

Prepping for Media Interviews

—Anxiety is normal when it comes to being interviewed. There's no cure for normal and it can be managed for your client.

—Reporters are trained to put people at ease, so the reporter will do a lot of your job for you when they arrive and your subject sees they are human.

—Do a rehearsal with your client with some possible questions.

—There is a lot of anti-media sentiment out there right now, so the anxiety may be greater than usual. The majority of media—especially local media—are professional and just trying to do their jobs. If your client stays on the defensive because it's "the media," the reporter will pick up on that. If you've worked with the reporter before, humanize him or her for your client.

—Remind them not to read from notes.

—Remind them to keep their answers short.

—When you rehearse with your interviewee, remind him or her not to use "inside baseball" language or acronyms that the general public won't understand.

—If it's TV, remind the client that all of about 15 seconds of the interview will be used. Most news casts have a total of 22 minutes to cover news, weather, sports and happy talk.

—Sometimes it helps to remind the interviewee that it is the subject matter that is the main focus, not them, which may ease self-consciousness.

—If the individual is being interviewed for their expertise, remind them "they got this."

The arc of storytelling in social media, annual appeals and traditional media

Kim Lamb Gregory

- Whatever your cause is, put a face on it. Find “that person” who personifies your message.
- Everybody has a story. Everybody. Talk to the people who use or benefit from your nonprofit.
- Look for the story you repeat to your spouse/roommate. A “hey Martha/Henry” story.
- For TV, make sure it’s visual. For radio, auditory. Print media also needs visual as they are now “multimedia.”
- For social media, try an “up-to-the-minute” event. “Here we are getting ready to row our cardboard boxes into the sea to benefit cancer reasearch” “Here’s Joe, who reinforced his cardboard boat with duct tape. Joe, tell me about that.” Do your own show on social media.
- Use simple, specific language. Read it out loud and if it doesn’t sound conversational, it probably won’t excite a reporter. Avoid overused words and clichés as they become invisible after a while.
- Show, don’t tell.
- Find a news hook. Statistics are always good. CDC statistics, Gallup polls, etc. Or use national “day of”s such as “Teacher Appreciation Day” or “Grandparents Day” and so forth to find an angle. Find a local angle to a national news story.
- If a media organization covers your nonprofit, post it to your social media and use their hashtag.
- When searching for stories, quote the people in the trenches; the people who use the library; the people who get the scholarship; the people who use the food pantry. Keep the quotes from the nonprofit staff to a minimum, or paraphrase their information.
- Unless you can prove it or show it, don’t say it. “We are the most, best, fastest, cleanest...” If you CAN prove it, you’ve got a news hook. “A Time
- Have one of your officers, volunteers, employees or experts write an opinion editorial. All they need is an opinion and 650 words. Be careful of about too many obvious pushes for your organization.
- Nonprofits are much more likely to get media coverage than for-profits.
- Radio talk shows are always looking for guests. If you have an event coming up, find “that person” or people and have them go on the air.

—Use storytelling techniques to craft your news release. Reporters sift through hundreds if not thousands of these, so the more interesting it is, the more likely they are to read it and maybe cover it.