

NONPROFIT Communications REPORT

MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NONPROFITS

*"If there is anything that's important to a reporter,
it is integrity. It is credibility."
- Mike Wallace*

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Improve Your Sales Skills

There are few jobs that don't require some degree of "selling," whether you're selling a product, a service, an idea or a feature story.

Here are seven ways to hone your sales skills:

1. Look into the eyes of the person to whom you are speaking. Show you're confident and interested in him or her.
2. Refer to individuals by name.
3. Respect the time of those with whom you meet.
4. Genuinely listen.
5. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't fake it. Find out the answer and get back to them promptly.
6. Under promise and over deliver.
7. Be as graceful with less important contacts as you are with key decision-makers.

Ideas for Your Newsletter

- In addition to including wish list items in your regularly published newsletter, follow up by listing items that have been funded along with the name(s) of the donor(s). Besides saying thank you, the listing also serves to encourage others to join in by contributing to an unfunded item.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Understand Ethics' Role in Social Media

By Megan Venzin

Platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook are worlds all their own. Fueled by opinionated audiences, trending hashtags and endless cascades of shared information, they have the power to fuel social movements and shape the brands that interact there.

"When utilizing social media, nonprofits need to recognize that even if they aren't the ones collecting user data, the platform is, and that should impact the way they make business decisions," says Jemalyn Griffin, assistant professor of practice at the University of Nebraska (Lincoln, NE).

"Gen Z and millennials are holding brands accountable, now more than ever," Griffin continues. They also make up the overwhelming majority of social media users. Nonprofits must strive to show this audience (and everyone else) that they operate through an ethical lens across all of their accounts and social feeds.

Griffin offers advice to nonprofits that want to create better relationships with their stakeholders on social media and how to keep ethics at the forefront of these communications:

1. **Establish a code of ethics.** Think about what your organization stands for and create a code of ethics that reflects those values. "That code of ethics should translate to how you use your social media platforms, as well as everything else you do," Griffin explains.
2. **Run a content audit.** "Each year, conduct a content audit to see what is performing best, who is posting on your behalf and who you are following," Griffin suggests. "Not only will this help you increase engagement (but) it will also allow you to recognize trends and reinforce ethical behavior."
3. **Get to know your influencers.** "It's important to have a record of contractual agreements with influencers and to be transparent in your annual report with stakeholders," Griffin says. The word "influencer" often conjures images of the Kardashians, but in reality an influencer can be anyone who posts on your behalf on social media — take stock of who these people are. Paid influencers should make that information known on their posts by adding the phrase "in partnership with ..." at the top of their posts.
4. **Engage in environmental scanning.** Get familiar with trending hashtags and global conversations that are being propelled by social media, even in circumstances when you think it might not apply to your organization. "It will when you need to earn the trust of your stakeholders," Griffin adds.
5. **Always be transparent.** Explicitly ask followers to opt-in to your e-mail list. Tell donors how you plan to keep their personal and financial information safe. Be equitable in how you target followers with advertising or other posts on social media. Transparency is key to maintaining a trustworthy reputation.

Source: Jemalyn Griffin, Advertising and Public Relations, Assistant Professor of Practice, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Lincoln, NE. E-mail: jgriffin6@unl.edu. Website: www.unl.edu

What's Included in Your Publications Schedule?

What makes up your nonprofit's publication production schedule? Here's one example of what might be included in a publication timeline:

1. Final day for writing assignments.
2. Deadline for article submission.
3. Artwork/photo submission deadline.
4. Editing completed for each article.
5. Proofreading completed for each article.
6. Layout begins.
7. Layout completed.
8. Layout/copy reviewed and corrected.
9. Sent to printer.
10. Page proofs returned from printer.
11. Page proofs OK'd with corrections.
12. Corrected page proofs returned to printer.
13. Printing completed and delivered.
14. Publication mailed and distributed.

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WILEY

Strengthen Relations With Journalists

Q. What actions have you taken to improve relations with local and other key journalists?

"The communications team at Widener University works to provide a consistent level of excellent service to members of the local media, because the best way to maintain a strong relationship is to be a partner who adds value.

"That means we respect reporters' deadlines, reply to information requests in a timely fashion and pitch stories that are unique and interesting to a local audience. We recognize local reporters are most interested in university news that impacts their local readers, and we don't waste their time pitching stories of internal university interest. In addition, we work to provide quick and convenient access to people with information, like faculty experts, when they need interviews.

"These are best practices for us, this year and every year. We may be doing more with reporters over Zoom and phone, instead of in person, but when the connections are strong to start, a change in working conditions doesn't disrupt them."

— Mary E. Allen, Director of Communications,
Widener University, Chester, PA.

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"What I have been concentrating on with my clients is what I call 'media readiness.' That means becoming a good source for reporters — understanding what they need, creating strong, emotive messages and then presenting through the various formats we have at our disposal. Zoom, Skype and other online platforms are, of course, what we use most to handle interviews now and sometimes telephone. Yet far too many nonprofit leaders don't manage well when under pressure. Many ramble and act more like pundits than advocates. I train them to handle tough questions, stay on message, speak in sound bites and bridge back regardless of the question.

"Working from home can cause people to let down their guard. I try to help them get their energy up, stay alert and maintain a professional posture while looking like pros."

— Douglas Gould, President,
DG+CO, New York, NY.

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"I find that the most helpful thing is to understand the programming and vibe of the media outlet. Regularly watching or reading the outlet will help you offer stories that are actually relevant and helpful to journalists. If you are pitching stories that don't match their format, it just adds to the hundreds of pitches for which they have no room. For example, do they regularly run a 'Good News' feature? If so, chances are they need regular content, and you can tailor your pitches for these kinds of features.

"Don't make it all about you and your organization — make yourself a valuable and helpful resource to reporters. I always try to take the time to ask a reporter about their interests and personal passions, and I offer to put them in touch with my own contacts. I make sure to let them know that they are welcome to contact me any time if they need help finding a story related to my industry (even if it isn't about my organization) and that I am happy to connect them to other nonprofits and resources."

— Victoria Kent, Marketing Officer,

Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore, Salisbury, MD.

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Show Up on Google's First Page

Q. *What techniques do you recommend nonprofit organizations apply to ensure their website shows up on Google's first page of results?*

"Sometimes the simplest things become the easiest to overlook. Make sure that your online profiles are completely filled out and regularly updated — that alone can make a big difference. This includes Google Business profiles, 'About' sections on social media pages, website contact and SEO settings and any other online profiles or listings your organization utilizes. It becomes so easy to 'set it and forget it' that it is important to schedule yourself time to routinely run a quick audit on those details. I also recommend googling yourself from a variety of different devices so you can see what your stakeholders see, or even don't see."

— Victoria Kent, Marketing Officer,
Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore, Salisbury, MD.
Phone (240) 599-6228. E-mail: vkent@cfes.org. Website: www.CFES.org

"There are four things we recommend nonprofits do to improve their chances of showing up on Google's first page of results. First, be sure to have a thoroughly completed Google Business profile, as the search engine prioritizes sites that have them. Second, perform keyword research and embed high-value short-, medium- and long-tail keywords throughout the copy on every page of your website. Third, perform back-end search engine optimization, which includes everything from geo-tagging images to writing meta descriptions embedded with keywords and much more, and, lastly, regularly and consistently publish long-form blog content as frequently as possible; we recommend at least once per week on the same day of the week and (at the) exact same time of day.

"When you are blogging, you also need to implement good search engine optimization techniques including using high-value keywords in the title, subtitles and approximately every 100 words throughout the article; keep the content as close to 2,000 words or more as possible; use keywords in image captions; and use header tags as well as inbound and quality outbound links.

"By combining good front- and back-end SEO and posting new content regularly, coupled with a completed Google Business page, you are well on your way to appearing on the search engine's first page of results."

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MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

Three Ways to Improve Your Facilitator Skills

Meeting facilitators generally guide the process that fulfills some specific goal(s) and encourages group participation. They help participants problem solve and evaluate their options.

To make that process as effective as possible, here are three ways to improve your facilitator skills:

1. **Encourage group dialogue by offering feedback.** Paraphrase or clarify what someone said. Take time to occasionally reflect on comments made by a group participant.
2. **Open up as a way to encourage others to do the same.** Be willing to be vulnerable. Don't hesitate to share a personal anecdote to spur a constructive discussion.
3. **Empathize with participants.** Listen to what others are saying. Show your understanding of their opinions and feelings.

Offer Human Interest Stories To Diverse Media Sources

Your clients, employees and volunteers offer possibilities for a wealth of human interest stories, but how do you get the media to agree that these stories are worth sharing? Here are some tips:

1. **Distribute a monthly news sheet to assignment editors.** Write short, descriptive paragraphs about a client you helped, the doctor who returned from a mission to Africa, the baker in your cafeteria who just won a prestigious cake competition, or the warehouse manager who has saved your organization thousands of dollars with his recycling system. Look for subjects who are involved in activities that reflect trending local and national news.
2. **Use social media.** Most magazines, newspapers, television and radio stations have Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Post a short message on their page with your story idea, photos or a link to more information. Other readers may see it and take note or leave comments agreeing that they like your idea.
3. **Watch newscasts and read stories.** See what local media are covering and writing about. Notice the types of human interest stories they find appealing. Find similar people and activities going on at your facility, and do your own short story for your newsletter or website profile.
4. **Carefully target your ideas.** Human interest stories take on many themes ranging from business to health and wellness to travel, hobbies and crafts. Pay attention to who writes about these topics and their writing styles. When you call them, mention their previous work and describe why you think your story idea is specifically suited to them.
5. **Make yourself available to media.** When newsrooms are slow, reporters call sources who have previously pitched good ideas. They may suddenly call to follow up on an idea you gave them weeks or months ago that has more relevance now than it did then. Be ready to respond quickly when they need topics by keeping your idea file updated. Breaking news always comes first, but less time-sensitive stories can be a great help to media when they need lighter material.

How COVID-19 Has Impacted News Coverage

Q. *How has the COVID-19 pandemic enabled your organization to secure an important news placement or to develop better relationships with members of the media?*

“In order to improve our relations and awareness with local media we have consistently reached out to local journalists. We have used traditional means of communicating via e-mail and also started using social media channels to connect. We have found that a Facebook or Instagram DM is sometimes easier to begin an informal conversation that gets the ball rolling. One of the challenges we faced because of COVID-19 was that news anchors were no longer going out for interviews and sending their videographers instead to conduct the interviews. This led to a disconnection in discussion and did not always work out to be the strongest, beneficial story for us; however, this became an opportunity for more communication between anchors and our organization which led to a more personable relationship, more interaction and more coverage. We have, as well, followed up with journalists after their story is published to thank them for their work and to keep us in mind for future pieces.

“Due to COVID-19 we had to adapt many of our services as well as develop new services to reach our community. These new services gave us opportunities to explain to the media what we offer and to spotlight the important people behind the scenes. In one story (<https://mynews4.com/news/local/local-high-school-choir-teacher-lifts-students-up-while-battling-leukemia>), we share how a local choir teacher is using virtual courses on mindfulness to help students stay calm during the pandemic — and she’s doing it all while battling leukemia.”

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“Highlighting our experiences with local clients is key when it comes to delivering unique value to local media. This spring we reached out to a local news outlet to share how we’ve adapted to serve people as they organize differently during the pandemic, and how a local nonprofit is using one of our software solutions, SignUpGenius, to recruit volunteers and support. The reporter interviewed one of our leaders, as well as a leader from the nonprofit, resulting in a story (<https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/inno/stories/news/2020/04/09/how-signupgenius-helps-organizations-across-the.html>) that was featured on their website and in their newsletter. We also tag media outlets on our social media channels when sharing published stories and write personalized e-mails to reporters when reaching out with news or story ideas.”

— *Peggy Liao, Executive Director of Marketing,
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Operate as a One-Person Video Crew

It takes effort to capture the perfect shot, but with practice anyone can create powerful videos for their association. In fact, most marketing teams already possess the equipment necessary to produce engaging clips.

“Your association likely owns a DSLR camera and a tripod, which is essential to getting still, clear shots,” says Nicole Volk, director of communications for the Ohio AgriBusiness Association (Columbus, OH). “And if you don’t, it’s not necessary to run out and buy those items right now. Everyone has a smartphone that can produce high-quality video.”

Volk is a self-taught videographer. Using knowledge she obtained in college as a communications student, she learned how to film simple interviews that highlight her association’s annual award recipients. She developed editing skills by watching online videos and later shadowed an experienced videographer who gave her practical tips on how to apply camera settings and record clean audio.

“At the end of the day, you are capable of creating videos all by yourself,” Volk says. “Whether it’s a personal contact or an expert on YouTube, there are people out there who will help you learn too.” In that spirit, Volk shares advice to videographers who wish to create eye-catching videos for their organizations:

1. **Be mindful of audio.** “Take stock of background noise and what you can do to mitigate interruptions,” Volk suggests. “Make sure cell phones and computers are turned on silent, and take interviews indoors when possible to avoid wind interference. You can always capture B-roll outside later.”
2. **Seek well-lit spaces.** “Avoid dark rooms and stay in the correct video frame rate,” Volk insists. “If you still need to improve lighting, consider purchasing affordable soft box lights, or look for filtered lenses to help achieve a more balanced look for outdoor video.”
3. **Watch tutorials or ask a professional for help.** YouTube is filled with tutorial videos, and seasoned videographers are never far away. Use resources at your disposal and build connections while you’re at it.
4. **Make your subject comfortable.** “I always send questions ahead of time and remind my subjects that anything can be rerecorded if necessary,” Volk shares. “Then I try to start a conversation with the subject — the camera is just a silent third party.” Humanize clips by capturing emotions, background shots of work spaces or anything else that helps tell the story of the person, place or program being featured.
5. **Invest in a tripod.** Whether using a traditional camera or a smartphone, an appropriately sized tripod is critical to capturing clean, professional video. “If you don’t have one, hold the cell phone as close to your body as possible to steady the shot,” Volk says. “In today’s smartphone world though, viewers are often accepting of minor imperfections.”

Source: Nicole Volk, Director of Communications, Ohio AgriBusiness Association, Columbus, OH. Phone (614) 326-7520, ext. 4. E-mail: nvolk@oaba.net. Website: www.oaba.net

Video Production on a Shoestring Budget

By Yvette Boysen

Time and time again, video has proven itself an effective form of communication. Despite this, some nonprofits shy away from it because it's perceived as expensive. However, producing a video doesn't have to be costly. In fact, you can start filming today with just your smartphone.

"We always say starting out small isn't a bad thing," explains Wade Clark, technical support specialist at BoxCast (Cleveland, OH). "When you have a project that might reach more people or is really important to you, then hire out that video work to someone in your area."

Either way, he says it's important to develop a plan for each video. Who is your audience? How will you use the video? What is your goal for the video? Remember, if you're trying to attract someone's attention, keep the video short — one minute or less. When telling a story, a lengthier video is acceptable.

Clark shares a few tips for shooting and producing your own video:

1. Shoot in an area with a lot of light, as phones typically do not perform well in low light.
2. To better your audio, consider a microphone attachment.
3. If someone is talking, move in closer.

If possible, purchase a phone stabilizer. Even a [relatively inexpensive one](#) can prevent excess shaking and allow you to move around a bit.

While the DIY approach works for many videos, Clark does encourage nonprofits to budget for larger projects they may want to outsource. If/when you outsource, remember these key points:

1. Carefully check out company websites. Make sure they produce videos with the look and feel you want.
2. Shop around for the best deal. "Most of the time you will 'get what you paid for' in video," Clark says. "But, if you are new to hiring people, it's not bad to hire a company that might cost a little less because, ideally, once you hire them you want to keep hiring them for future projects and build a relationship with them. This will only make your videos better."

Source: Wade Clark, Technical Support Specialist, BoxCast, Cleveland, OH. Phone (888) 392-2278. E-mail: wade.clark@boxcast.com. Website: www.boxcast.com

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT'S BENEFITS

Community Service Results in Visibility and New Volunteers

Not only do community service projects bring about positive publicity for nonprofit organizations, they also have additional benefits: gaining the attention of would-be customers, attracting new volunteers, cultivating donor relationships and more.

Use these community service techniques to accomplish good works and benefit from doing them:

1. **Look for ways to fill needs in your community.** Almost every community has gaps in volunteer services. Turn to your own employees and volunteers to make a good match between your organization's mission and the needs of people who live in your service area.
2. **Partner with another organization.** When a noncompeting organization's services complement your own, meet with its representatives to plan a joint activity where employees and volunteers from both sides spend a day or weekend working together to meet a common goal for the good of the community.
3. **Organize a community-wide volunteer fair.** Contact as many charitable organizations in your city as possible to see if they would be interested in being part of a volunteer fair, with your organization acting as the sparkplug. Ask for city council support, create media kits and arrange for a site large enough so multiple organizations can set up recruitment booths and displays about their volunteer opportunities.

Strategies for Selecting And Writing Feature Stories

Every story is unique, but, according to DeLani Bartlette, writer and media specialist at University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR), a few strategies can help you select and write feature stories that entertain and connect your readers to your organization.

First, it's crucial to know your audience; equally important is knowing your topic. Beyond meeting the basic criteria for your particular outlet, your story must offer something interesting and "unexpected." A piece that lacks this element may come across as what Bartlette calls "a generic puff piece" — something you want to avoid.

When Bartlette is searching for stories, she says she always refers to advice given to her by one of her former teachers.

"A good storyteller focuses on the people behind the stage," Bartlette says. "Look beyond the slick press releases, the official spokespeople, the staged event. Get to know the real people involved in the topic. Stories are always more interesting when they center on real people."

Once she's chosen a strong topic based on these criteria, Bartlette does her research, completes her interviews and then takes a step back.

"I look at it all as a whole and decide what structure will work best to tell the story," she says. "Maybe a straight chronological story will work. Maybe I'll use the WSJ (Wall Street Journal) format, if the story connects to a wider trend. Maybe I'll group info by topics. The whole idea is to tell the story in a way that will keep the reader's attention and convey the information accurately and clearly."

Regardless of the structure, always remember rich, applicable details and information from a variety of sources will help capture readers' attention and successfully communicate the story.

Source: DeLani Bartlette, Writer and Media Specialist, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR. E-mail: drbartl@uark.edu. Website: www.uark.edu

Follow the Two-Person Rule

Never make a customer or visitor talk to more than two people to get a question answered. If you're No. 2, you solve their problem.

Techniques on Winning Over Your Audience

Public speaking comes easy for some. For others, it's a bit more challenging. Shakira M. Brown, an award-winning business communication strategist and professional speaker, has tips and techniques that will have you winning over audiences in no time.

To begin, it's important to understand your role as a public speaker — you must inform and entertain.

With that in mind, Brown shares nine tips that will help you make a lasting impression and meet your goal of either bringing your audience to a consensus or taking some form of action:

1. **Be prepared.** “The first thing you have to do is demonstrate that you have a command of whatever material you're delivering, and the only way to do that is to be well-prepared,” Brown says.
2. **Be confident.** Believe you are an expert and you should be there.
3. **Tell stories.** This starts with preparing relevant stories ahead of time — not only determining what they are but how you will tell them so your audience can visualize them in their minds. “When you're coming up with stories to share, you should be looking at all aspects of your own life, personal and business experience, experiences that you've had over the years and then also think about other people's stories that you can relay to that audience — not to steal the story but to show them that there are people like them,” she says. A word of caution though — don't go overboard with your stories.
4. **Consider videos.** If you're sharing someone else's story, it can sometimes be more powerful to have the individual tell it themselves. Short, 30- or 60-second videos are one way to accomplish this.
5. **Present yourself well.** This goes beyond appearance. Brown says how you carry yourself matters. Hold your head high and keep your shoulders back. Additionally, facial expressions and slight arm and hand gestures are important as well.
6. **Bring your best self.** If you're having a bad day or week, rescheduling may be a good option.
7. **Accept that mistakes happen.** Just keep going.
8. **Relax.**
9. **Consider training.** If you're still uncomfortable with public speaking, hiring a coach may be beneficial. After all, it's just a more organized method of practicing.

Source: Shakira M. Brown, Business Communication Strategist and Professional Speaker, SMB Strategic Media, LLC, Princeton, NJ. Phone (888) 436-0033. E-mail: book@shakirabrown.com. Website: www.shakirabrown.com

Use Data to Create Compelling Stories

“When reviewing a pitch, reporters have two questions: ‘What are you announcing, and why should I care?’” says Clarissa Horowitz, vice president of marketing for Treasury Prime. “Nonprofits must understand why their news matters in a greater context — are you demonstrating business impact, societal impact, program impact or policy impact?”

A newsworthy story often showcases something that is first, best or unique, and reliable data is key to supporting those claims. “Take a look at what data you've collected and compare it to what's already out there in the world. You may have data that no one else is reporting,” Horowitz says. With some historical research, you may even find that this proprietary information could be predictive of external trends that reporters want to cover and their audiences want to read.

Horowitz shares an example from a retail banking client. “We decided to survey American homeowners and focused on questions about home equity, the bank's core business, as well as broader questions about financial and housing markets,” she says. Using the data — which was collected by an outside research firm — her client was able to place timely media stories about changes in attitude over time toward home equity. Here Horowitz shares more ideas for using data to create compelling stories and pitches:

1. **Commission custom research.** Organizations like CITE Research and Nielsen have access to broad audiences, industry expertise and solid track records.
2. **Move quickly with an omnibus survey.** Consider jumping on an omnibus survey — a single survey administered to a large number of people with questions from multiple organizations. For a flat fee per question, you can reach a large audience.
3. **Collect proprietary data.** Nonprofits that regularly collect their own data may be sitting on a media goldmine. “Internal data is very appealing to reporters, because it's seen as credible,” Horowitz says.
4. **Piggyback on existing data rollouts.** Get to know your industry's giants, because their announcements or annual reports could provide the tailwind for an even bigger story for your organization.
5. **Support your story with third-party data.** “You can use credible third-party research that is already in the public domain to buttress your own data,” Horowitz says. However, run your fact checks — we are living in the age of misinformation.

From newsletters to social media, nonprofits control a collection of owned channels that can be used to share their findings. “You know a data program is working when reporters ask about the research you do and the data you collect,” Horowitz says. “Once you've created something great, push it into the world using every channel you have: paid, earned, social and owned.”

Source: Clarissa Horowitz, Vice President of Marketing, Treasury Prime. E-mail: clarissa@treasuryprime.com. Website: <https://treasuryprime.com>

Integrate Social Media Into Your Crisis Strategy

Is social media included in your organization's crisis communication strategy? If not, it should be.

"Many of my nonprofit clients are hesitant to take a stand on social media as there are lurkers, anonymous posts and cruel feedback that can leave organizations facing damage control and reputation management issues," explains Susan Young, award-winning visibility strategist and CEO of Get in Front Communications, Inc. (San Antonio, TX). "We are in sensitive times right now. The possibility of offending someone or misspeaking — coupled with HR and legal policies — can be confusing. Still, that must not stop you from preparing in advance and being proactive."

To begin, it's important to realize that, regardless of whether you're posting, people are talking about your crisis. So Young says the best approach is to know your audience and overcommunicate with them. She shares six tips to do so through the use of social media:

- Create a holding statement or a template so you are prepared when a crisis strikes.
- Don't let social media's "speed and real time" intimidate you.
- Determine what social media platforms your constituents use and how they prefer to receive their information. This information will help you deliver your message in a user-friendly format and style.
- Remember that even though it may seem as if you're repeating yourself over and over on platform after platform, most people are only seeing one or two of your social media posts.
- Keep in mind video is a great tool. It gives viewers an opportunity to actually see a human, thereby building rapport. Keep your video short — three minutes or less — and communicate all essential information and resources.
- Remember your organization's employees. It's absolutely crucial to keep your co-workers informed. Throughout the situation, keep asking yourself, "Are our people okay?" and "How can we make their lives easier once it's done?"

Source: Susan Young, CEO, Get in Front Communications, Inc., San Antonio, TX. Phone (210) 375-6422. E-mail: sue@sueyoungmedia.com. Website: www.sueyoungmedia.com

Presentation Don'ts

To enhance any presentation you're making, avoid these three mistakes:

1. Never apologize for yourself or your credentials.
2. Avoid being negative. An audience is more energized by positive thinking and solutions.
3. Don't indicate you don't have time to talk more about a point you've made. You'll only disappoint the audience.

Voice Mail Tip

- Want to encourage more call backs? At the end of every voice mail message, say, "I look forward to hearing from you soon, (person's name)." Adding the person's name personalizes the message and enhances the likelihood of a return call.

Presentation Tips

- When making a presentation to a group, tell attendees in advance if you plan to provide handouts of important points following your talk. You'll avoid the criticism of having them take lots of unnecessary notes.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Ten Useful Media Interview Prep Tips

It's ironic but true: Looking and sounding relaxed and comfortable takes preparation. Preparation is especially important for a media interview.

Keep these tips in mind before an interview to get in the proper mindset:

1. Know and play to your medium. For TV, suggest visuals and activities that help complete the story. For print, come up with a graphic, photo or logo that furthers your message.
2. Relax. Stay cool. You are the expert.
3. Take the initiative.
4. Select two or three main communication goals.
5. Cover these goals early.
6. Come back to them often.
7. Don't speak off the record.
8. Be personable. Establish rapport while maintaining professionalism.
9. Correct yourself. If you think you gave a rambling answer, say so and rephrase your answer more succinctly. Reporters will most likely prefer a smooth answer anyway.
10. Give the phone number where you can be reached during the time the reporter will be writing the story.

Additional Interviewing Advice

Additionally, when talking to...

A print reporter — Don't limit questions or ask to see a story before it's printed. Take time to clarify your points. Ask if the reporter would like you to explain a point further or go over something again.

A television reporter — Dress appropriately. Look at the reporter, not the camera. Project energy and enthusiasm as you make your point in brief sound bites. If bringing the reporter to your agency, choose a setting with an appropriate background. Bring in props, such as flowers, plants or a lamp, to soften the setting. Think B-roll, too.

A radio reporter — Have notes to help with your answers, but don't read them word-for-word. Sound conversational. Remember the sound of your voice is of utmost importance, so speak clearly and with energy.

Get More Mileage From Your Podcast

Your organization might release an episode on the iTunes store every month, but that's only one way to reach a large audience with your podcast. "A single recording session can be the inspiration behind multiple pieces of content," says Tony Veroeven, director of marketing and membership at AMPED Association Management (Middleton, WI).

If you've ever produced a podcast, you already know it takes precious time to script, record, edit and distribute an episode. Here are a few ways to get extra communications mileage from your efforts:

- Improve SEO by writing posts about each episode and share them on your website's blog.
- Create a featured post on LinkedIn and update it regularly to include new episodes.
- Tag your featured guest on social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and share a link to their episode.
- Post a photo from the recording session on Instagram.
- Record your podcast using Zoom and share a short video clip on Facebook.
- Feature your new episode in a dedicated e-newsletter and share with your mailing list.
- Include a widget player on your home page so visitors can listen to clips or full episodes on demand.

To reach listeners, you must meet them where they already are. The best way to do that is to create touch points that span a variety of social media platforms and communications avenues. "Set reasonable goals for how many subscribers or downloads you want to draw per episode," Veroeven shares. "And remember, building an audience is a marathon, not a sprint."

Source: Tony Veroeven, Director of Marketing and Membership, AMPED Association Management, Middleton, WI. Phone (608) 251-5940. E-mail: tveroeven@manageassociations.com. Website: <https://www.manageassociations.com/>

Techniques to Look Like a Pro on Zoom

You are more than just a silhouette. And your words deserve to be heard loud and clear. Video conferencing is here to stay, and it's time to show the world there's a professional sitting on the other side of the computer screen.

"Bottom line — how you present yourself in this new world of Web conferencing does matter. But don't be afraid to be real," says Kelly Guenther, a former television reporter and photographer who now serves as communications and creative director for Guenther Group, Inc. (Seattle, WA).

A work-from-home lifestyle is full of surprises, however, it should not impact a person's ability to conduct polished video calls. Inexpensive tools and DIY fixes can turn murky shots into engaging meetings. Here Guenther shares techniques to kick your Zoom presence up a notch:

1. **Make use of what's already available.** "The easiest way to create a more professional-looking shot is to face a large, brighter window to illuminate yourself and set your laptop on a few books so it rests closer to eye level — that alone does wonders," Guenther says. "Conduct speaker tests on Zoom, or whatever app you are using, to ensure audio is adequate."
2. **Invest in affordable tools.** Consider investing in a \$30 ring light to add a pop of brightness to your environment. An external Web camera with a built-in microphone might be a better alternative to the hardware found in older laptops. Simple upgrades like these go a long way.
3. **Wait to reveal your video.** "Decline showing your video until you can adjust the image (and your background) to your liking by avoiding too much headroom or a straight shot of your nasal cavities," Guenther shares. "Sometimes that means moving to another location, especially if the kids have left a pile of laundry in your normal background. And then relax. Prepare to have a conversation — this applies even if you are presenting."
4. **Have a photo alternative on standby.** "If you don't want a live video image of yourself, don't leave a black screen with your name on it," Guenther insists. "Post a flattering photo, because seeing you in some way is important. Yes, it can be you biking or posing with your family. This often promotes conversation."
5. **Dress for success.** "One of my colleagues, Ellie Javadi, says to wear a pair of shoes and a nicer shirt, even if you've got sweatpants on from the waist down, because it makes you feel more professional," Guenther shares. "How you feel will project visually."
6. **Be conversational and friendly.** "You are not presenting on a stage by any means," Guenther explains. "Simply be yourself and people will appreciate it. This is a much more informal medium."

Source: Kelly Guenther, Communications and Creative Director, Guenther Group, Inc., Seattle, WA. Phone (206) 550-8985. E-mail: kelly@guenthergroup.com. Website: www.vimeo.com/guenthergroup

Gear List for Online Meetings

You don't need a high-tech film studio to produce a clean shot for your next video call. Former television reporter and photographer, Kelly Guenther, offers her must-have gear list for online meetings:

LIGHTING

- USB ring light *or*
- Lume Cube lighting kit *or*
- Production ring light with stand.

GREEN SCREEN

- Green screen cloth *or*
- Stretch screen *or*
- Green paint or wallpaper.

AUDIO

- USB microphone *or*
- Beats headphone *or*
- Shotgun microphone (for loud environments).
- USB microphone adapter (for computer).

CAMERA OPTIONS

- Streaming converter (for professional cameras with HDMI).
- Long HDMI cable.