

WHAT MAKES NEWS? CRITERIA CHECKLIST

The media reports information that editors believe is of interest to readers, viewers, and/or listeners. This is different than what is interesting to us. Stories that we pitch to a journalist need to be attention-getting and substantive. You can sell a story by answering the questions: What's new? And so what?

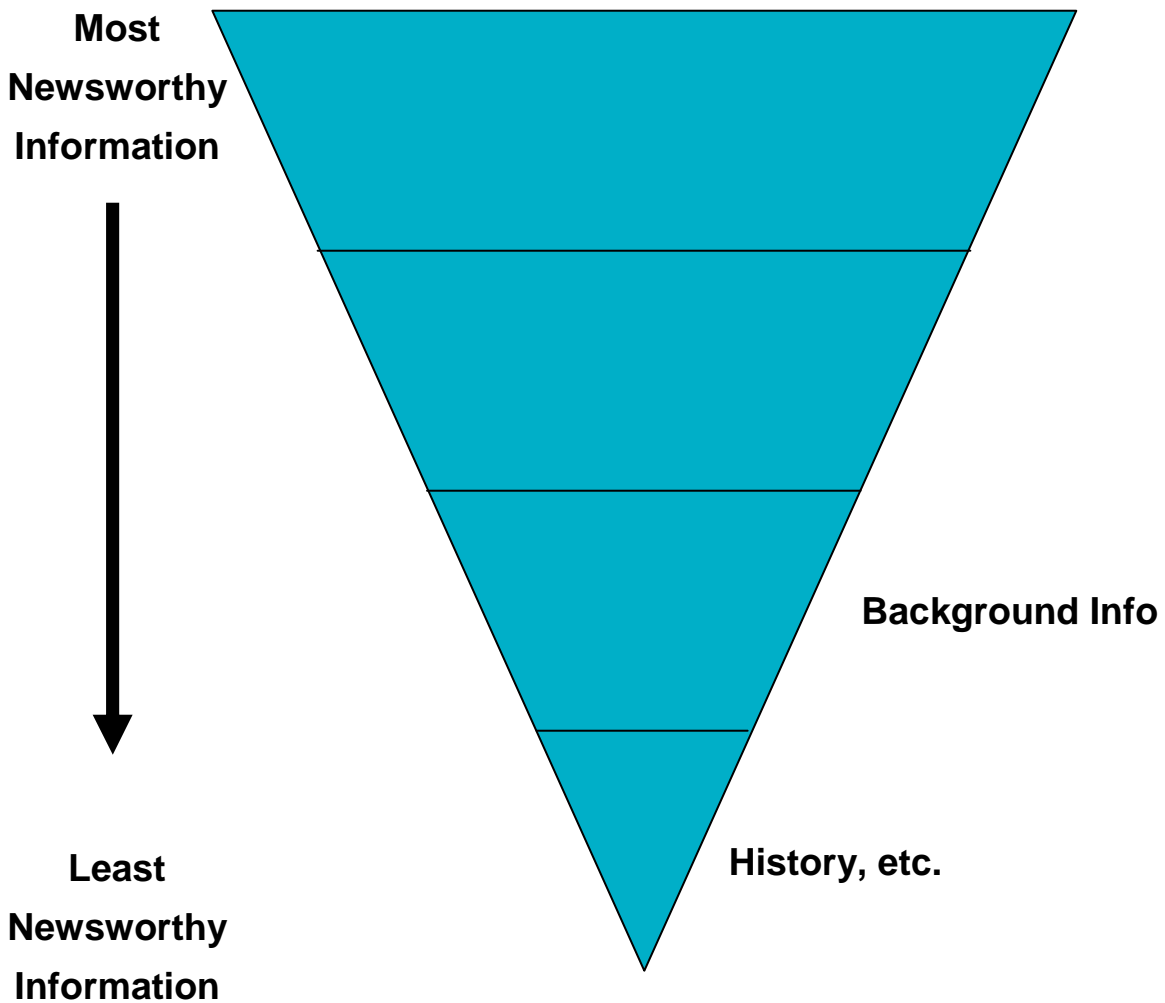
Editors are inclined to cover stories that meet one or more of the following criteria. Use this as a checklist when you are preparing to send something to the media:

- ◆ **Timely:** does it relate to current events or breaking news?
- ◆ **Offers new insight or data.** The media loves **numbers!** Use statistics, polling data, and other objective information to sell stories.
- ◆ **Unusual, unexpected or shocking:** is something out of the ordinary happening?
- ◆ **Celebrity or prominent figure.** If a high-ranking public official or celebrity is involved, media will be more likely to cover the story.
- ◆ **Local impact:** People want to know news that will directly affect them. Is it localizing a national or regional story?
- ◆ **Dollar amounts:** impact of smoking translates into X million dollars a year to society/lost worker productivity.
- ◆ **Contains action:** Meetings are not interesting to reporters. They need something that will entice readers.
- ◆ **Defines a trend:** Reporters love to cover trends because the stories usually speak to a lot of people.
- ◆ **Creates an extreme:** highest, biggest, lowest, smallest, most, least, record-setting are all selling words for a journalist.
- ◆ **Anniversaries** such as the anniversary of September 11, the Smoke-Free Air Act.
- ◆ **Service oriented** – news you can use, i.e., special events or something readers/listeners can take action on.

Adapted from M+R Strategic Services and Michael Anstendig

INVERTED PYRAMID

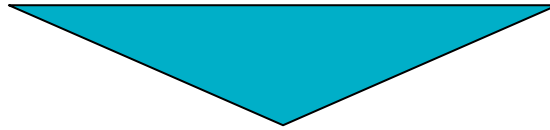
The Inverted Pyramid for Media Interviews



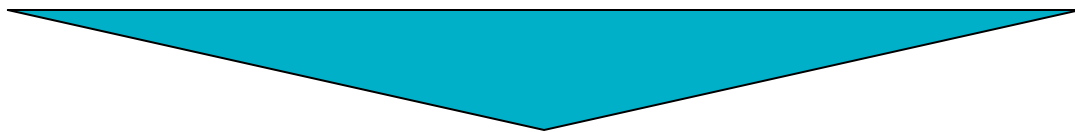
Source: Michael Anstendig

TALKING POINTS

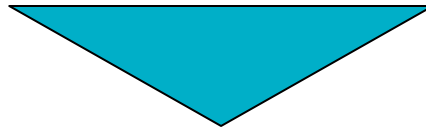
POSITION / OBJECTIVE



PRO / NEUTRAL / PRESENTING INFO / CON



TALKING POINTS



CONTENT AND DELIVERY

Content (Before)

- Short;
- Simple;
- Clear;
- Newsworthy; and
- Compelling.

Delivery (During)

- Tone
- Body language
- Eye placement
- Facial expressions
- Use of hands
- Clothing - appearance

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR A MEDIA INTERVIEW: BEFORE

Adapted from: www.smallbusinessnotes.com and M&R Strategic Services

- ◆ Know your position or agency's position on the issue.
- ◆ Alert anyone in your agency who needs to know or provide clearance for your interview to proceed.
- ◆ Write your talking points. Talking points should be:
 - Short;
 - Simple;
 - Clear;
 - Newsworthy; and
 - Compelling.
- ◆ Practice your talking points aloud with another person.
- ◆ Dress professionally:
 - Women: remove big jewelry, apply makeup, etc.
 - Men: dress neatly, shirts (not white) and ties if appropriate.
- ◆ Find out:
 - What is the reporter's angle? What is their style?
 - Is the reporter experienced or knowledgeable about your field of expertise?
 - As much as you can about the program and news outlet that is going to interview you.
 - Who is the program audience?
 - How long will the interview last?

- **Format: Is the interview live or being taped? Over the phone or on the studio?**
- **Does the reporter need background information?**
- **Where and when will the interview be held?**

◆ **Remember about reporters:**

- **They have their own style.**
- **They have a goal and objective for the interview, and you can ask them what they are looking for from you.**
- **They are looking for the local angle.**
- **They want “juicy” sound bites or quotes.**
- **They can ask sharp and tough questions.**

◆ **Show up early, but expect to wait! Allow time for the unexpected – traffic, no parking, etc.**

◆ **Think about where would be good for the interview. Tidy up if need be and remove personal effects (pictures of kids, etc.)**

◆ **Place your organization or program logo where it will be seen.**

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR A MEDIA INTERVIEW: DURING

Adapted from: www.smallbusinessnotes.com and M&R Strategic Services

- ◆ Turn off cell or office phones.
- ◆ Be mindful of your body language. If TV, ask the reporter where to look. (Usually at them, not the camera! If you are not sure – ASK!)
- ◆ Be able to answer basic questions about your program in a clear and concise way.
- ◆ Be prepared for difficult and *what if...* questions?
- ◆ BRIDGE back to the points you want to make!
- ◆ Speak slowly.
- ◆ RESTATE the question in your answer. Example:
 - Q: What impact does raising taxes have on smoking rates?
 - A: Raising taxes lowers adult smoking rates by 5% and youth rates by 10%.
- ◆ PAUSE between delivering talking points. They can use these pauses to edit.
- ◆ When giving out contact information speak slowly and make sure the reporter got the right information.
- ◆ You can repeat your answers.
- ◆ You can ask to re-do a quote or re-tape a clip (if not a live format).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR A MEDIA INTERVIEW: AFTER

Adapted from: www.smallbusinessnotes.com and M&R Strategic Services

- ◆ At the end of an interview, you can ask the reporter to read back your comments or “quotes”.
- ◆ Follow-up with reporters after the interview to thank them.
- ◆ Watch the news piece or read the article to see how you came out.
- ◆ Provide them with information and other ideas (pitch letters/emails) about your topic.

MORE INTERVIEW DOS AND DON'TS: BODY LANGUAGE

Adapted from M& R Strategic Services

- ◆ **Sit squarely in the middle of your chair and tilt just slightly forward.**
- ◆ **Always take a minute to adjust your seat so that you are comfortable.**
- ◆ **If you are standing, stand with one foot slightly in front of the other. If you stand with your feet side-by-side you will shift your weight and appear as though you are rocking on camera.**
- ◆ **Radiate energy. Try to appear warm and interested. Smile as much as possible, even if talking over the phone. Telemarketing research has shown that listeners can sense when the person on the other end of the phone is smiling—and it makes them more effective.**
- ◆ **Be enthusiastic about your topic. Nobody wants to hear from someone who looks bored.**
- ◆ **Keep hand movements confined to your upper body. Talking with your hands looks natural and makes you appear lively, but keep the television frame in mind.**

BRIDGING TECHNIQUES

Bridge interview back to YOUR message



“The best way to answer that is to look at the broader issue...”



“What’s really at issue here is...”



“Let’s focus on what’s really at stake here...”



“What we know to be true is...”

Adapted from M&R Strategic Services

INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT FORM

Presenter Name: _____

E- Effective
N- Needs development
N/A- not applicable

Content

- Clear Talking Points
- Local angle
- Newsworthy
- Compelling
- Easy to understand

Delivery

- Eyes placement
- Facial expression
- Use of hands
- Use of bridging
- Easy to understand
- Compelling
- Voice
- Tone
- Body language
- Clothing

Additional Comments: _____