

Media Relations

Handbook 2

- Why communicate to journalists ?
- How does it work ?
- How to successfully speak to journalists ?
- Dos and Don'ts
- Practice your messaging
- Some Key messages to use

May 2009, France
By Carole Schaal. Copyright of WACC Foundation
carole.schaal@wacc-network.org
www.wacc-network.org

Why communicate to journalists ?

The media are used and consumed almost every where, no matter the medium, and penetrate nearly 100 % of our population households. In places, it is the 3rd source of information after family/friends and co-workers. Along with governments, NGOs, and businesses, the media - sometimes called the 4th power - are considered a highly trusted source of information; the ranking depending on the national culture.

Besides delivering information and news, media coverage helps:

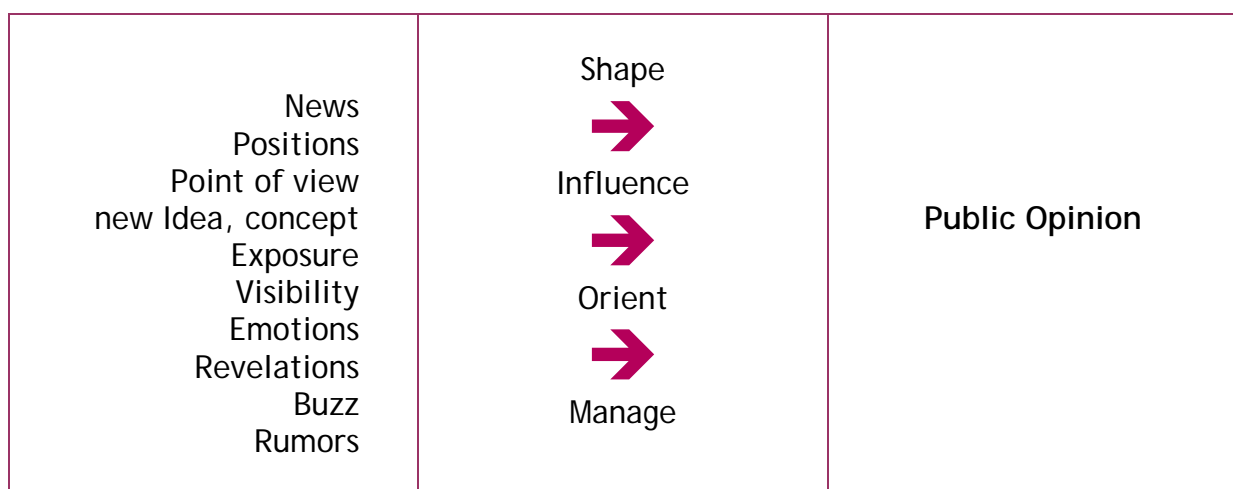
- ⇒ Raise awareness of our cause and encourage cervical cancer prevention
- ⇒ Reach out a large audience
- ⇒ Influence stakeholders

...

An impact to consider for the « credit » of the source, offering:

- ⇒ « Neutral » point of view, often perceived as objective
- ⇒ Trust in the newspaper/publication's investigation and faith
- ⇒ Natural caution and legitimacy

What does it do for you ?



How does it work ?

1. Start with evaluating the situation

Ask yourself:

1. What does your organisation need to do ?
2. What issues are standing in the way ?
3. Who is the target audience ?
4. Why should they change ?
5. What should they be aware of ?
6. What should you tell them ?

2. Analyse your final targets

1. Which public do you need to talk to in priority, through the media ?
2. Which public do you need to change perception? Is it the same one you need to inform, persuade, and motivate ?
3. Which public do you need to influence? Which public is a key influencer ?
What is their perception of the situation ?
4. What can affect their perception/behaviour ?

3. Prepare your messages and tools

For effective Press relations results, you need a few ingredients to start:

1. News !

- ⇒ Problems, issues, stakes
- ⇒ Out breaking, extraordinary information, rare event, innovation
- ⇒ Score, record, performance, trend
- ⇒ Emotion, anger, fear, empathy, new community bonding ...

2. Facts ...

- ⇒ Epidemiology: 500 000 cases of cervical cancer and 260 000 death each year deplored by the World Health Organisation in January 2009
- ⇒ Evolution (is this getting worse ?); comparison (is this more than female car accident ?)

3. Value

- ⇒ Benefit the target group : protect health and avoid cervical cancer, avoid HPV diseases or death, and emotional anxieties

4. Caution - Third party

- ⇒ Experts, politicians, head of institutions, celebrities
- ⇒ Testimonials, opinion or behaviour surveys ...

A press release contains:

- ONE objective - One idea - One page (the rest goes in background or fact sheets)
- A few key messages - Simple words and concise syntax
- Facts - Figures - Graphs
- Illustrations. Concrete examples are proofs
- Quotes from your president, a celebrity and/or medical expert (Task Force)
- Press contact : local contact, local phone number and email
- Visuals of women involved (association, disease, mothers, daughters ...)

Prepare yourself and all spokespersons ahead to any questions journalists can have.

4. Learn the rules of media relations

Journalists are media professionals.

- They live for the 'Truth'. They like oppositions and debates. They dig new stories to make the head lines. They may investigate and question different sources for the public to know and make their decisions.
- They have competition (other media, other journalists...), they have deadlines, and they have bosses. They don't necessarily have the final word: publication delay, head lines and cuts imposed by their editor in chief.
- They welcome new connections and talented speakers, as "story tellers" or "news makers".
- They prefer high "titles" (president of, expert of, spoke person of ...). They need good info, not cookies nor free cocktails even though it is always nicer to meet people that way.
- Be aware that journalists may not always be very 'well-mannered' ... unwillingly. They always have urgent requests and needs, because of their tight deadlines. When they say they will attend an event, they may not be able to come...
Don't give up, call again!

On your side, you should take all this into account and:

- Reserve your communication to when you have something newsworthy to say
- Always say what is new and don't forget to say it is new.
- Say it early. Send "Save the Date" press releases, invites and programme as early as possible. And do so more than once.
- On the long run, adopt a regular and reasonable rhythm of communication: Find the good balance between paper, email and oral contacts. Unless something special is under way, do not reach them more than once a month.
- Offer to meet them at first, get to know them and present your association, your cause and new activities. Make sure you learn about their media, pages/show and style before.
- Target to score: Don't send all the information you have to all the journalists. Tease a few, tip one or two, ask questions they can't answer but want to know more about, organise encounters or lunches with experts and celebrities endorsing your positions ...
- You can never be too formal in your media encounter. Casual behaviour may be inappropriate or even misperceived.
- Allow time for journalists: spokesmen must be not only motivated but available as well. All this takes time.
- Prepare your key messages and practice questions and answers ahead of the real interview

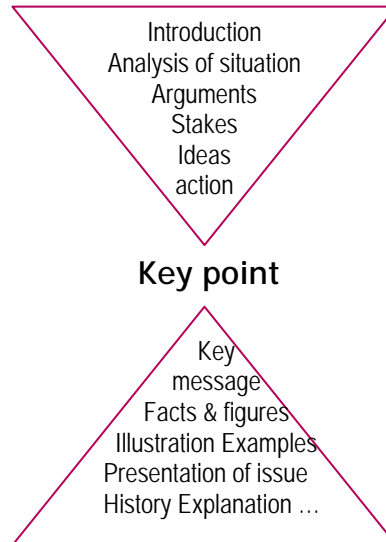
How to successfully speak to journalists ?

Before the interview:

Prepare your story and anticipate all questions.

Structure your key messages.

Invert the structure of traditional and scholar presentations, which are more adapted to the written format. Forget the Introduction-to-Conclusion principle:



Define your priorities: make sure you say your key point first.

Adapt your messages to the media you are going to speak to

TV : TV is The media of emotion, make sure it is there. Provide images to show or for the crew to film (women testimonials, cervical cancer surgery, WACC event...). If you are filmed, do not look at the camera. Forget the technical material and look at the interviewer in the eyes. If you stress and need a moment, ask for it. It will help everyone. Dress conservatively.

Radio: If TV works with images, radios need sounds and voices. Make it short too. Local radios will take a few minutes. National radios will usually go up to 1 or 2' maximum (ask and practice timing yourself). Emotion and conviction are also important here. They should be heard in your voice.

Print: publications offer space for complex ideas and for argumentation. Imagine the title of the article and structure your ideas around it. Make sure you repeat it, say it in your introduction, in your presentation and in your conclusion. Since more information will be given, it is fundamental you structure and prioritize your messages. *" First..., Second ..., Third and finally.... "*

Web: Internet has its own rules too. On line informative websites can integrate complex messages - but divided in short blocks, with short sentences and simple words. Images and videos are also important there. The trend is to put short filmed interviews & events on line today (2 to 5 minutes). What travels best in the cyberspace are fun pieces, but there are also highly esteemed and serious web sites dedicated to women and health.

Rehearse!

During the interview:

- ☑ Empower your cause
- ☑ Convince the minds
- ☑ Conquer the hearts

Always introduce yourself and your organisation. Breathe and relax. Be nice and polite. Offer coffee or tea first. Sometimes, stress makes us forget the basics ... We only have one occasion to make a good first impression.

Use **simple** words everyone can understand. Allow no room for possible misinterpretation. Test yourself with 14 years old !

Give **examples**. One for each key message

Listen and listen. Listen to the question till the end of it. Do not jump on the answer too soon.

Use the oral **flagging** technique to highlight what is important to you:

- ☉ "The most important thing is..." ; "For us, the biggest issue is..."

If a question does not come up during the interview, go ahead yourself.

- ☉ *"There is one question mothers always ask about cervical cancer ..."*

If you do not have the answer, say so. Do not guess. Do not estimate approximately. Look for the answer or check with your WACC Task Force expert, and come back to the journalist as soon as possible.

If the question is tricky, or out of the scope, you may want to **reformulate** or **bridge** to another point to highlight :

- ☉ *"Before going to this point, there is an issue that need to be investigated further ..." - "You are asking about... X, but do you know that... YY is an important concern in our health community today..."- "This subject is out of my competency but let me tell you about ..."*

Remember journalists are media experts but You are the expert in your field. Many journalists ask questions to fish for information and may not know which the smartest questions to the most interesting answers are.

So go ahead, enjoy the exchange and don't let them lead the game.

If the "question" is not a real question but a comment ... No need to agree or disagree. It seems that the journalist wants a discussion more than a classical Q&A session. Feel free to state your positions on the issue and take the opportunity to present your views, your analysis of the situation, the solutions that need to be implemented ... With what is most important to you at the top!

If the question is putting you on a bad spot, or if you disagree... Say so gently and firmly :

- *"I can't let you say this, let me explain why..." "No, and let me tell you why I disagree..."*

Do not fill in the blank. When you are finished, you are finished ...

Be aware of your **body language**. It says a lot about you and how you feel about the situation you are discussing.

Before closing the encounter and saying thank you, always repeat the key points you came to say.

When the interview is over, invite the reporter to call you back as much as needed. Offer a scientific contact for medical questions.

Do not ask to read/view and control the piece. Your job is to ensure you have given a good story with an interesting angle, clear messages and sticking figures. It is now done. The journalist's job is to get the information and then write / relay the information.

Remember !

Dos	Don'ts
Enjoy yourself. As easy as ABC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Answer ◦ Bridge ◦ Communicate 	Don't repeat negative language, but do deny it
Use Quotable Language Use Figures. Use Examples	Avoid jargon, buzzwords, acronyms
Take control. Give your point of view.	Don't argue
Make direct eye contact. Adapt body language	Don't say 'No comment'
Anticipate questions	Don't use 'Off the record'
	Don't over do it Don't lecture

Practice, practice, practice !

Key point
Communication goal
The “ideal title”

<p>1 Key message Facts Figures Examples Story</p>	<p>2 Key message Facts Figures Examples Story</p>	<p>3 Key message Facts Figures Examples Story</p>
<p>Conclusion : wrap up coming back to your communication goal and repeat your key messages</p>		