



Interacting with the media can be scary! Try reframing your nerves with these tips to successfully engage. You'll be a PR pro before you know it!

Think of every interview as a chance to introduce something you love (because it is!)

It can be disappointing to realize that people in your own community haven't heard of your organization or all the hard work you devote to improving your community. You know your story—it probably just needs a little boost so that others know about it, too! Make focusing some time/resources on reaching the audience who needs to know more; you can reach potential donors and volunteers, all while sharing something you know and love.

Identify the potential news outlets in your community.

Is a local reporter especially good at covering local issues? Do you enjoy a specific reporter's print articles? Is a TV station quick to report on issues of concern that pop up in your community? Make a list of all possible news outlets; follow their social media, read or watch their work, and get to know their style.

Make a personal connection.

Reporters are busy, and so are you— you're both actively involved in serving your community. That shouldn't discourage you from reaching out to invite a reporter or other member of a local media organization's staff to stop by and experience your operations. Be sure to have your ducks in a row: identify your organization and the purpose of your call (or written communication). Because you have been getting to know the organization, consider what angle might make for a good story and mention that. Your work holds value to the community, so be confident that others will find that value as well! Ensure you are easy to reach by sharing the best time/method for contact.

Practice, practice, practice!

Before a visit or scheduled interview, practice your "talking points" with family, friends, or even a shelf full of canned goods! Be prepared to share those main ideas, but also be prepared to repeat them; this can be accomplished by having a variety of details/supporting stories that bring your primary message into focus. Develop an interview ritual to help with nerves; this might include listening to a favorite song, purchasing a special drink at your local coffeehouse, or calling a friend who makes you laugh. Getting in the right frame of mind will help you speak clearly, calmly, and with authority.

Know the characteristics of a good interview.

The best interviews are positive, concise, simple and straightforward, free of jargon and acronyms, focused, relatable, and supported by data/statistics. Most of all, an interview shines most when it is clear the person being interviewed cares about his or her subject.

Don't forget your "ask."

Do you need more funding? Volunteers? Donated items due to increased need? All of the above? Don't forget to ask clearly and with purpose—a clear request will stick in the minds of those who hear your interview/see the coverage.

Be prepared for the best, be prepared for the worst.

In the rare circumstance that something goes wrong and you're suddenly faced with reporters who want answers, your organization should identify the key spokesperson who will be responsible for interacting with the media. Prepare yourself for answering three key questions in a crisis:

1. **What happened:** be clear and concise with details while protecting privacy if applicable
2. **What's happening now:** be forthcoming with response; for example, if an accident has occurred, be clear about safety precautions or emergency response information
3. **What happens next:** be transparent, invite an ongoing conversation to update with new information, and don't speculate.

One is not done.

Congratulations! You did it! Consistent coverage is the name of the game, though, so look ahead for the next opportunity with enthusiasm and make it happen! Practice makes it easier, and you know what to do.

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