997—a record and more than twice the number in the previous year . . . (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).

News releases written in either style should make liberal use of quotes by leaders of the organization. Quotes add color, emphasis, and human interest, and if news outlets do not publish the release, they may pick up some of the quotes (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).

All releases should observe the conventions of capitalization, abbreviation, hyphenation, and usage that prevail in the news media. The most widely used convention in AP style, as set forth in *The Associated Press Stylebook* (available in many major bookstores or from the Associated Press, 50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York 10020; 212-621-1825). The publication also offers useful grammar guidance (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:9).

News Release Format

All news releases must carry certain elements. The first page should appear on the group’s letterhead or special letterhead designed for news releases. Special letterhead should include the words NEWS prominently across the top or side, and the name of the group or its field of expertise, such as NEWS FROM ABC CHARITIES or NEWS ABOUT THE HOMELESS. The other necessary elements are described below (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:10).

- Release date and time. Above the headline, advise the news media when they may publish or air the information. In most cases, the instruction will be FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. If, for example, the release is sent out before an event takes place, the instruction should be FOR RELEASE ON (the date and time the event is to occur) (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:10).
- Contact person: Underneath or across from the release date, provide the name of a person the news media can contact for more information, and type a telephone number under the name. It is often helpful to provide the contact’s home telephone number if calls are anticipated at night or over the weekend (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:10).



- **Headline:** Summarizes the highlights of the story, drawing from the points made in the first few paragraphs. This could consist of a main head and a kicker above or below. View the headline as an opportunity to sell the story, to encourage the editor or reporter to read on (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:10).
- **Dateline:** Most stories should begin with the city and state from which the release is coming (either where the group is headquartered or the site of the event being described) and the date. For example: PEORIA, IL, AUG. 3, 2002—. . . Note that AP style requires that the names of states and months be abbreviated except for those with four letters or fewer. A dateline is not needed on feature stories that are not time-sensitive (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:10).
- **Body:** Leave several inches of white space above the headline to give news editors room to edit the copy, revise the headline, and insert type specifications. Do not break sentences or paragraphs from one page to the next. Number pages at the top, using either the standard numbers or the traditional news format (ADD ONE for page two, ADD TWO for page three—along with a one- or two-word slug line for the story; for example: ADD ONE—RESCUE). Type MORE at the bottom of each page except the last, at the end of the story, type ### or -30- (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:10).
- **Standard description of the group:** It is good practice to end releases with a three- to four-sentence description of the organization, its purpose, scope of activities, number of supporters or members, and any other information that would help an outsider quickly grasp its reason for being. This statement can appear on all materials published by the organization: consumer brochures, research reports, testimony, newsletters, journals, and even the back of business cards. This helps ensure that the essential facts about the group are disseminated in a consistent manner (Wilbur, Finn, and Freeland, 1994 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:10).

Preparing Copy for the Mass Media. Remember to follow the guidelines established in your initial discussions with media representatives. Most outlets appreciate receiving copy reasonably far in advance of the date of use. Use only one side of 8 1/2- by 11-inch paper.

Put your name, the name of your organization, and your address and telephone number in the upper left corner of the first sheet. This gives the reporter necessary information to conveniently check back with you if necessary. Also, identify any added pages and give them consecutive numbers. Usually you will be asked to double-space, leaving ample margins, and start about one-third of the way down the first page.

You may find it necessary to prepare a number of items in advance and send them in a packet. This is not the best approach; your information will more likely be used if you can provide the reporter with individual, timely stories. If you must use the



packet method, occasionally, be sure to mark each story with the desired release date. If photographs or other artwork are being used, indicate whether illustrations are attached or are on file with the outlet. Provide these details on the first page or on a covering sheet.

If your copy will be read on the air, provide phonetic spellings for troublesome words or unusual names.

Advertising

When working with mass media outlets you may find that buying some advertising space or time will be well worthwhile. You will be able to reach more people and reinforce promotional efforts. Attention-getting advertising can bring dividends.

Time and space for “free advertising” are limited. Do not imply that you expect free publicity in return for buying advertising.

Reaching People Directly

You can accomplish much for your organization by using direct contact to supplement your mass media efforts. Similar activities can be planned to reinforce or replace work with the mass media.

Newsletters. Regularly scheduled newsletters offer an opportunity to chat in writing with those on your mailing list. Member understanding and enthusiasm can be increased. One major item of current interest, a few smaller ones, regular columns from officers, and a schedule of events often are included. Use only material that is worthy of the space it occupies. Carefully screen your mailing list and keep it up-to-date. Direct your messages to the persons receiving the letter (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:13).

Direct Mail. Special one-shot items of importance may be handled separately from a newsletter mailing. They might feature details of a resolution or report, announcement of an event, or promotion of a fund or membership drive. Often, mailing lists are limited to members. However, direct mail might be sent to community leaders to improve your organization’s image or to enlist cooperation. The letter should contain one main idea that can be quickly grasped. Pattern your letters after good examples you have seen. Keep them attractive, neat, and brief. Do a quality job, because competition in the mailbox is keen.

Publications. Pamphlets may be prepared by your organization or by a group of organizations with common interests. Used to explain objectives or to inform about a campaign, these publications can support other activities. Printed programs and annual reports are other publications that may be developed by a special committee. Plan for functional illustrations and use of color. Work with your printer or someone who knows about preparing quality publications. When a publication is needed, good planning will get you a lot for your investment (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:4).

Displays and Exhibits. Well-planned exhibits in key locations or at local events can bring your organization’s purposes and accomplishments to the attention of many people. Plan so these exhibits can be put together for more than one showing to get



greater value from your work. Portable exhibits may be most practical. Use lettering that is easy to read. Limit your message to a few words. Seek expert help, whenever possible, because people will judge your entire organization by what they see.

Keep a Scrapbook

Clip your published articles and put them in a scrapbook. Write down details regarding media's use of your information. Keep a written record of other publicity activities. Include descriptive photographs when you can get them.

Keep a carbon copy of all material you prepare. This will give you a permanent record in your scrapbook. It will help you if one of your media contacts calls to verify something. Also, if a club member has a question on what you sent, you can show him your carbon.

This scrapbook provides a listing of activities during your term of office. You can keep track of material that was used by media. You will also note material that was not used. Gather any feedback that indicates accomplishment of your intended aims. This permanent record will give you and your successor useful background references.

If Your Story Was Not Used

If material you provided was not published or broadcast, you should politely find out why so you can avoid similar pitfalls in the future. A major event or catastrophe may have crowded available space and time. Maybe use of your item was only postponed. Know what is going on in the circulation or broadcast area. Plan your events and releases to avoid heavy competition whenever possible. For instance, Monday's newspapers are generally crowded.

You may find that your item was not used because: you missed the deadline; your information was incomplete or the reporter could not read your copy and was unable to reach you to verify a fact; your item was not of local interest; or your material was not in a form that the outlet could use. Worst of all, it may have been because your item was prepared so it was of interest only to you and your fellow club members (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:8-11). If you plan well and follow through correctly, these pitfalls can be avoided.

Extent of Involvement

The size of your organization, the magnitude of its activities, available media outlets, and your own reporting and photography experience govern the size of your job as publicity chair or coordinator. Your responsibility may range from serving as a coordinating chairman to handling the entire publicity job for your organization. Your work may include providing a tip for follow-up by a reporter on completing ready-to-use stories for an outlet. Your role in preparing exhibits, window displays, and similar activities may be limited to advisory work with a special committee in your organization. Keep in mind that some of the publicity potentials discussed here may not apply to your job. Be sure to weigh carefully the possibilities and select the methods that will meet the needs of your organization best. Then find a way to include activities with greatest potential.



Enthusiasm and a bit of legitimate showmanship may create interest and help you get your point across. Good publicity chairmen focus on reports of accomplishments and achievement of worthy intentions.

To have media representatives think of you as professional:

- Do not be afraid to suggest an unusual idea if you honestly believe it is work- able for the medium.
- Never use business connections as a threat to get your material used.
- Remember that media representatives at your events are invited guests. They should never be asked to buy tickets or pay admission.
- Show appreciation for the time and space given your organization. You have worked hard, but so have people at the outlets. Letters of genuine thanks are welcome and can enhance your chances in the future (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1-13).

The challenge you face is not a small one. However, plan well to stay on top of your job and you can become a success without undue time and effort. Your publicity plan will show where you need help to accomplish the wide variety of tasks before you. Publicity chair get to know dynamic people. The material you create for public release should be stimulating to you and others. Success in effective public relations can be very satisfying to you and productive for the organization (Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1-13).

Delegate Reports to the Organization

You are going to represent your organization at a special meeting or a convention. Part of this privilege includes giving a report of the event to the sponsoring organization upon your return. The people who sent you expect that your report will be interesting, meaningful, and effective. You need to know what to include in the report as well as what to omit to give a report that commands the organization's interest and attention.

Things to Include

Begin by emphasizing your overall reaction to or impression of the meeting or convention. Stress the particular topics that impressed and enlightened you most. Discuss some specific points in enough detail so that people realize you did learn a great deal from your experience. Show how your thinking has broadened and/or changed as a result of your experience.

Mention enjoyable experiences, such as recreational activities, or meeting other people, but keep this part BRIEF! Name some of the people you met and why they impressed you favorably. Include who they were — their positions, where they are from, who they represented, and any other necessary information. Verbally express appreciation to the sponsoring organization. An interesting report is an indirect way of expressing thanks. Stand straight; speak loudly, slowly, and clearly; speak with enthusiasm.



Publicity Plan Checklist: Things that Need to Be Done		
Things to Consider...	Need to Do	Done
1) Read previous reports of my organization and am familiar with programs, activities, and goals of the organization.		
2) Obtained an accurate, updated membership list and have biographies and photographs of key officers and members.		
3) Discussed duties of my job with previous publicity chair.		
4) Started a notebook with background information that will help in my job.		
5) Checked on newspaper, radio, and TV outlets serving my area and have appointments to visit with a contact person at each.		
6) Visited media people so they know what I have to offer and I know their respective policies, rules, and needs concerning my material.		
7) Prepared a general publicity plan, based on knowledge I have gained thus far.		
8) Discussed my publicity plan with officer of the organization, have worked out a tentative timetable, and have their approval and support.		
9) Been assigned committee members who have accepted responsibilities or agreed to carry out the program plan alone.		
10) Other		

(Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1)



Material Preparation Checklist Things that Need to Be Done		
Duties and Functions	Need to Do	Done
1) Follow this checklist for each piece of material I prepare.		
2) Gather all pertinent facts and have the answer to <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , <i>when</i> and <i>where</i> as well as <i>why</i> and <i>how</i> . I am sticking to facts and avoiding opinions.		
3) Collect extra background information and included items with human interest value.		
4) Keep the audience in mind and write to people outside our organization.		
5) Keep in mind needs of the media outlets while preparing the material.		
6) Prepare my final copy and check spelling of names, titles, and places or -----.		
7) Consider where illustrations can help tell the story have arranged for suitable pictures adequately identified.		
8) Release the material to conform with deadlines of media involved.		
9) Prepare information as requested by media outlets and have included a contact name, address, phone number, and organization name.		
10) Maintain a file copy of any material provided to media outlets.		
11) Obtain necessary releases to use photographs (include sample release form).		
Activities that must be addressed:		
1) I have noted use made of my material, particularly any changes that have been made, as the record is filed in the scrapbook.		
2) I have provided board members advanced copies of press releases.		
3) If the coverage reflected extra effort by the media, I have been thoughtful enough to offer a "thank you."		
4) I have offered words of thanks to those responsible for media coverage.		

(Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1)



Things to Omit: A List of Does and Don'ts

- Do not stress how much you ate, give a sportscast of all the recreational activities, or tell about the jokes you played on your roommate if you stayed overnight. This gives your audience the impression that nothing serious happened.
 - Do not include petty complaints that may give a false impression of the total quality of the meeting or convention. Do not criticize one or two speakers or parts of the program, but concentrate on the parts from which you benefited. Do not forget, the parts you did not like may be the parts someone else thought were best!
 - Do not bore your audience with insignificant details, such as the exact time things happened, kind of automobile traveled in, room number of dorm, how fast you got there, or other trivia.
 - Do not act like you are the “all knowing Wizard of Oz” just because you attended and represented your organization.
 - Do not tell people that your excellent leadership ability went unrecognized at this event, because you certainly could have done better than the speaker or your discussion leader.
 - Do not limit your reporting to formal occasions. The organization will appreciate your know-how and enthusiasm, and be interested in your informal experiences as well.
 - Do not risk offending people who have different views by being too rigid in yours. Sell your views by their own merit, not be degrading another person's viewpoint.
- Do not attempt to be a comedian (unless you are), because nothing falls flatter.

(Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1)

Tips for Speaking Engagements

Giving Dynamite Presentations

The key to “must-hear” presentations is hard work and preparation.

Here are some ways to become a polished public speaker:

- Prepare the presentation. Know the subject thoroughly, organize the talk, and rehearse it several times before the actual presentation (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).
- Communicate enthusiasm. The best way to get an audience excited about a talk is for the speaker to be excited about it (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).



- Cover the important bases. The purpose of a presentation is to give audience members the basic facts about the nonprofit. The speaker should never assume that they are already known (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).
- Allow time for questions. Audience members might not understand everything in a presentation. Speakers need to give them time to ask questions and clarify any misunderstandings for them (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).

Some people are not born public speakers. If this is also the case with the nonprofit's board members, suggest that they take a course in public speaking or join a group like Toastmasters International. If these are not viable options, try sharing these pointers on speaking in public with them:

- Stand while speaking. Standing gives authority to the presentation and speech. It also focuses the audience on the speaker and makes it easier to use visual aids (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).
- Decide whether or not to use a podium. There are pros and cons. Some speakers feel that a podium adds a formal touch to their talk or gives them a sense of security. Others feel that it creates an artificial barrier between them and their audience. There is some truth to this point. If board members insist on using a podium, have them try moving away from it from time to time during the presentation (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).
- Do not speak in a monotone. Remind board members that it is important to modulate their voices. Inflection and tonal changes add variety and drama to a voice and will help hold a listener's attention (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).
- Speak in plain English. Nothing makes an audience's eyes glaze over more quickly than a speaker who uses jargon or incomprehensible technical language. Remember listener comfort by using language that is familiar to the non-specialist (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).
- Maintain eye contact. Veteran public speakers know that when you lose eye contact with your audience, it loses interest in you (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).
- Use visual aids. If board members are not using them, they are missing some effective communication tools. With desktop publishing, no one has to be a graphic artist to help board members create professional-looking graphs and charts. Just remember to keep them simple and easy to understand (Struck, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:5).

Presentation Basics

Text or Notes?

Reading a prepared text robs a presentation of spontaneity. It does not hurt to write a text; this forces through organization, and it fixes many remarks in the speaker's mind.



It is possible to develop excellent speaking notes from a text, notes that are far more complete than those made from an outline. However, to put life into a fully prepared speech, one must be more actor than speaker. Also, much audience contact is lost because the speaker's eyes are frequently on the paper. A prepared text is recommended only when the topic is so sensitive or controversial that every word must be weighed and reweighed before delivery (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

Three- by five-inch notecards containing the topic outline are best. One method is to write each point or subpoint on a separate card along with whatever reminders or other backup information may be needed. With a little practice, it is possible to capture all the information needed on a pack of file cards that will slide into a pocket and fit neatly into the palm of one hand when needed (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

Notecards should be typed or legibly hand-lettered because each word must be found at a glance. Use all capital letters and triple spacing between lines. Other gimmicks include using a two-color underlining scheme to note a shift to another point or the need to turn to visual aids for support (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

One word of caution about notecards: Number them in sequence so that none will be missed and there will be no confusion about their order. Many experienced speakers have grim recollections of dropped notes. (Picture a handful of unnumbered cards gently fluttering to the floor like so many autumn leaves while the audience awaits the next remark) (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

Verbal Tics

The supervisor who wants to develop as a speaker should make a tape recording of himself or herself doing a presentation and analyze it with brutal frankness. Listen especially for nonword sounds that may be used, the verbal tics that fill the conversations of so many people (listen to a half-dozen taped interviews on any news broadcast to know exactly what is meant here) (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

The serious would-be speaker should work to eliminate all verbal tics. Becoming aware of what one is doing when speaking is more than half the battle; the rest is the conscious control of every sound that comes from one's mouth. Verbal tics are thinking time for many speakers, but that essential time does not have to be sacrificed.

Pauses of two or three seconds are normal, and sometimes a brief silence is as compelling as a shout. In any case, two or three seconds of silence are much to be preferred over two or three seconds of "and-uhhhh!" (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6)

Also, listen for what happens to words uttered without care. Does for come outer? Does to sound more like ta? This is not to suggest that elocution lessons are needed before giving one's first job-related presentation. However, listening to one's own voice and correcting glaring inconsistencies will vastly improve one's speaking style with very little effort (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).



Timing

With plenty of material and a good outline, a speech can be expanded or contracted according to the demands of the clock. A new speaker who is concerned about the extent of preparation and wants to know how long a speech will take should make a dry run against the clock. This should not be done silently; if just “thought through,” the material will be covered too quickly (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

An actual speech situation is needed. A small audience—perhaps two or three associates or family members—will hold the speaker to a speed closer to that of actual delivery. A speaker using a prepared text or falling back on a fully written speech to estimate time should use the rule of thumb employed by many professional speech writers: 150 words of text equals approximately one minute of speaking time (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

Humor

A presentation may lend itself to the use of humorous anecdotes and illustrations; the topic may have its lighter side. However, do not force the use of humor. Humor in a speech ought to occur naturally, related to the topic or theme. Then, when a supposedly funny comment fails to get a laugh, it may still have contributed toward making a point (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

In speaking as in writing, humor is difficult to handle well. It defies consistent treatment. What is funny to one person may vary from time to time and also be influenced by the mood and surroundings of the moment. What is funny to one person may not be funny to another (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

Regardless of the so-called permissiveness of the times, it is still best to keep remarks as inoffensive as possible. A speaker has no guarantee that he or she will never upset a listener with something said in jest. But ethnic or even slightly off-color remarks will certainly meet with someone’s disfavor in the average listening groups (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

If poking fun at anyone, be your own target. Take care, however, to portray yourself as a normal human being with normal shortcomings. It is easy to go overboard and look foolish (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

In short, humor in a speech should flow from the topic and the situation and serve a purpose other than simple entertainment. A speaker should not try to be a stand-up comic—that “act” could open and close with a single appearance (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6).

Style

With time and experience, each speaker will develop a style that is in some ways unique and that tells the audience a great deal about the speaker as an individual. It would be presumptuous to dictate what a particular speaker’s style should be: however, there are ways to make each speech more effective than the last (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:6-7).



Always be aware of the verbal tics discussed earlier; work to eliminate them until they are no longer an automatic recourse during speech (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

Develop a preference for the concrete word over the abstract one. For instance, avoid saying “machine” when actually referring to a “volumetric infusion pump,” and avoid saying “early morning” when “6:00 A.M.” will send a clearer, more specific message (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

Watch out for loaded words that create unintended impressions. Control words so that most of the impressions created are intentional, to make or reinforce points. For example, “eager beaver” says one thing to listeners; “interested and tireless worker” says something quite different (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

Use anecdotes and case histories whenever possible to illustrate points and keep the topic firmly linked to the real working world. Speak in personal terms—you, we, us—to establish and maintain the necessary interrelationship of speaker, topic, and audience (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

Remain aware of other factors influencing the manner in which speaker and material are received; vocal range, varied rather than monotone; enunciation, especially of key words intended to register strong impressions; body movements, with at least some limited movement; and facial expressions, which often say more than the words about the speaker’s enthusiasm for the topic (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

Finally, practice establishing eye contact with members of the audience. Look directly at numerous listeners in turn throughout the presentation. Visually sweep the room, but frequently linger a few seconds on first one person and then another. Ultimately, the speaker should cause each listener to feel that he or she has been communicated with personally (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

Follow-Up

After completing a first speech—or any presentation, for that matter—the speaker’s attention should turn to self-evaluation. The all-important word is feedback. The speaker should stimulate feedback by encouraging questions and discussion after the speech. The speaker should use such feedback to strengthen the material and refine speaking techniques. Also, to be assessed is timing, through a comparison of estimated delivery time with the time actually required to give the presentation (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

The feelings experienced by the speaker while speaking and immediately after speaking should indicate the inadequacy of preparation. It is only during and after the speech that one will know whether the preparation was sufficient (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

If the talk was recorded, after two or three days the speaker should play it back and critically analyze his or her technique. Once past the humbling experience of hearing



himself or herself as others do, the speaker will be able to spot mistakes and go about correcting them (McConnell, 1993 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:7).

Be Yourself When You Report. Remember to gear your presentation to the organization's level of interest and understanding. Save time for the organization to raise specific questions on aspects you have covered or possibly on one or two points you may have omitted. If you use visuals, make them neat, appropriate, and large enough. Also, position visuals so the people in the back row can see them easily.

Responding to Bad Press

What can a nonprofit organization do to ensure positive relations with the media? Here are some suggestions: (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).

- Look for warning signs that trouble may be on the horizon. Be on the alert if the organization has experienced a change in senior personnel, made a significant change in its bylaws, or has disgruntled employees, members, or contributors. Many organizations use anonymous suggestion boxes or hotlines to help alert officials to potential problems within the organization (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Be flexible. Many elaborate crisis response plans do not work. A quick response is at least as important as a perfect response. A 30-minute plan that provides a broad outline may be highly effective (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).

Key steps in the plan might include:

- Have key officials gather to determine confirmable facts
- Alert board members
- Choose options for responding
(Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Predict how the crisis may unfold. Try to anticipate what will happen in the first 30 days. Then project how employees, donors, and the public will respond (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Be alert to tell outsiders any bad news. Organizations typically tell the press more than they tell their own staff (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Respond rapidly to inquiries. Time is always of the essence when dealing with the press. A few hours' delay can result in a reporter who is covering the story missing a deadline. This will postpone when the nonprofit's side of the story gets out. Even if all the answers are not yet available, call to tell the reporter an update will be ready in another hour (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Do not point out any inaccuracies in the early coverage of a story. Defuse the sensationalist area first (Pokrant, 1995).



- Cooperate with reporters. The story will be written, so do not antagonize the press or act paranoid. Officers and board members should always be prepared to speak with the television press. Preparation can be as simple as having a list of do's and don'ts handy (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Develop a network to monitor news coverage around the country. This should include board members, members, contributors, and advisors. A network will help determine how widely a negative story has been publicized (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Select battles carefully. There is rarely enough time to respond to every press item.
- Do not repeat criticism in responding to it. Those who read the response may not have seen the original article. Instead, focus on the organization's positive accomplishments (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).
- Always remember — reporters get the last word (Pokrant, 1995 in Di Lima and Johns, 1996:8:1).

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