

# Working with the Media

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# Farm Writer

- Country Life in BC
- Western Producer
- GrainsWest Magazine
- Orchard & Vine
- AgriSuccess Magazine
- Past-President, BC Farm Writers' Assn.



# Strategic Communications

- Investment Agriculture Foundation
- BC Agriculture & Food Climate Action Initiative
  - Farm & Food Care Foundation
  - Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

# Agenda

- Understanding media
- What makes information newsworthy
- Key messages
- What to do when a journalist calls
- Practical tips to get your message out effectively

# Role of the Media

- Inform/educate
- Advocate
- Provoke thought
- Influence (people and politics)
- Spark change

# Types of Media

## **Print**

Newspapers, magazines and professional journals/industry periodicals

## **Broadcast**

Radio and television

## **Online**

Social media, blogs and vlogs

# Inside the mind of a journalist

- Smaller news rooms
- Fewer “beat” reporters
- Larger workloads
- Less time
- Always have an angle
- People make the stories – they need you
- Working in multi-platform environments

# What is Newsworthy?

**Conflict** – Oral or physical

**Consequence** – The more people the story affects, the more newsworthy it is

**Timeliness** – Old news is not news

**Proximity** – Pertinent to the intended audience



# What is Newsworthy?

**Oddity** – Man bites dog

**Celebrity** – Famous = newsworthy

**Human Interest** – Kids and puppies

**Progress** – Milestones and advances

**Scenesetters** – Visuals and sound

# Appetite for agriculture

- Largest footprint of any single human activity - our lives depend on it.
- Increasingly controversial – ALR, Site C dam, LNG development, urban/rural conflict, local food.
- Industry is being forced to work for social license and public trust in new ways.
- Environmental, social, economic, political and emotional.

# Why You?

- People make the story
- You are the subject-matter expert
- You can tell the story on the ground
- You answered the phone

# On Camera#1: Introducing Yourself

- Who are you?
- Where are you from?
- What do you do?
- Why does the issue matter to you?

# Perspective Check

- A media encounter is an opportunity for YOU to communicate with key audiences – be clear what you want to achieve
- We all want the same thing: truthful, accurate reporting

# Key Messages

- Concise, conversational and quotable – use plain language
- Descriptive
- 15 to 20 seconds long
- Detailed
- Passionate/sincere/irresistible
- Not dependent on a question

# Exercise: Key Messages

- What are your organization's key messages?
- Do they meet the criteria?
- What needs to change to make them work?

# Getting Your Message Out

- The modern sound bite is 5-20 seconds; be efficient with your words and ideas
- Start with what is most important/relevant
- BE INFORMED, ACCURATE & QUOTEABLE



# When a Journalist Calls

- Be available – don't wait until deadline
- Ask focus of interview and questions
- Have your own purpose for the interview
- Take the time you need to prepare
- Be relevant

# On Camera 2: Key messages

- Introduce your organization
- How are you involved – role/relevance
- What are you doing on the issue?
- Why does it matter?

# Take Your Time

- Breathe and think before you answer
- Clarify questions you do not understand
- Speak slowly & conversationally
- Do not talk to fill silences – stop talking when your answer is complete

# Watch Your Language

- Avoid technical jargon and acronyms
- No 'ums' and 'ahs'
- Avoid negative phrasing
- **EVERYTHING** is on the record

# Stay on Message

- Confirm the obvious
- Bridge to key messages
- Remain calm and controlled
- Don't let yourself be led off topic

# Know Your Limits

- Say “I don’t know” effectively
- Be prepared to refer them to background material or contacts – fact sheets, backgrounders, websites, people, etc.
- Be helpful and courteous

# Thou Shalt Not

- Guess or speculate
- Share confidential information
- Lie or mislead
- Lose your cool

# Body Language – Do

- Maintain eye contact
- Sit or stand comfortably with good posture
- Remain calm & controlled



# Body Language – Don't

- Do not smile or laugh at inappropriate times
- Rock or swivel chair; jingle keys in pocket
- Break eye contact or stare directly into camera lens

# Radio

About the Medium	Tips for Interviews
Stories evolve quickly	Speak slowly & clearly
Very responsive – call-ins and social media comments can shape coverage	Make your points early
Often more personality-based journalists, ie: on-air program hosts	Provide web link or phone number for more information

# Video/Television

About the Medium	Tips for Interviews
Very visual	Don't wear loud patterns Empty your pockets
Hosts can be unpredictable	Maintain eye contact with interviewer, don't look into the camera Don't smile or laugh at inappropriate times
B-Roll (on-farm)	Nothing is off the record Backdrops help tell the story

# Tough Questions

- Be prepared
- Be direct
- Be real
- Practice

# Exercise: Tough Questions

- Brainstorm uncomfortable questions –  
What do you least want to be asked?
- How do you answer it now?
- How can you answer it better?

## Questions, concerns, coaching?

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