

CHAPTER 9

Media Relations – and – The Impact of Public Relations (Strategic Communication) on the News

The very first step toward becoming successful in dealing with the media is the ability to recognize *hard* news and understand the difference between *hard* news and features.

Hard news is something of interest to a segment (or fragment) of the public. It is (more) immediate. For the most part, it is timely and has a local “hook.” It probably becomes outdated quickly unless it is updated. A more formal definition calls for *hard* news to be truly newsworthy, presented factually and objectively. Many times, it is breaking news.

Feature (or *soft*) news, on the other hand, covers many categories that don’t fall under *hard* news – human-interest stories, personality pieces, etc. Feature stories are less timely and don’t have the immediacy that hard news does. In many cases, they are “evergreens.”

Hard news can often be controlled. (Announcing a major breakthrough, appointment or resignation.) This type of information can be announced through a news release or news conference. Other *hard* news events might be beyond your control – an employee walkout, a shooting, an industrial accident or the unexpected death of a key employee.

When unexpected news breaks, time may not permit preparing a news release. However, you can call the media (if possible, before they call you) and give them the full story (or as much as you have that can be on the record). Good reporters usually find out anyway, especially if the news is bad, and you will gain some powerful friends because *you* contacted *them* with the information. With the pressures of 24/7 news, it is more important than ever to be proactive.

As for features, many times you won't even have to write them. Just pitch the story ideas to reporters, who in turn will "sell" them to their editors (gatekeepers) – and voila' – they do the work for you.

On the subject of news releases – they should never be hit or miss. News releases and, depending on the event, media kits, should be part of an over-all communications program (see pros and cons of media kits in Chapter 5).

Never forget this simple "unwritten" rule: reporters like to talk to people who make news. They look for name recognition – whether in print, online or broadcast. Your job as a public relations practitioner is to make that person available and your responsibility as strategic adviser is to make certain that the newsmaker is prepared for the interview.

Recognizing Hard News

It has already been established that *hard* news is any event that affects or is of interest to a reasonable number of people. News is about change and how those changes are tracked and documented. Reporters – whether seasoned or rookies – will tell you, news is the search for truth. According to veteran editor and college professor Everett Landers, "Journalists rely on public relations and/or media spokespeople to provide facts and other information because writing from ignorance is the highest unethical act in journalism.

"People act on information that isn't true. Newspapers, especially, have an obligation to filter."

When deciding whether you have a newsworthy item, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is the item of consequence to a reasonable number of readers, listeners or viewers?
2. Will the readers be interested in reading it?
3. Does it have impact?
4. Is it timely?

An important event that occurs today or tonight must be reported in tomorrow's papers (or it might even find its way almost immediately onto the newspaper's website or a TV or radio station website). Missing the deadline for the next day's paper may cause editors to reject an otherwise good story. If something happens today, or is about to happen, prepare a news release or media advisory, sometimes called "an invita-

tion to cover” (Chapter 5 – Basic Strategic [Persuasive] Writing) that could be emailed, faxed or “snail” (regular) mailed. Never play favorites with reporters. (Well, almost never.) [You might have to “use” a reporter for your benefit.]

Is your story local in nature – in other words, does it have a “hook” and does it relate to what people might have on their minds?

The local media thrive on news that originates within their circulation, listening or viewer areas. Try to emphasize the localness of the story by name-dropping.

No matter with what organization you are associated, developing good media relations is imperative. Failure to get along with the media can result in bad press even when conditions don’t warrant it. It is a no-win situation for you if you decide the media are your adversaries. A “rule” to live by: “Never argue with anyone who buys ink by the barrel and paper by the ton.”

Knowing how to communicate is essential. If reporters are regarded as intruders, they will react accordingly. If, however, you treat them with trust and consideration, their attitude will be positive and friendly, but still businesslike. View reporters as partners in the distribution of your organization’s news, not as adversaries.

PR Play 9-1

Reporters like to talk to people who make news. It is your job to make that person available and your responsibility to make certain that newsmaker is prepared for the interview.

Treat Newsmen and Newswomen as You Would Want Them to Treat You!

Get to know reporters on a first-name basis. Results support the finding that a reporter on friendly terms with a source will make every effort to be fair to that source when controversial news develops.

However, even the most effective media relations programs won’t always escape the wrath of the media. If you are criticized, don’t jeopardize a longstanding relationship by “jumping” on the reporter. Rather, schedule an informal meeting, over coffee or lunch, and discuss the

issue(s). If nothing else, you will ascertain whether or not the reporter and/or his outlet have an agenda.

Some Things You Ought To Know

Right or wrong, the media consider themselves watchdogs. The majority of reporters are not interested in sensationalizing the news. Essentially, they report controversy because they believe it to be in the public interest and because that is what their editors assign.

Reporters are charged by their editors to cover the news accurately and fairly. However, some reporters might enter into combat with an inherent bias – which leads to agenda setting.

Unfortunately, unless you are in a metropolitan area, staffs are small with few “beat” systems. All that adds up to the public relations practitioner dealing with different reporters whenever a story breaks – supplying the same background information time and time again. It can get frustrating. But remember, as the media relations contact, you are there to serve – to help assure that the reporter gets a factual story. The reporter is your first step toward getting your story to the target audience. The reporter – and newspaper – are intermediary audiences (message carriers).

As a media relations contact, you must remember – print is a space medium; television and radio are time media.

PR Play 9-2

“Never argue with anyone who buys ink by the barrel and paper by the ton.”

Everett Landers – Former managing editor (Gannett) – News Coach and Professor – Temple (Pa.) University and Rowan (N.J.) University

Establish a Policy

Every organization, small and large, should have a media relations policy. It should underscore its commitment to be truthful and to give facts accurately when dealing with the media. The policy should also include a commitment to admit problems and mistakes when asked about them and to explain what is being done to solve them. The act of accepting responsibility when necessary must be included in any media policy. (Examples:

Positive – Johnson & Johnson®, which pulled all Tylenol® products from store shelves following product tampering [1982] blamed for seven deaths on Chicago’s West Side; Negative – Ford® and Firestone®, which blamed each other for hundreds of deaths and injuries [2000] attributed to crashes involving Ford Explorers® and Firestone® tires; and Pennsylvania State University [2012], which was slow in reacting to the Jerry Sandusky child-abuse scandal (see Chapter 14). An example of mutual respect between a spokesperson and the media would be Connecticut State Police Lt. Paul Vance reacting to the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December 2012 (see Chapter 14).

Every person responsible for dealing with the media – in fact, every PR practitioner, strategic adviser and counselor – should have an understanding of how each vehicle or communication channel (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV news and the Web – podcasts, videocasts and blogs) works and the role it plays in the *convergence of distribution* (media convergence) and other *cross platforming* techniques (Chapter 10). When crafting a *media relations policy*, don’t be afraid to discuss its contents with media representatives – editors, news directors, reporters, editorial writers, etc. Their involvement and recommendations add credibility and understanding to the policy because they partnered in drafting it.

What Editors and Reporters Expect of PR Practitioners

Editors and reporters embrace the concept of *relationship (management) marketing* when dealing with an organization’s spokesperson or media relations contact.

Because of downsizing in print media, both in personnel and editorial copy space – known as the news hole – less space (fewer column inches) is being allocated for editorial copy. (However, as hard copy space decreases, Web content increases.)

On the flip side, TV has been increasing its news programming and providing more opportunities for features to fill time. Years ago, local stations carried only 6 and 11 p.m. (10 p.m. in some markets) newscasts. Today, it is common for local affiliates to carry early morning, midday (noon or earlier) and 4, 4:30, 5, 5:30 and 6 p.m. “shows” or a combination of late afternoon or early evening broadcasts. And, almost all affiliates and many independent TV stations and cable operators run 10 or 11 p.m. newscasts.

For public relations, staff cutbacks in print and broader programming on the television side translate into many more opportunities for organized and savvy strategic advisers to become “content providers” through well-written news releases and/or by providing professionally-produced video.

In all media, thanks to increased deadline pressures, reporters have come to rely on an organization’s communication staff more than ever. In summary, these are the top criteria editors, news directors and reporters expect of PR practitioners and other strategic communicators:

- Relationships
- Know what news is
- Deadline awareness
- Accuracy
- Timeliness
- A climate of trust/honesty
- Understanding media limitations
- Accessibility (especially when bad news hits)

Making the “Pitch”

There are numerous opportunities to get stories into newspapers and on radio and TV using the news release as the foundation for a reporter’s story. When presenting – “pitching” – your story to a reporter or editor:

- Use few words with a hook.
- Work in an action verb or two.
- Hot topics are best.
- Target it.
- Drop a familiar name or two.
- Ask yourself: Does my story have impact? (Reporters do not get paid for under-reported information.)
- Get to the point quickly – but don’t forget the angle.
- Personalize it, if possible.
- Don’t be afraid to offer facts in support of your “pitch” and story.
- If sent electronically, ask for receipt confirmation in lieu of follow-up call.

As in baseball, some “media pitchers” are better than others. But, when it comes to “media pitching,” everyone can learn – because unlike baseball, strategic communicators don’t “pitch” curves. All “pitches” are straight – although they do need a “hook.” While that might sound contradictory, the bottom line is – “pitches” must be open, honest, thorough and valid (relevant).

PR Play 9-3 Preparing the “Pitch”

The “pitcher’s” preparation should include more than just a familiarity with local news outlets.

- Read, read, read.
- Watch, watch, watch.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Get story ideas *from* the media.
- Think trend pieces.
- Research who you are pitching.
- Create targeted media lists.
- Know the publication or news outlet before making the contact.
- Know which reporter to contact (rather than just a “cold call”).
- Have all the facts at your fingertips.
- Craft a sample “pitch” or elevator speech (30 seconds maximum) before making the call.
- Practice your “pitch” before making the call.

It never hurts to think outside the box. As you do, ask yourself, “If I were a reporter, would *I* be interested?” Believe in your “pitch.” Understand and know your client, product or service as well as you know your own name. You must convince yourself before you try to persuade others – a major step in your becoming a “content provider.”

Practice being smooth and comfortable on the phone. Research an outlet’s deadlines, websites and other electronic outlets – many 24/7 news providers – have a deadline a minute. No matter which newsroom you call, always ask, “Is this is a good time?” If not, ask *when*. Be persistent, but not rude. Everyone has a different “pitching” style. Find the one that works for you and be consistent.

Here are more suggestions to help you get coverage for your phone “pitch”:

- Identify yourself and who you represent.
- Ask about timing. Is reporter on deadline?
- Once you get the positive response you are looking for – start “pitching.”
- At *that* moment “hit” the send button on your computer to re-mail your news release so that the reporter has it (again) at the top of his/her mails and won’t have to search for it.
- Your “pitch” should be 30 seconds – maybe a bit longer.
- If you are interrupted with questions – it’s a good sign.

cont.

PR Play 9-3 continued

Don't get discouraged if you are rejected. In fact, learn from rejection. Hitters in baseball are considered successful if their average is .300 or better. Media relations "pitchers" should consider themselves "winners" if 30 percent or more of their story ideas make it into print or on the air.

PR Play 9-4

A Checklist

"Newsworthy Story Angles"

WHO

- **Celebrity**
 - Are famous people involved?
- **Human Interest**
 - Does it have a man or woman in the face of adversity?
 - Does someone have an unusual job?
 - Is it someone who makes a good story?

WHAT

- **Adventure**
 - Is there an adventure, experiment, exploration or voyage?
- **Hot News**
 - Does it relate to a hot news item?
- **Bleeds and Leads**
 - Does it involve hate, tragedy, love, sex, children or animals?
- **Mystery**
 - Does the mystery have suspense?
 - Will they find an answer?
 - Will they find a cure?
 - Will the community/world survive the onslaught (power shortage or water)?
- **New**
 - Is it new?
- **Novel**
 - Is it unusual, novel, peculiar, humorous, different or odd?
 - Is it the biggest, smallest, nicest, meanest, strangest or happiest?

cont.

PR Play 9-4 continued

- **Unknown**

- Is it little known but interesting (desolate beach, unusual service/store/product/restaurant, etc.)?

WHEN

- **Timely**

- Is it timely?

WHERE

- **Proximity**

- Is it local?

WHY

- **Importance/Impact**

- Is it important to a large number of people?
- Is it important to a small number of people?

- **Consequence, Conflict, Controversy**

- Does it have consequence, conflict or controversy?

- **Future**

- Is it going to change the future?
- Will it help you earn more money or live a longer/healthier life?

PR101: Media Relations and M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

The “pitcher” has to intrigue the reporter or editor enough to pique his/her interest in the story. The reporter wants to hear why the story might be relevant to the news outlet’s readers, listeners or viewers.

Use words and examples that paint pictures to bolster your “pitch.” It’s called “scene setting.” Once the reporter or gatekeeper “buys” into your story, he/she still has to sell it to an editor at an editorial planning meeting also called an *editorial content, log* or *budgeting* meeting. Print (space) media rely on such meetings to plan their pages while broadcast (time) media rely on them to lay out their shows.

Meeting participants traditionally include editors or news directors, news planners and assignment editors. There are times when beat reporters and general assignment reporters might attend to “pitch” their own stories, which might include those “pitched” to them. News planners are critical to the space and time devoted to a story and, in fact, help reporters justi-

fy covering stories. News planners maintain the news files and work with assignment editors to set up stories a day or two in advance.

Anatomy Of A Newspaper

While this entire book could be considered an “anatomy” of strategic communication, the next several paragraphs home in on the “anatomy” (structure) of a newspaper.

First and foremost, it must be accepted that newspapers are a business. Just ask the local group – Philadelphia Media Holdings, LLC (PMH) – who purchased *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for \$562 million from The McClatchy Company, which spun it off from its Knight Ridder acquisitions. Less than nine months later, PMH announced major layoffs – nearly 20 percent of its editorial staff, plus dozens of others in sales and support positions.

Daily newspapers rely on more than just the paper that hits the street every day to contribute to the bottom line. They generate revenue online, with such sister publications as weeklies and guides, and special sections. Approximately 75 percent of a daily’s revenue is from display and classified advertising – half of that is from classified (rather than display) automotive and real estate ads – and 25 percent is from circulation. Market penetration (circulation) of 50 percent of the homes in a market is considered good. With all of the news sources now available, more than 50 percent is considered very good.

On any given day, dailies are made up of the following sections:

- Section A – Main news with a 95 percent readership. The front page is also referred to as Page 1A.
- Section B – Local and metro news with strong readership – more than 50 percent. Page 1B is referred to as the second front page or split page.
- Sports (section C in many papers) – Readership averages 55 to 60 percent.
- Business – (section D in many papers) – Readership averages more than 50 percent thanks to increased number of features.
- Lifestyle/Home – (section E in many papers) Heavy on features – considered “soft” and “fuzzy” news by editors. Its readership is in the 40 to 50 percent range.
- Classifieds (section F in many papers).

- Other sections (especially on Sundays and “lettered” for quick reference) could include:
 - Automotive
 - Books
 - Arts & Entertainment
 - Health/Well Being
 - Jobs
 - Opinion
 - Neighbors (Zoned)
 - New Homes
 - Real Estate
 - Travel

Daily and weekly newspapers have transitioned to online. A strong online presence – for both print and broadcast media outlets – serves to establish the Internet as a strong advertising vehicle. Web versions of newspapers mirror print. For example, *The New York Times* on any given day has the following “jump to” (links) sections:

- Front Page
- International
- National Report
- Obituaries
- Editorials
- Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor
- The Metro Section
- Business Day
- Sports
- The Arts

Newspaper sectioning started as an advertising strategy – attracting certain readers – thus targeting audiences. Each has its own editor and staff – many eager to develop relationships with an organization’s media relations representative. Staff is comprised mostly of general assignment reporters, but a number are considered beat reporters, meaning their area of coverage is specialized.

During the evolution of sectioning, editors discovered that readers enjoyed the ease of finding the news they wanted. Sections have their own front and back pages. Many of the section fronts – called *cover pages* – carry banner or strip ads across the page bottom (footer) and

occasionally across the top (header). Those section fronts carry *center packages* – a major (lead) story in the center also called the *centerpiece story*. *USA Today* commonly uses this technique.

Section back pages have become premier advertising space – often carrying dramatic full page ads. Sunday papers have the most sections and the largest circulation. News is in shortest supply for the Monday and Saturday editions.

A newspaper's corporate flow chart consists of its publisher, who serves as the chief executive officer (CEO). Other department heads include news, controller, advertising, circulation, production, human resources and marketing.

The news department is headed by an editor-in-chief or executive editor. Moving down the chart is the managing editor and news editor, who runs the desk – or slot, as it is known in some newsrooms. The section editors, who have the most impact on readers, report to the news editor. They include section A (front), city, sports, business, entertainment, lifestyle and travel. Many newspapers have weekend and special section editors. Special sections are usually run to generate revenue.

Instrument of Understanding

Newspapers view themselves as instruments of understanding – the muscle that drives journalism – even today with all of its editorial staff reductions.

Their first loyalty must be to their readers, listeners or viewers (now that print is cross platforming with blogs, podcasts, videocasts and tweets). To achieve that loyalty, reporters must never forget their job is to find the truth and report on it, according to Everett Landers, a news coach and former managing editor (Gannett).

That's where the strategic communicator/media relations specialist comes in – not only pitching stories important to his/her organization, but working with the enterprising reporter to help him/her report with *balance, accuracy, fairness* and *meaning* (keeping in mind what the reader will get out of the story). Said Landers: “Without meaning to the stories they carry, newspapers – as we know them today – cannot survive. To contribute to their quest for survival, *civic journalism* is now commonplace – stories about the critical issues on readers' minds; stories that reflect the community.

“The media relations specialist contributes to that *civic journalism* by working with reporters to develop a relationship and being able to explain why, what they are pitching is as it is and is news.”

Strategic communicators must always keep in mind the newspaper’s role in the community – mirroring life as it happens – reporting on stories and their reactions so that the people who read it learn about their neighbors, community, jobs and possible changes within their “section of town.”

The *MAC Triad Plus* plays a vital part in placing a story. That’s because the PR practitioner, who helps craft the strategic message and has chosen the newspaper as its channel, also targets the audience(s) (general and specialized), its geodemographics (where), demographics (who) and psychographics (personality, values, attitudes, interests, or lifestyles – also called IAO variables (Interests, Attitudes and Opinions).

Landers believed a strategic communicator’s trust must be earned “always keeping in mind that knowledge is power and that knowledge and the knowledge of those you represent make *you* a valuable resource. The reputation and credibility of both the newspaper and the organization’s strategic communicator must be first and foremost.”

Landers and others recommend that the organization’s media representative know his or her product as well as their own name, know the people behind it and the organization’s philosophy, mission and vision.

According to Landers, “Newspapers often serve as *contrarians* (*skeptics*) – questioning whether the public receives what is promised. Ideally, ethical public relations, universally practiced, would eliminate the need for *contrarians*.”

More than a century ago, newspaper (*Emporia [Kansas] Gazette*) editor and publisher William Allen White said, “A newspaper is an instrument of understanding – information that people want and need. Newspapers bring news to the people.”

That concept holds true today. For newspapers to achieve that goal, said Landers, editors continually remind reporters that journalism’s major purpose is to *inform, educate, inspire* and *entertain* – help readers make intelligent decisions. When pitching a story or reacting to a reporter’s interview, a good practice would be for the PR practitioner to keep in mind the characteristics of a quality newspaper:

- It reflects values.
- It transmits culture.
- Its content is relevant.

With the rapid technological changes, Landers suggests that if television newscasts report the news, today's newspapers – in hardcopy and online – must define it. A well written news story is not unlike an “executive summary.”

Understanding the difference between hard and soft news and the philosophies of William Allen White and Everett Landers are hardly enough for the public relations practitioner. The person responsible for media relations should also fully understand the make up of a traditional newspaper from the front page (1A) to that display ad on the back page of section E or whatever letter or title is on the final section. (Terms commonly used in newspaper newsrooms can be found beginning on page 290.)

Landers offers this advice to media specialists to help them better understand journalists and their outlets: “There has always been a special bond between the public and press. The average person has a preoccupation with the other person's trouble. It's called *human interest* and people react to *human interest*.”

PR Play 9-5

Scheduling a News Conference

Scheduling of a news conference is dictated by the subject matter or its urgency. But when the luxury exists, think about selecting a “light” news day. For example, most public bodies, town councils or school boards regularly schedule their meetings for the first and third or second and fourth Mondays or Tuesdays in a month. Why not try to schedule your news conference or event for the “fifth” Monday or Tuesday in a month, for example? There are only a few such days in a year, and editors have available space the day after. It is a wonderful public relations tactic that doesn't take a great deal of strategic planning.

PR Play 9-6

News Conference or News Availability Checklist

Purdue University, Rowan University, reporters and others offer these suggestions to assure a successful news conference:

- Reserve a room large enough to accommodate the expected number of media representatives and invited guests. The meeting area must contain electrical outlets and space for television crews.
- Have tables, chairs, lectern, pencils and paper.
- Arrange to have microphone and amplification.
- Have water and glasses for speakers.
- Arrange for parking.
- Notify phone receptionists, security and others who might have to respond to calls or to media when they arrive.
- Use banner, sign and/or logo behind the lectern and on the front of it.
- Provide visuals for television.
- Alert/remind the media by phone or email no later than the day before.
- Invite public officials and VIPs who have an interest.
- Brief participants about format and possible questions.
- Post signs directing news media to the conference site.
- Arrange to have someone meet the media.
- Take notes and/or record for reporters unable to attend or for follow-up calls.
- Be prepared to help get things going following the initial statement, by having someone ask the first question if no one else does.
- Prepare a media kit (Chapter 5).
- Make the media kit available on your website for media outlets who did not send representatives to the conference and for follow up.

cont.

PR Play 9-6 continued

Media Kit Contents

- Cover memo (list of media kit's contents)
- List of participants
- List of partnering or cooperating organizations
- Media Advisory/Media Alert/News and Photo Memo/Invitation to Cover (There is little difference. Choose one heading and stick with it for all of your media kits and media announcements.)
- News Releases
- Straight (hard stories)
- Features (soft stories)
- Biographies of speakers and key personnel
- Fact Sheets
- Backgrounder
 - Historical
 - Statistical
- Pictures and other graphics and visuals (suggested captions)
- Public Service Announcements (on CD or flash drive [USB])
- Position Paper(s)
- Op-Ed piece(s)
- Letter(s) to the Editor
- Texts of speeches
- Quote sheet
- Testimonials
- Fillers (newsy notes)
- Clip sheets (news clips)
- Logo repros or slicks – include on Flash (USB) drive, CD or DVD
- Collateral materials – Brochures/Publications
 - Annual reports
 - Magazines
 - Newsletters
 - Videos (DVD/Flash [USB] drive)
 - Free samples (if ethical)
- Entire media kit should be duplicated on Flash (USB) drive, CD or DVD

With the advent of the Internet and other technology, the debate over media kits and their effectiveness has grown louder. Don't allow the cons to be a deterrent. Prepare a media kit for the Web just as you would for hard copy (Chapter 5). Those reporters interested in this resource would be encouraged to take advantage of it by downloading it from the website's "Newsroom." For those who attend the news conference, the media kit should contain a version on disk or Flash (USB) drive – known as electronic press kit (EPK) – as well as hard copies of such major components as news releases and fact sheets. For those organizations that really want to impress, think about distributing the kit on a low capacity, inexpensive "flash drive" that plugs into a computer's USB port.

The News Conference Compared to a News Availability

The news conference is an effective media relations’ tool when properly used. It gives members of the media an equal opportunity to ask questions about a variety of topics or just the subject matter at hand.

While some organizations hold regular news conferences, it is more advisable to call them only when making major announcements, announcing important developments that need detailed explanations or to clear up a major controversy. Most times it is prearranged.

A news availability, on the other hand, is an opportunity to make someone available for questions from the media. It is less formal with no prepared statement – although the experienced strategic counselor has worked with that “someone” on key message points.

When scheduling a news conference, keep these suggestions in mind:

- Unless under pressure of time, give at least 24 hours notice.
- Let editors know why the news conference is being called.

PR Play 9-7

In-service For Reporters

A rarely used, but accepted and encouraged method among strategic communicators is the “in-service” for media members covering a long-term story or special event. A New Jersey school district that had lost nearly a dozen bond and budget referenda over several years determined that neither the public nor the media understood the issues.

The public relations professional and school administrators invited media to a series of workshops spread out over several weeks. The workshops, over lunch (reporters do have to eat), lasted 45 minutes to an hour. Media outlets were encouraged to send any reporter who might cover the next referendum. A number of handouts – electronic and printed – were distributed and visuals were used freely.

Attendance was excellent. The message was communicated to the reporters who in turn took it to the public in terms the audiences could understand. Those in-services – cutting edge at the time – were considered successful because the district went on a “winning streak” at the polls. (A number of media outlets were so impressed, they decided to run [side bar] stories on what they considered a unique approach.)

- Hand out a statement, background paper or fact sheet covering the main topic.
- Allow for a question period once the statement has been delivered.
- Don't allow the chief executive to handle the questioning alone. Staff members familiar with the topic should also be present.
- Anticipate questions and be sure the main participants have been fully briefed.
- If some of the questions stray, try to answer them. If they cannot be answered, be diplomatic. If not, reporters grow suspicious (skeptical) – it's their nature.
- End the conference as soon as interest lags. Be sure to thank the reporters for attending.

When and How to Complain

Errors are bound to occur – at least once in a while – no matter how hard you try to prevent them or the reporters try to avoid them. Remember, reporters and editors are under tremendous pressure. Never complain about minor errors. Save those complaints for the big mistakes.

If you must complain, get together with the reporter and discuss the error. There may have been a misunderstanding about a point or fact. There is even the possibility that the change was made by an editor without consulting the reporter.

If it is felt that a reporter slanted a story unfavorably, discuss the matter openly with him or her. The misunderstanding will probably be cleared up and a new improved long-standing relationship may be developed.

If errors occur frequently, or if the reporter continues to slant stories that might be embarrassing to your organization, discuss it (agenda setting) with the editor. But be prepared to document your argument with clippings, releases, fact sheets and other data.

If an editor gets the impression you are complaining without justification, he/she will probably instruct the reporter to step up his hard-hitting tactics. Never demand that an editor replace a reporter on your beat or fire him/her. Simply lay the facts on the table and let the editor decide how to handle the situation.

PR Play 9-8

Never hold a reporter responsible for an editorial stand his/her newspaper may have taken even if you believe the reporter had input in the action. Unfortunately, a paper has the right to take any stand it wishes and usually has an editorial board who establishes the opinion.

Some DOs When Dealing With Reporters

- Always be available to give information at any time.
- Give reporters your home or cell phone number and get his or hers – and also exchange email addresses. These numbers and addresses come in handy when unexpected news breaks during off-duty hours.
- Compliment a reporter when he or she has done an exceptionally fine job and on occasion, it doesn't hurt to drop a note or email to the editor.
- When a reporter isn't available to attend an event, a meeting or a speech, take notes and call immediately with the information.
- Be sure to let the media know if an event has been cancelled.
- When discussing news with reporters, always put facts in perspective and give as much background information as possible – but remember, you are always on the record.
- Always respond promptly to a reporter's question. If you don't have the information available or want time to think before answering, tell the reporter you will call back in a few minutes. *Then, make sure you do.*
- When giving a reporter an impromptu statement on the phone concerning a controversial issue, jot down or record your side of the conversation so you can recall what you said. The notations can also come in handy if another reporter calls about the same topic. It can also help if you are misquoted.
- According to the *Los Angeles Times*, it is acceptable to offer a reporter the opportunity to have him/her fact check and back check story content with you to make certain quotes and other facts are accurate.

Some DON'Ts When Dealing With Reporters

- Don't expect newspapers or other media to publish or air every word you write or say. Papers will rewrite your releases to conform to style and fit into limited space. Radio and TV stations will edit your material – many times taking a 10 or 15-minute interview and reducing it to a 25-second sound bite.

PR Play 9-9
**On and Off the Record/For
Background Only/Not for Attribution**

Remember – when talking with reporters you are always on the record – even during informal or chance meetings. Avoid casual comments or “off the record” remarks unless you specify first that what you are about to say is not for publication or air. And be sure the reporter will accept “off the record” information before volunteering it. *Background* (“*on background*”) information is just that – for *background only* – not to be used and not to be attributed until such a time (if ever) that the *newsmaker* gives the go ahead. It is purely an act of educating a journalist about the subject without saying anything that can be used in a specific story until it is released. “Not for attribution” means that the information can be used, but the source may not be identified.

- Don’t complain to an editor if a story isn’t published or aired. If compelled to ask when a story will be published or aired, be diplomatic.
- Don’t ever ask a reporter to see a story before it is published. (The very best and more secure reporters might go over strategic points in a story to assure the facts are correct [fact checking and back checking].)
- Don’t ask reporters for clippings, tear sheets or recordings of stories after they appear or are aired. (If they practice good relationship marketing, they might just send them to you.) It is your responsibility to track *hits* and *impressions* (see pages 293 and 294). Set up online “alerts.”
- Don’t ask a newspaper to return a photo unless it is a very rare print – most are emailed, anyway.
- Don’t try to suppress unfavorable news. Any attempt to do so usually ends up with the story receiving greater prominence.
- Don’t tell a reporter how to write the story. If you want certain points emphasized, do that during the interview.
- Don’t stress your title or position. Just be certain the reporter is given such information as corporate heads, key officers and “key” players.

Getting Coverage In Print and On The Air

Persuading the media to cover your business can be exasperating – both for you and for the journalists you approach. Contacting your local media with poorly researched story ideas is likely to result in no coverage and may even turn off reporters and editors who will consider future coverage.

“When business owners turn to the media, they think they can clobber them over the head with an idea and that the reporter should do it,” says Greg Matusky, president of Gregory Communications, Inc., a

PR Play 9-10

Twenty-five Ways to Deal with the Media

- Make the CEO responsible for *media relations*.
- Face the facts.
- Consider the public interest in every operating decision.
- Respond quickly.
- Return calls.
- Know to whom you are talking.
- Be a source before you are a subject.
- If you want your views represented, you have to talk.
- Be prepared.
- Know your message.
- Put your story in context.
- Use everyday language.
- Don't speculate.
- Slow down.
- You are always on the record.
- Cage your lawyers.
- Tell the truth – or nothing.
- Be available.
- Don't expect to bat 1.000 (to be perfect).
- Be realistic.
- Don't take it personally.
- Control what you can.
- Know with whom you are dealing.
- Avoid TV unless you feel you can speak candidly.
- Be human.

Purdue University
M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

media communications firm based in Ardmore, Pa. “Business owners must understand that good media coverage is like good sales – it starts with relationships.”

Matusky and other communications professionals offer these tips for approaching the media:

- Get to know your local media. That means read, watch and listen to the news sources in your market.
- Understand that journalists have specific coverage areas – called beats. If you need help determining which reporter covers your business area, contact an assignment editor at the media outlet.
- Determine how you can help reporters do their job – such as supplying them with relevant statistics or relating what may be an emerging trend that you’ve noticed among your customers.
- Call the appropriate reporter with your story idea, and ask to schedule a telephone appointment.
- Expect to spend six to 12 months developing contacts in the media before you get results; and, remember, you are likely to see coverage only if a reporter considers your information to be a legitimate story angle.
- Be prepared for rejections.
- Tell the truth.

Check with your local chamber of commerce or other business groups to see if they offer media relations training seminars. Ideally, seminars include a panel of media representatives from your market.

Meg Whittemore – *Nation’s Business/September, 1994*

Twenty-five Ways to Deal with the Media

- **Make the CEO responsible for media relations.** That means he/she must often speak for the corporation – routinely and in times of crisis – and must delegate enough authority to make the public relations spokesperson a credible source.
- **Face the facts.** If you screw up, admit it candidly. Avoid hedging or excuses. Apologize, promise not to do it again, and explain how you’re going to make things right.
- **Consider the public interest in every operating decision.** Your reputation depends far more on what you do than on what you say. Act accordingly. Try giving your senior public relations expert a seat at the table when decisions are made.

- **Respond quickly.** You can't influence a story once its deadline has passed. Stalling can tarnish or destroy credibility. In a crisis, figure you have a day – at most – to get your story out.
- **Return calls.** Reporters are always writing on a deadline. Delays could mean that your side of the story may not be told.
- **Know to whom you are talking.** Ask the reporter who he or she represents and the nature of the story.
- **Be a source before you are a subject.** The time to make friends with reporters is long before trouble hits. Get to know the people who cover your company. Educate them. Help them with their stories and give them reason to respect you. Determine which journalists deserve your respect and trust.
- **If you want your views represented, you have to talk.** Reporters are paid to get stories, whether you help or not. When you clam up, they must depend on other sources – often people like that marketing VP you fired last month.
- **Be prepared.** Review the topic and have notes.
- **Know your message.** Predetermine your main points and stick to them.
- **Put your story in context.** Briefly provide any relevant background or anecdotes that explain the problem or situation.
- **Use everyday language.** Avoid jargon or specialized technical terms.
- **Don't speculate.** If you don't know an answer to a question, don't guess. Offer to get the answer later if you can, or refer the reporter to someone who can answer it. (Know the reporter's deadline.)
- **Slow down.** Speak clearly and concisely. Encourage questions for clarification.
- **You're always on the record.** There's no legal obligation for a reporter to keep anything off the record. Never say, "no comment."
- **Cage your lawyers.** They will (almost) always tell you to keep your mouth shut. But in many crisis situations your potential legal liability may be trivial compared with the risk of alienating your customers, employees or regulators.
- **Tell the truth – or nothing.** Nobody likes a liar.
- **Be available.** Offer to answer follow-up questions or help clarify problems that might develop as the story is being written and edited. (Editors and reporters list as a complaint, organizations' spokespeople not being available, especially when bad news breaks.)

- **Don't expect to bat (a perfect) 1.000.** Strategic communication is a game of averages, so be content if you win most of the time. Even the most flattering story will likely have a zinger or two, and even the best companies get creamed now and then.
- **Be realistic.** Be aware a reporter's job is to get news, not necessarily to make Rowan University or you look good.
- **Don't take it personally.** The reporter is neither your enemy nor your friend. He or she is an intermediary between you and the people you need to reach. And forget about your ego – nobody cares about it but you.

PR Play 9-11

HOWARD JOFFE
BEST EVIDENCE

EXECUTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS • CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS • VIDEO DEVELOPMENT

Top 10 List of Media Relations Mistakes

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10. Lack of preparation/plan
9. Failure to identify audience
8. Reluctance to accept responsibility
7. Inability to show compassion
6. Failure to focus
5. Natural bias against reporters
4. Inability to shut mouth
3. Natural tendency to want to sound more intelligent than we really are
2. Fear & loathing
1. Panic

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PR Play 9-12

Building Strong Reporter Relationships

Learning more about the beat reporter or columnist who covers your industry for your local newspaper, radio or television station is an integral first step. After all, research is a key component of every public relations process.

There is no reason reporters should intimidate you. Many times, they need the company spokesperson as much as the company needs them. Former Gannett editor Ev Landers said, “Don’t be afraid to make the first move. Once reporters know you, they will have an interest in what you know, develop a mutual trust and maybe even write about you.”

Landers and others suggest picking up the phone and inviting the reporter for lunch or coffee. Offer to pay, but know that company policy may prohibit the reporter from accepting a “free lunch.” (Let them pay for your meal if they offer – or split the check.)

1. Become familiar with the kinds of stories they cover so you can discuss them.
2. Take a media kit, background information or fact sheets they might find interesting. (Put them on a CD or “flash” drive they can keep.)
3. Offer yourself and your organization’s employees as local experts for national stories.
4. Ask about other “areas” they cover or stories they are working on.
5. Don’t talk off the record unless you fully understand the ramifications (PR Play 9-9.)
6. Ask about the reporter’s personal interests, family, hobbies (relationship marketing).
7. Suggest story ideas and offer to do the “leg work” (research). Offer to provide names of those with opposing points of view.
8. If they write about you or your company, send a thank-you note (inside front cover) but never a gift.
9. Offer your home phone, cell phone and beeper numbers. If you are serious about your job, invite them to call you 24/7.
10. Ask, “How else can I help you?”
11. Exchange business cards.
12. Mail a thank-you note within 24 hours.
13. Keep in touch regularly. Offer feedback on their stories. Email helpful articles about their areas of expertise or their hobbies. Share news tips and story ideas.
14. Do lunch again in about six months.
15. Contact another reporter, from another news outlet, for the same kind of “mindshare” meeting.

- **Control what you can.** Release the bad news yourself – before some reporter digs it up. Use your selective availability to reporters as a tool. Set ground rules every time you talk. If the public isn't buying your message, change it.
- **Know with whom you are dealing.** The press is not a single entity. TV is different from print. Magazines are different from newspapers and the *Fairfield Daily Ledger* is different from *The Wall Street Journal*. Within any news organization there will be a normal mix of individuals, some honorable and competent, some not. Do your homework on journalists before you talk to them, reviewing their past work or talking to other executives they have covered. It's called "due diligence."
- **Avoid TV unless you feel you can speak candidly.** Even then, learn to present your views in the 10-second sound bites that are the building blocks of TV stories. Use simple declarative sentences and ignore subtleties. Whenever possible favor live TV shows over those that can edit your remarks.
- **Be human.** Reporters – and the public – usually will be more sympathetic to a person than to a corporation. If you can do it without lying or making a fool of yourself, show that you are a person with feelings. Then, the media may minimize your mistakes. Insist on being judged on a human scale, with normal human fallibility taken into account. Remember, people love to root for underdogs.

Purdue University
M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

Print Media Terms Every Practitioner Should Know

ABC – Abbreviation for Audit Bureau of Circulations, an organization that compiles statistics on circulation.

art – Photograph(s) or other graphics accompanying a print or Web story.

attribution – A line identifying the source of a quote.

back story – In both print and broadcast journalism, it is the copy or information toward the end of the story – but is still important.

banner – A headline stretching across the top of a page; also called a "streamer" or "banner line."

banner ad – Ad that stretches across the top of a printed page or horizontally across part or all of a Web page. Also called a *header*.

beat – A specific topic that a reporter usually covers (e.g., business, education, police, a municipality, a sports team, etc.).

blurb – A quotation or statement that is separated from the rest of a news story and sometimes set off with borders above and below – for emphasis. The quote is usually taken from the story it accompanies. Also called a *liftout quote* or *pull quote*.

boxcar – A teaser or banner head that runs above the nameplate is called a skybox or skyline. If they are boxed (with art), they are called skyboxes or boxcars. If they are only a line of type, they are called *skylines*.

broken display ad – Display ads usually disguised as editorial copy where an ad is inserted over the copy – sometimes “interrupting it” as an attention getter. Also known as an *interrupted display ad*.

bullet – A type, usually a big dot, used to highlight items listed in the text. Also called a *dingbat*.

byline – The reporter’s name (or author’s name), usually at the beginning of a story.

caption – A line or block of type providing descriptive information about a picture. Headline or text accompanying a picture or illustration. Also called a *cutline*.

center package – The major (lead) story in the center of a main page of a newspaper. Also called the centerpiece story. *USA Today* commonly uses this technique.

centerpiece story – The major (lead) story in the center of a main page of a newspaper. Also called the center package. *USA Today* commonly uses this technique.

classified advertising – Advertising arranged according to the product or service advertised, and usually restricted in size and format. The ads are “classified” into various categories such as help wanted, autos for sale, apartments for rent, etc.

column inch – A unit of measurement one inch deep and one column wide. Generally speaking, a 250-word release, double spaced, 12 point type, would become six column inches in the typical newspaper.

copy desk – The desk where copy is edited, headlined and placed on the page it will appear in the newspaper.

cover page – The first page in a section. Also called section front.

cutline – The copy (usually only a few lines) that accompanies and gives necessary information about a picture or “cut.” Not as in depth as a caption.

dateline – Line at the beginning of an out-of-town story that indicates both the place and the date of origin of the story.

deadline – The last moment to get copy in for an edition.

display ad – Advertising matter other than in-column classified ads. They usually have a border.

dot whack – An ad, usually on front page of newspaper attached to as if it were a Post-it® or sticky note. Also called *popper* or *press-on* ad.

double truck – A two-page spread in a print publication, where the ad (editorial copy) runs across the middle gutter. It could be the center fold (“center spread”) or any two full side-by-side pages (facing each other). If it prints across the gutter between the two pages, and if the pages are on the same sheet, rather than two adjacent sheets, it might be called a “true” double truck. This name comes from the days when the heavy forms for newspaper pages, largely filled with lead type, were rolled around the composing room floor on heavy carts called trucks. Two pages for one project meant a double truck.

ears – Space at the top of the front page on each side of the newspaper’s name where weather news, index to pages or announcement of special features appears.

edition – A press run of a newspaper. A daily generally has more than one edition a day – for example, “City Edition,” “Lakeshore Edition,” “Early Edition,” “Late Edition.”

editorial – An article that expresses the opinion of the newspaper’s editors and usually also reflects the opinion of the publisher or owner of the newspaper. The department of the newspaper where news is gathered, written, edited and readied for publication.

feature – Any story that has human interest value, even though it is not news in the strict sense.

filler – Short informational stories or advertisements, usually timeless, used to fill small spaces where needed.

first-day story – A story published for the first time and dealing with something that has just happened, as distinguished from a “follow-up” story.

First Amendment – The first article of the Constitution’s Bill of Rights, guaranteeing Americans freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition.

five W’s – Who? what? when? where? why? – the questions usually answered in the lead of a news story.

flag –The printed title (i.e., name and logo) of a newspaper at the top of the front page. Also called a *nameplate*.

folio – Newspaper name, date, and page number that appear at the top of each page.

follow-up – Story giving later developments of an event already reported.

footer ad – Display ad that stretches across the bottom of a printed or Web page. Also called *strip ad*.

general assignment – A reporter who covers a variety of stories rather than a single “beat.”

graf – Newsroom slang for paragraph.

halftone – A picture or drawing that has been concerted into a pattern of tiny dots for reproduction in a newspaper or other print medium.

handout – A press (news) release – prepared material given to news people in the hope that it will be printed without change or that it will be helpful in preparing news stories.

hard news – (important news) – Straight news reporting without interpretation or background material.

head/header – Headline or special label for any regularly appearing section, page or story. Also called a *standing head*. Also, a *banner ad* that runs across the top of a newspaper page.

headline – Large type running above or beside a story to summarize its contents. Also called a *head*, for short.

hit – Each time a news story appears in or on a different media vehicle. In an Internet sense, it is a visit to a particular page on a website by a Web visitor. See *impression*.

hold – “Hold for release” instruction to hold a story until the editor releases it for publication.

hook – The stylistic device used by a reporter to draw a reader into the story.

hot – A label given to an important story.

human interest – Emotional appeal in the news. A “human interest” story, as compared with a “straight news” story, bases its appeal more on the unusual than on consequence.

impression – The number of potential readers, listeners or viewers who could see a printed or broadcast story, ad or commercial or number of visitors to a website. Impressions are based on a publication’s circulation or a radio or television program’s unduplicated audience. Some consider an impression the number of pairs of eyes or ears that will be exposed to a media vehicle. See *hit*.

index – Table of contents of the newspaper, usually found on Page One.

insert – A flyer or magazine that is placed into the folded newspaper after it has been printed.

interrupted display ad – Display ads usually disguised as editorial copy where an ad is inserted over the copy – sometimes “breaking it” as an attention getter. Also known as a *broken display* ad.

inverted pyramid – The standard news story structure in which facts are arranged in descending order of importance.

jump – To continue a story from one page to another.

jump line – The continuation instructions of a story that is jumped to another page (Continued on page 10; Continued from page 1).

kicker – Small headline, often in italics and sometimes underlined, above and slightly to the left of the main head. Usually, one line. In broadcast, the last or tagline of a commercial or public service announcement (PSA). Also called a *tagline* or *stinger*.

kill – To eliminate all or part of a story.

letter to the editor – A letter in which a reader expresses his or her views in the newspaper; usually printed on the editorial page or the page opposite the editorial page.

liftout quote – A quotation or statement that is separated from the rest of a news story and sometimes set off with borders above and below – for emphasis. The quote is usually taken from the story it accompanies. Also called a *blurb* or *pull quote*.

localize – To emphasize the local angle in an out-of-town story.

masthead – Statement of ownership, place of publication, executive personnel and other information about the newspaper, generally placed on the editorial page.

nameline – See *cutline*.

nameplate – The printed title (i.e., name and logo) of a newspaper at the top of the front page. Also called a *flag*.

news hole – The amount of space left for news after advertisements have been arranged on the page.

news services – News-gathering agencies such as the Associated Press or Reuters that distribute news to subscribing newspapers.

newsprint – A grade of paper made from recycled paper and wood pulp, used primarily for printing newspapers.

nut graph – The explanation paragraph that generally follows the lead *graph*. It explains the significance of the story and gives its news “peg.” Some public relations practitioners also refer to *boiler plates* as *nut graphs*. However, boiler plates should be the final paragraph in a story.

obit or obituary – A biography of a dead person. Sometimes “canned obits” are kept on file in the newspaper’s library to be used at the time of a prominent person’s death.

offset press – A printing press in which the inked image is transferred from a plate to a rubber roller, which in turn puts the ink onto the paper.

op-ed – Commentary traditionally printed on page opposite the editorial page (Chapters 5 and 6) of a newspaper.

overline – The caption above a photograph.

Page One (or Page 1A) – The first page of the newspaper. Also refers to the importance of a story – as in “page one news.”

pagination – Computerized newspaper page design.

piece – The general term applied to any newspaper article written by a reporter. Also called “*story*.”

pix – Abbreviation for pictures.

popper – An ad, usually on front page of newspaper attached as if it were a Post-it®. Also call a *dot whack*.

population – In marketing research, the total group that a researcher wishes to study. The individuals whose opinions are sought in a survey. The population can be as broad as every adult in the United States or as focused as liberal Democrats who live in the Fifth Ward of Chicago and who voted in the last election. The sample is drawn to reflect the population. Sometimes called the *universe*.

porkchop – Half-column picture. Synonymous with *thumbnail*.

pox – Police.

promo – An eye-catching graphic element, usually on Page One or section front, that promotes an item inside. Also called a *teaser*.

public relations (journalist’s definition) – The art or science of developing understanding and goodwill between a person, firm or institution and the public.

publisher – The chief executive and often the owner of a newspaper or other publishing firm.

pull quote – A quotation or statement that is separated from the rest of a news story and sometimes set off with borders above and below – for emphasis. The quote is usually taken from the story it accompanies. Also called a *blurb* or *liftout quote*.

put to bed – Printer’s term meaning all the pages of an edition are completed and the presses are ready to roll.

Q and A – Copy in question and answer form, as in verbatim reports of court proceedings.

quotes – Quotation marks. A quote is a portion of a story that consists of direct quotations.

register or registration – Correct placement of printing on the sheet. In color printing, register means the correct placement of each plate so that the colors are laid down properly, without running “off-register.”

ROP – Run-of-paper news and advertising that appears in any part of the paper. Convenient to the make-up of the paper.

second-day story – A “follow-up” story giving new developments on one that has already appeared in the newspaper.

second front page – The front page of a second section. Also called the “*split page*.”

section – Separate parts of a newspaper.

section lead – Top story in a section.

sectional story – A major news story with different aspects, featured under two or more headlines.

series – A group of related stories generally run on successive days.

shirt tail – A short, related story added at the end of a longer one.

shoot – To take photographs. As a noun, a *shoot* is a photo session.

shot sheet – A list of photo opportunities that can be provided to a newspaper or magazine photographer, videographer, or one hired by the public relations practitioner coordinating an event.

sidebar – A secondary news story that supports or amplifies a major story.

skybox/skyline – A banner head that runs above the nameplate. Serves as a teaser. If they are boxed (with art), they are called skyboxes or box-cars. If they are only a line of type, they are called *skylines*.

slant – An angle of a story. A story is “slanted” when a certain aspect is played up for policy or other reasons.

soft copy – Copy seen on a computer screen.

source – A supplier of information. A person, document, etc.

split page – Usually the first page of the inside or second section (section B) of the newspaper carrying local, metro or area news; the second front page.

spot news – News obtained on the scene of an event, usually unexpectedly.

spread – The display given to an important story; a double spread is one across facing pages.

squib – A short news item; a filler.

stand-alone photo – A picture that doesn't accompany a story, usually boxed to show it stands alone. Also called *wild art*.

standing head – Headlines that do not change and are usually kept in a library file on a computer so they are ready for instant use. Also a special label for any regularly appearing section, page or story. Also called a *header*.

steepchase ad – Ad that runs vertically up one side of a page or the other.

stet – A Latin term meaning “let it stand” – *stetundum*, Proofreader's notation instructing the printer to ignore a change marked on a proof.

story – The general term applied to any newspaper article written by a reporter. Also called “*piece*.”

straight news – A plain account of news facts written in standard style and structure, without coloring or embellishments.

streamer – A multi-column headline leading a page, but not necessarily across its full width. Synonymous with *banner*.

stringer – A correspondent for a newspaper or a news agency, usually part-time, who often covers a certain subject or geographic area. The person is usually paid according to the number or length of stories printed by the newspaper.

strip ad – One or two inch-wide ad across the bottom of a page. (Example would be front page of *Courier-Post* or *USA Today*.) Also called a *footer ad*.

style book – A compilation of typographical and other rules formulated by a newspaper to make uniform its treatment of spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, punctuation, typography, etc. Most newspapers provide style books for their staffs' use.

subhead – Small, one-line headline inserted in the body of a story to break up the monotony of a solid column of small type.

summary deck – A sentence or two below a headline that introduces a story. Many times, summary decks are set in italics.

table – A graphic or sidebar that stacks words or numbers in rows so readers can compare data.

take – A portion of copy in a running story sent to the composing room in sections. Each page would be a *take* – Take 1 (page 1), Take 2 (page 2), etc. (In broadcasting, a “take” is each attempt at recording a story.)

tearsheet – A full page of the paper, including the folio, which has been clipped out and sent to an advertiser as proof that his or her ad has appeared.

teaser – An eye-catching graphic element, usually on Page One or section front, that promotes an item inside. Also called a *promo*.

text – The verbatim report of a speech or public statement.

think piece – A background or opinion article.

thumbnail – A half-column picture. See *porkchop*.

tie-back – The part of a story that ties it back to something that has already been published.

PR Play 9-13

‘Journal’ tries to start anew

By Al Neuharth
Founder of USA Today

The new year this week saw a highly publicized attempted regeneration of a 118-year-old newspaper which once was No. 1 in the nation. This year also will mark the 25th anniversary (Sept. 15) of the new kid on the block who dethroned the former champ.

The past 25-year history of both:

In 1982, *The Wall Street Journal* was tops in circulation with 1,925,000 copies sold each day. *USA Today* started then with zero.

Now, *USA Today* has 2,269,000 circulation; the *Journal* 2,043,000.

This week’s “new” *Journal* hyped its content, but behind a still bland face. It reminded me of the fateful meeting noted pollster Lou Harris had with our Gannett board of directors after his extensive and expensive research in 1981 about a possible new national newspaper.

cont.

PR Play 9-13 continued

With copies of *The Wall Street Journal* spread in front of him, Harris said:

“A good newspaper is not necessarily dull. The TV generation will not fight its way through gray, insipid newspapers no matter how good they are.” (Ditto the Internet generation.)

When we launched *USA Today*, a short page-one note highlighted these goals:

“Enlightening and enjoyable to the nation’s readers.”

“Challenging and competitive to the nation’s journalists.”

In last weekend’s *Journal*, publisher L. Gordon Crovitz touted the “new” *Journal* in a lengthy letter, which read in part:

“We understand the concern at a time when so many once-authoritative news outlets have fallen to ‘journalism lite,’ with fads and entertainment as news. Rest assured — as others dumb down, we intend to increase the amount of exclusive, highly distinctive coverage in the *Journal*.”

Dumbing down, or dumbing up? “Enlightening and enjoyable” or “exclusive, highly distinctive”? As long as the competition for No. 1 continues, readers and advertisers will benefit. Stay tuned.

Feedback

“Readers don’t give a fig if the paper they read is No. 1 on the Hit Parade or not; nor, luckily for them, do they really have to choose between the “either/or” attributes cited by Al. Long live the (enlightening) *Wall Street Journal* and the (highly distinctive) *USA Today*.”

— Gloria Cooper, deputy executive editor,
Columbia Journalism Review

“Stay tuned, but not because one newspaper or the other wins the circulation war. Stay tuned, because now more than ever we need the best in quality, fearless journalism.”

— Marvin Kalb, senior fellow at Harvard’s Shorenstein
Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

Published: January 7, 2007

PR Play 9-14

Differences Among Media

	<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Television</u>	<u>Radio</u>
Deadline	Weekly/ Monthly	Morning/ Afternoon	Live/ Morning/ Afternoon/ Evening (Cable – 24/7)	Live/ every minute (24/7) for all news/ hourly for others
Needs	Photos/ Quotes	Photos/ Quotes	Scenes/ Sound bites	Natural sound/ Sound bites
Story Length	50-1,500 words	50-1,500 words	60-90 seconds	10-35 seconds
Reporter	Weeks on a story	A day or week on a story	A few hours on a story	20-30 minutes on a story

PR101: Media Relations
Mary Ortega and M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

PR Play 9-15

Anatomy of a Newspaper – Typical Sunday Web version – *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

World
U.S.
Washington
Business
Technology
Sports
Arts
New York/Region
Editorials
Op-Ed

PR Play 9-16

**Anatomy of a Newspaper – Typical Sunday
traditional hardcopy – *The Philadelphia Inquirer***

Sections

National/Foreign	A
City & Region	B
Currents (Editorials/Opinions)	C
Sports	D
Business	E
Automotive	F
Jobs	G
Arts & Entertainment	H
Real Estate	J (I is omitted)
New Homes	K
Neighbors	L (Targeted to specific regions)
Image	M
Travel	N

PR Play 9-17

**Why send news releases?
(Here are just a few reasons.)**

- Accomplishments
- Appointments
- Breakthroughs
- Honors and awards
- Workshop presentations
- Anniversaries
- Major special events
- Death of key personnel
- Product launches
- Organization expansion
- Grants received
- Official announcements
- Survey results from polls you conducted or reaction to another's survey and your tie-in
- Retirements
- Event partnership(s)
- Position paper or op-ed offering
- Visit by VIP

tie-in – Used to connect one (possibly a sidebar) story with some other, perhaps more important, story.

total market coverage – If a newspaper covers only a percentage of its market through paid circulation, then a supplement has to be published/printed that would go free to the rest of the market.

trial balloon – A project or idea tentatively announced in the news media to test public opinion.

trim – To reduce the length of a story; same as boil down.

typo – Typographical error – a mechanical error in typing a story.

underline – See *cutline*.

universe – In marketing research, the total group that a researcher wishes to study and measure. Also, all people who are prospects for a specific product or service. See *population*.

wild art – A picture that doesn't accompany a story usually boxed to show it stands alone. Also called *stand-alone photo*.

wx – Weather.

zoned editions – Geographic region served by a newspaper. For example, *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* publish a city edition and zoned editions for their many suburbs.

Portions from *Newspapers In Education Partners In Education*
with modifications and additions by M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA –
Rowan University, Glassboro N.J.

Broadcast Media Terms Every Practitioner Should Know

actuality – The recorded words of someone who is part of a radio news story.

anchor interview – An interview conducted live by a television news anchor with a newsmaker either inside or outside of the studio.

assignment editor – Supervises and coordinates coverage by radio or television news gathering staff. Maintains contact with outside news agencies, police and fire departments, and other news sources to obtain information regarding developing news items. Determines priority and assigns coverage to news units. Works closely with the *news planner* at many television and radio news outlets.

B-Roll – Video accompanying a television story.

breaking news – News that is happening right now.

cop shop – Police headquarters.

cross platforming (media convergence) – The convergence of distribution – print, radio, television, broadband, wireless and digital signage. Also called *multiple platforming*.

doughnut (sandwich) – A reporter’s on-location, live intro and close with pre-recorded video or audio. Also called a *wrap*.

live shot – An on-scene television or radio news story reported as it is happening.

media convergence – See *cross platforming*. Also called *multiple platforming*.

multiple platforming – See *cross platforming*. Also called *media convergence*.

narrowcasting – Targeting niche audiences through electronic media.

nat sound – Audio that’s part of a television or radio news story but is not the sound of someone speaking directly into a microphone or to the camera (background sound).

news planner – Oversees daily and long-range newsroom planning. Creates and maintains planning systems that help develop stories while working with newsroom journalists. Develops and executes planning systems day ahead, week ahead, month ahead and longer range planning and oversees planning meetings to review these events. Today’s news planners use social media to find events/contacts that will lead to stories across multiple platforms. Works closely with the *assignment editor* at many television and radio news outlets.

newser – A news conference.

package – A pre-recorded television news story voiced by a reporter. It usually consists of standup or bridge, sound bites and B-roll.

phoner – An interview taped over the phone by either a radio or TV reporter.

reader (talent reader) – A TV news story with no accompanying video.

PR Play 9-18

Critical Thinking for Media Relations Specialists/News Release Writers

1. Why does your story matter? (The hook?)
2. What's the Point?
3. What does it say about Life? The World? The times we live in?

Connecting with Readers

1. What's the story about – in ONE word – sometimes, TWO?
 - Economy
 - Education (local schools)
 - Environment
 - Health Care
 - Social Security (two words)
 - War
 - Neighborhood (theirs)
 - Relationships (love)
 - Social Media
2. All about readers (target audience[s])
 - What surprised them?
 - What did they learn about themselves?

sandwich (doughnut) – A reporter's on-location, live intro and close with pre-recorded video or audio. Also called a *wrap*.

sound bite – The recorded words of someone who is part of a television news story.

take – Each attempt at recording a story is considered a "take."

talent reader – A TV news story with no accompanying video.

talking head – Close-up video of a newsmaker or newsperson speaking.

voice over sound or VO/SOT (sound on tape) – A television news story with accompanying video read by the anchor that leads into the recorded words of a newsmaker. (Similar to actuality except it is for TV.)

voicer – A pre-recorded radio news story voiced by a reporter.

wrap – A radio or TV news report voiced by a reporter and containing the voice of a newsmaker. (Similar to a *sandwich* and a *doughnut*.)

Courtesy of Kathy Kerchner – Interspeak, Scottsdale, AZ, and Debra Gelbart – Mercy Healthcare Arizona, Phoenix, AZ, with modifications and additions by M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA – Rowan University, Glassboro N.J.

EXERCISES

PR Challenge 9-1

As a public relations practitioner or media relations director, new to a job and to a region, what immediate steps would you take to develop relationships with the local media? List the first five steps that are absolute and then five you would take as time permits.

PR Challenge 9-2

Referring to PR Play 9-9, how do you justify to your “boss” that he or she should go “off the record” in discussing certain issues? If you are opposed to going “off the record,” why?

PR Challenge 9-3

If you decide to hold an “in-service” for reporters, what strategic message would you send to persuade them to attend?

PR Challenge 9-4

PR Play 9-17 lists a number of reasons to prepare and send a news release. Can you list five others?

PR Challenge 9-5

Please respond to the following questions using as many or as few words as necessary. You may refer to other chapters in *The Public Relations Practitioner’s Playbook for (all) Strategic Communicators* to support your responses:

1. How would you develop relationships with the media?
2. Once you establish a relationship with a reporter, editor or news director, how would you maintain it?
3. What might be the biggest obstacle you would encounter when dealing with the media?
4. What skills are necessary for dealing with the media?

5. How do you feel about so-called transparency and open communication?
6. Is open communication essential to public relations and when might it have to be avoided – at least temporarily?
7. Do you feel public communication is essential to public relations?
8. What do you feel is the most essential, effective or efficient form of public communication?

