
Is Your Organization Still Avoiding Media Calls?

Contributed by Nicole Germain

A public relations plan can help your organization build credibility and motivate greater giving. During my career I have helped many organizations develop PR plans which have helped them actively engage the media instead of avoiding it. A PR plan should cover several things. It should identify your goal and objectives; your target audience; the message you want to communicate; and what medium you wish to disseminate that message. Also, you should put measurements in place that will help you determine when you have reached your goal. It doesn't matter if your plan is modest; the important thing is that you have taken the first step to launching a strategy which will build your organization's brand and awareness level over the long-term and assist your organization in its on-going fund raising efforts in the short-term.

I once worked for an organization where the organization's spokesperson was terrified of speaking to the media. She told me that she was afraid of saying the wrong thing. It surprised me because if you listened to her talk to others about the organization you could tell that she believed in the mission and vision down to her core. In order to help her face her fear, I set up media training for her. We practiced phone, on-camera, and radio interviews. We also developed a list of questions and answers. Our hard work resulted in much greater comfort with taking calls from the media. In summary, when choosing a spokesperson for your organization select someone that believes in the mission and vision of your organization; have them participate in media training and develop a script of possible questions and answers that they may get from the media.

Organizations have treasure troves of success stories that illustrate the good that they do everyday but often they keep those stories to themselves. Succinctly telling your success stories can effectively differentiate your organization from all the other donation-seeking organizations. So begin capturing those compelling and motivating stories and develop a series that you can pitch to the media or post on your web site.

In summary, don't run away from publicity good or bad. Be prepared to engage the media. Develop a public relations plan, identify a spokesperson and promote your success stories. I firmly believe that if an organization embraces the media and uses it to their advantage it can build brand awareness while generating fundraising dollars.

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