

## **Key points to remember when working with the media**

1. Never lie to a reporter. Always say what you know as fact. Always tell the truth. If you lie to a reporter, you lose your credibility and you will never get it back.
2. Never say “No comment.” This is an open door for reporters to show in their stories that you are covering something up. The last thing you want to ever do is cover something up. Look at Nixon and Clinton. Also, always remember that reporters are going with their stories whether you comment or not. It is always best to get your side of the story out.
3. Respect deadlines. Reporters’ lives revolve around daily deadlines. Learn those deadlines and work to ensure that you get information to reporters to help them meet their deadlines.
4. Never go “off the record” with a reporter. In the good old days, reporters respected information off the record. Today that isn’t so. Reporters will use anything and everything they can to get their stories.
5. Be prepared. Know what you want to say and say it early. It’s safe to prepare key messages that you’d like to see in tomorrow’s story. Feel free to work them in when appropriate.
6. Keep things simple. Remember that if the reporter doesn’t understand what you are talking about, readers won’t either.
7. If you don’t know the answer to a question, it’s safe to say, “I don’t know.” You can always find out the best way to provide the information to the reporter once you have it.
8. Don’t lose your temper. Very important! Reporters will know when you are frustrated, and if you take your frustrations out on them, their stories will reflect it.
9. Answer questions that are a matter of public record. In other words, if a reporter asks for sensitive information that has to do with public funds, it would be best to provide the information. The more the reporter has to dig, the worse your story will be tomorrow.
10. Never ask a reporter to see the story before it is published. This not only shows that you don’t know the newspaper business, but you will undermine the reporter’s dignity.
11. After each interview, offer reporters additional help if it is needed. You’ll find that if you approach working with the media as an opportunity to get your story out, instead of a chore, your coverage in papers will be fairer to your organization.
12. Most important, always try to let the reporter know that you are trying to help him/her get the story needed. A reporter has a job to do: write an objective story. Help him/her do that by providing accurate information in a timely fashion, but don’t cross the line. It is unethical to offer and for reporters to accept) free lunches and gifts.

## More Media Relations

- l Speak in terms 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders can understand... express, NOT impress!
- l The organization speaks with one voice
- l Deadlines! Make yourself available and accessible
- l Don't show anger or frustration
- l Never say, "No comment."
- l Never, ever cover-up
- l Relationship building:
  - Media
  - Opinion leaders
  - Supporters
  - Voters
- l If you ever have a problem with a reporter:
  1. Go to the reporter first
  2. If it happens again, go to the editor