MEDIA RELATIONS

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTIONS

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TODAY’S MEDIA

• Technology has dramatically changed information sharing
  • Internet
  • Social media
  • Blogs, podcasts, RSS, et.
    • Smart phones, PDAs

• Market share decreasing for:
  • Broadcast media/ TV news
  • Newspaper circulations
TODAY’S MEDIA

• Increased pressure and facing uncertainty

• Journalists asked to do more with less

• Time is of the essence
  • Who gets “what” story first?
WHO ARE REPORTERS?

• Seeking information – It’s their job!
• Tremendous pressure from editors for stories
• Short deadlines, lean staff
• Competition on multiple fronts:
  • Social media
  • Print vs. Electronic

• Reporters are not the enemy.
MEDIA RELATIONS

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Provides an opportunity to get information out and tell your story
- Voter and Media education
- Proactive component
- Dispel myths or inaccuracies
- Drive the discussion effectively
- Reach your critical audience
MEDIA RELATIONS

• Where Media Gets Information
  • Internet
  • The public – candidates, special interest groups
  • White Papers/Reports
  • Industry Trade Publications
  • Past Media Coverage
  • Blogs/Message Boards/Community Forums
  • Other Media
  • Your Office
MEDIA RELATIONS

• Be **proactive** rather than reactive
  • Voter and media education
    • “The basics of the election process”
  • Routine press releases
  • Public service announcements
  • Post frequently asked questions on website
MEDIA RELATIONS

• Be Ready
  • Timing is everything!
  • Keep it Simple
  • Formulate with Input/Participation from Key Players
  • Closely Guard All Confidential Documents
  • Get accurate information together

• Act quickly
  • Be Prepared to Respond Quickly
MEDI A RELATIONS

• Always comment
  • Do not speak without being thoroughly prepared.
  • Focus on message.

• Keep positive attitude even when under attack.
  • Never show emotion or anger!

• Put ego aside for the greater good.
  • Your message becomes the organization's position.
  • Sometimes it is best to pass the baton to someone else.

• Never be afraid to say "I don't know, I'll find out and get back to you."
Think of every media contact as an “Opportunity”.

During times of crisis, be available – lack of information could be perceived negatively.

Do not fear the media.
• Always comment
• Speak with **one voice** to ensure clear, accurate communication

**Be consistent with information**
• Provide Consistent and Convenient Location
• Regular Press Briefings
• Spokespersons/Media Contact(s)
• Messaging
  • Be fair
  • Provide information in a non-partisan manner
• Coordinate your messaging
  • Department of State/Division of Elections
  • Department of State Communications Director
  • Your local County Administration

• Get Help
• Keep media informed as information becomes available
• Keep lines of communication open with the media
MEDIA RELATIONS

• Consider the limitations of office
  • Physical layout
    • Visibility of canvassing board, ballot counting process, etc.
    • Transparency to media and public
MEDIA RELATIONS

- **BE HONEST!**
  - Never Lie.
  - You will get caught
  - Your reputation will be on the line

- **Do not leave the media empty-handed**
  - Be a resource – provide useful information – Media Kits
  - Respect deadlines

- **Listen to the question**
  - Stick to the focus of the story
  - You do not have to tell everything you know
  - There is no “Off the record”
MEDIA MATERIALS – MEDIA KIT

• **Fact Sheet**
  - Comprehensive, but easy to understand
  - Handouts and Online

• **Q&A**
  - Make it easy to understand – consider your audience
  - Drive the message – ask questions you want to answer
  - Good interview preparation tool – public and media resource
• **Statistics, Maps, Charts, etc.**
  ◦ Think of visuals – photos, videos, props, demos, etc.

• **Success Stories or Profiles**
  • Make the story come alive with real people and real stories
  • Use real examples whenever possible

• **Make Your Message Memorable**
  ◦ Be innovative when making announcements
DEALING WITH MEDIA
BE PREPARED!

• Be prepared for success
  • Speak simply
  • Be brief, but avoid yes/no answers.
  • Stay away from statistics in oral interviews
  • Avoid professional jargon
  • Avoid acronyms

• Shape your message
  • Be brief, say what you mean
  • Concentrate on your most important points
  • Use your Fact Sheet and Q & A Sheet
  • Stop talking when done!
CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

What is a Crisis?

(3 different types)

- Operational Crisis – Emergency (Reactive)
- Organizational Crisis – Issue Management (Proactive)
- Organizational Crisis – Reputation Repair (Reactive)
DEFINITION OF A CRISIS

• **Emergency**: The unknown, unpredictable...
  - *(natural disaster; technology/equipment related; human error)*

• **Issue Management**: Unstable condition involving the likelihood of an impending abrupt or decisive change
  - *(critical report or media coverage, imminent legal decision)*

• **Reputation Repair**: Integrity or reputation of an individual or organization is threatened
  - *(potential scandal)*
HANDLING A CRISIS

Crisis Communication Principles

- Contact the Department of State immediately.
- Never try to lie, deny or hide involvement.
- Ignoring a situation can make the matter worse.
- The public and media will usually decide what they are interested in.
- Coordinate message.
- Remember your stakeholders – the voters.
- Promote voter confidence in your communications.
HANDLING A CRISIS

Coordinated Communications Plan:

- Scheduled Press Conference
- Meeting with Editorial Board
- Information to feature writer
- Create Fact Sheet for dissemination and posting
- Coordinated webpage messaging
- Draft and distribute PSA’s
- Create earned media photo-op event
- Create Feature News Release
- Secure Op-Ed Placement
Development of Communications Plan

Do It NOW!

- Media list, Fact Sheets, Q & A, Media Kits
- Primary Contact Points – Front Desk Phones, etc.
- Assignment of Key Roles
  - Spokesperson
  - Staff Contact with Director/Division of Elections, DOS Communications Director
- Message Development – Develop Scenarios
- Media Training for staff
MEDIA RELATIONS – OTHER POINTERS

- Always assume that you may be on video or in microphone range.

- There is no “Off the Record”.

- You may be taken out of context – it can and will happen frequently.

- Be careful with your message!
  - Corrections- Don’t be afraid to contact reporters immediately if you want a correction.
FINAL THOUGHTS…

- Maintain a Professional Working Relationship with the Media.
- Don't Burn Bridges.
- Reporters can be your advocate when you are trying to get information out!
- Prepare, Coordinate, Communicate!
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