

Top 5 Media Tips

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Quick Poll

- Who in this room has had a bad interview experience?
- Who in this room has had a good interview experience?
- Who in this room has a media/PR/communications person?

Tip #1 – Make connections now

Today. Seriously.

If you don't know your media contacts in your community, take steps today to set up a lunch.

At that lunch, make sure your media contacts know when your annual milestones are— budget time, award season, staff recognitions... any potential story that will cast your organization and department in a positive light.

What's changed in the last few years:

Turnover is even worse now, especially among traditional media. Go out of your way to keep in touch with your editor, and keep a line on the advertising side in case even that goes out the window.

Tip #2 – Prepare your talking points

Assuming you know the topic of the interview:

- Doing an interview with the media is the same as public speaking – if you prepare and practice, you're much better off than trying to wing it.
- There is nothing wrong with taking a sheet of talking points into the interview with you. If the reporter you're working with is smart, they'd be grateful to have a copy of that sheet.
- Prepare for contingencies/questions out of left field

If you get the “getting to know you” or “just checking in” reporter:

- Lean on the milestones and your bragging points of the last year

Tip #2 – Prepare your talking points

What's changed in the last few years:

Nothing is sacred. If you have something prepared and you have time, get a second pair of eyes and make sure what you've said is clear, concise and doesn't leave room for misinterpretation.

Think about in-person communication and the way you portray yourself – be conscious of body language and non-verbal cues.

Tip #3 – Make it easy

- Sending information to the media should be an exercise in making that information easy to use.
- Do not attach PDFs with your press releases. If you receive a press release from GFOA in PDF form, take the time to re-type the key takeaways and put them in the body of your email.
- If possible, always either attach a Word document or just include the content in the body of your email.

Tip #3 – Make it easy

What's changed in the last few years:

Send at least one photo with everything. If you're attaching a photo, make it print quality. (Quick check: 350DPI or higher)

If your organization doesn't have a nice camera, offer to set up a photo opportunity. You look accessible, they get the quality they need, and they'll probably share the photo with you.

Is there something associated with your message that's Instagram worthy? Perfect for a Twitter post? Include that with your main message.

Tip #4 – Maintain your website

- This may seem intuitive, but make sure a lot of the easy questions (Where can I find the budget? Where can I find your organizational chart?) are simple to answer using your website.
- Make sure your PDFs are up-to-date.
- Have a person on your team that's trained to update content. IT is great, but it's even greater if you can get a news item on the front page of your website and control when it comes on and off.

What's changed in the last few years:

Take control: Conduct a mini-website accessibility study to make sure your priorities aren't getting overshadowed.

Tip #5 – Spotlight your employees

- Awards are great, employee features are better.
- Talk about certifications, talk about community outreach, talk about ways you're actually helping.

What's changed in the last few years:

- Recognize that while this might feel like a reward for some employees or generations, it might be a punishment for others. Make sure the staff member you want to recognize is comfortable and well-represented.