

"If you can't explain it to a 6-year old, you don't know it yourself." — Albert Einstein

NONPROFIT Communications REPORT MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NONPROFITS

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Polish Your Board Presentation

Here are seven steps to help guarantee a smooth delivery next time you're asked to give a presentation to your nonprofit's board or some other key advisory group:

1. Begin your presentation with a smile to establish rapport and help you relax.
2. If you use a PowerPoint presentation, bring a printed copy just in case there are any technological glitches.
3. Speak slowly and deliberately so your audience can understand your message.
4. Make eye contact with as many persons as possible rather than focusing on one or two people. Eye contact helps to maintain interest.
5. Deliver key information with enthusiasm. It's contagious and will also help hold audience attention.
6. Don't hesitate to occasionally ask a question to engage people and be sure the group understands key elements.
7. Move about occasionally rather than standing in a fixed position.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

University and City Join Forces for Mutual Benefits

By Yvette Boysen

Western Michigan University (WMU; Kalamazoo, MI) and the City of Kalamazoo have joined forces. This mutually beneficial partnership is one that your nonprofit may want to explore and replicate.

Created in 2017, Shared Gold is a civic action plan between WMU faculty, staff and students and Kalamazoo community members. The purpose is to "better foster civic engagement, social responsibility and shared prosperity in the community."

According to Bob Miller, associate vice president for community outreach at WMU, Kalamazoo has always considered the university an asset as faculty and students frequently shared their research as it related to the city. However, the university typically initiated the projects. Now, the new plan invites and encourages the city and its officials to take a more active role and come forward with suggestions, problems and challenges.

Shared Gold goes beyond simply being good neighbors. All agreed-upon collaboration efforts must reflect a true partnership with each party benefiting.

"Is there an opportunity for us to 'advantage' our core mission of research, discovery of knowledge and teaching opportunities for our students through experiential learning?" Miller asks. "At the same time, as a result of that, are we, in fact, 'advantaging' the community as a resource? When we can say that, in fact, we are, then that's the goal."

One example of an accepted project involved a study about why college students do or do not visit downtown Kalamazoo to eat and shop. With guidance from a faculty member, students in an undergraduate marketing research class conducted surveys and interviews. They presented their findings and recommendations to Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership (then known as Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated), the nonprofit that initiated the project, and changes are already underway.

Another collaboration effort involves the proposal of a mixed-use business incubator for new business start-ups in Kalamazoo. Even though the project is still in the study phase, WMU faculty and students have already researched and reported on the concept.

"It's already beneficial, and it hasn't really even happened yet," Miller says.

While these are just two of the many opportunities for collaboration between WMU and Kalamazoo, if you look carefully at your nonprofit, you're likely to come up with potential projects that could benefit your organization, your community and your local university, as well.

Before you commit to an opportunity, though, Miller recommends a critical conversation.

"One of the key things, as is true with any successful partnership, is to agree upon expectations and deliverables," he says. "Let's look at what success looks like for this partnership. Let's do this before we start anything. Let's be clear about what we hope to accomplish."

Source: Bob Miller, Associate Vice President for Community Outreach, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI. Phone (269) 387-2073. E-mail: bob.miller@wmich.edu. Website: www.wmich.edu

Looking for Media Coverage? Be Proactive

If your organization is looking to increase your media exposure, be proactive and reach out to the local publications in your area that cover nonprofit happenings to let them know you are available for interviews.

Many cities and towns produce their own free monthly or quarterly publications detailing happenings in the area, events and other news. Staff with independent newspapers and other smaller publications may also be more inclined to write a story about your organization, or let you write your own feature than would be those at more mainstream publications.

Search online for publications in your area and be sure to check with your local chamber of commerce for an updated listing. In addition, you can find many local free publications in diners, hotels and other local establishments. Become familiar with these publications and make a list of those you feel may be interested in your events and programs before contacting them.

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Skills for Handling Challenging Interviews

It's happened to all of us — you spend hours preparing for that important live interview and then, out of nowhere it seems, the reporter poses that question you weren't expecting. Do you skirt around the query, provide too many details or answer in a straightforward, decisive manner? Your own reputation and that of your nonprofit depends on your next move.

"The more you say, the more you stray," says Vice President of Phillips Media Relations (Washington, D.C.) Christina Mozaffari. "The most common pitfall that nonprofit spokespeople face stems from the desire to give every ounce of information to the reporter. Instead, they should be experts at prioritizing information."

Over the course of her career, the self-proclaimed "reporter in recovery" collected an Emmy Award for her coverage of election night 2008, and has covered a foreign war and even the election of a pope. While producing content, she developed a tool kit for handling challenging interviews. She offers her tips below:

1. **Identify three top-line messages.** "First, hone in on three fully formed ideas and really think about your desired target audience," Mozaffari urges. "If you haven't prioritized your messages based on who it is you are trying to reach, then there is a slim chance you'll get through to them. Support those messages with strong anecdotes, statistics and memorable sound bites, like triples or superlatives."
2. **Draft target audience personas.** "Avoid thinking of audience members generically. Instead, imagine a real person — what is his or her life like? What is his or her name? Where does he or she work?" Mozaffari asks. "That's the gut check for your key messages. Then optimize language by eliminating industry-specific jargon and acronyms. This will ensure your communication style is more suited to reach the right people."
3. **Use inviting body language.** "Your tone and energy are everything," Mozaffari says. "Feeling uncomfortable with the height of your energy is often a good sign — only then will it translate to your audience as being engaged and enthusiastic."
4. **Embrace difficult questions.** "You can't be defensive when you're asked a difficult question. Instead, you should see it as an opportunity to correct a misconception," Mozaffari says. "Give a real, authentic answer knowing that you can't please everyone all the time. That's what makes a reliable spokesperson."
5. **Utilize ATMS.** ATMS stands for "Answer, Transition, Message, Sell." "The first step to answering a difficult question is actually acknowledging it," Mozaffari explains. "This can be as simple as 'Yes,' 'Not necessarily,' or 'We don't see it that way.' Acknowledge the inquiry first so you can genuinely transition back toward your message. For nonprofits, the sell should be powerful and include a clear call to action."
6. **Take advantage of the last few minutes of the interview.** "It's a mistake to end an interview without reinforcing your single most important point," Mozaffari says. "Circle back to your top message, so the reporter is forced to reflect on it as they walk away."

Source: Christina Mozaffari, Vice President, Phillips Media Relations, Washington, D.C. Phone (202) 776-0640. E-mail: christina@phillipsmediarelations.com. Website: www.phillipsmediarelations.com

BUILD JOURNALISTIC RAPPORT

Alert Media Contacts of Communications Staff Changes

Whether your communications director is leaving or you are adding to your media relations staff, don't assume media contacts will notice the new name on your website or press release. Communicate staff changes immediately to avoid any confusion.

Such changes are opportunities for new staff to introduce themselves and establish rapport with journalists. Giving media contacts the heads-up about an important media-related staff change also helps guarantee your organization won't miss out on news coverage because media contacts were unable to find the right person to interview — particularly important when dealing with media contacts who regularly cover issues affecting your organization or with whom you have a close working relationship.

PBS Documentary Expands Nonprofit's Visibility

Finding a way to increase your organization's visibility can be challenging. However, Gilda's Club Twin Cities (Minnetonka, MN) partnered with local media and highlighted a special project not only in its community but far beyond state lines.

The project — LISTEN/Stories of Cancer Told Through Movement, Music and Voice — began when Allison DeCamillis, program director of the cancer support organization, was brainstorming opportunities for Gilda's Club members to share their experiences with cancer. Because intense feelings like these are often hard to put into words, DeCamillis came up with the idea to tell these stories through a performance involving movement.

It was at that point Gilda's Club partnered with Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater (Minneapolis, MN), a local dance and theater company. Together, they created an expressive arts performance that allowed those directly impacted by cancer to share their experiences through movement, music and voice.

Since DeCamillis wanted to expand the project's reach, she pitched her idea for a documentary to Twin Cities PBS (TPT; St. Paul, MN). To begin, the station created a 10-minute short used to raise money for the project. It then produced "LISTEN/Stories of Cancer and Resilience," a 26-minute documentary highlighting the project and Gilda's Club.

TPT aired the film multiple times and will continue to do so during cancer awareness month and just prior to Gilda's Club events. The documentary is also available on the nonprofit's website (www.gildasclubtwincities.org/listenfilm), as well as that of TPT. Additionally, DeCamillis says a Texas television station recently picked up the film.

Because of TPT's storytelling abilities, DeCamillis says she knew she wanted to partner with the PBS station.

"Twin Cities PBS does an incredible job of telling local stories and doing so in compelling, creative and ethical ways," she says. "Since they cover the arts, science, health and medicine (and more), we felt they could take this unique project and find a compelling way to craft the narrative."

To share your nonprofit's story, finding a media outlet that fits your organization's culture and values is key. DeCamillis says it's important to be extremely clear on each entity's roles and responsibilities and not forget to discuss issues such as ownership, usage and distribution. For the LISTEN project, she says all partners utilized their strengths and continually touched base to reiterate the ultimate goal: a "timeless tool" to share Gilda's Club's story and mission.

Source: Allison DeCamillis, Program Director, Gilda's Club Twin Cities, Minnetonka, MN. Phone (952) 767-7627. E-mail: ali@gildasclubtwincities.org. Website: www.gildasclubtwincities.org

GARNERING TESTIMONIALS

Let Clients, Volunteers, Donors Tell Why in Their Own Words

Looking for a procedure you can follow to collect genuine testimonials? Consider this idea: Produce a fill-in-the-blanks template that constituents — clients, former clients, donors, sponsors — can use to guide them in describing their perceptions of your organization in their own words.

Create a form such as the one shown here and distribute it to particular groups of individuals as opportunities arise: receptions, seminars, mailings. As you get the completed forms back, select those you like best and use the actual form as a testimonial in printed materials — along with a photo of the individual(s).

Mike and Susan Melrose believe XYZ Nonprofit merits their support. Do you? If so, we'd love to hear why — in your own words!

XYZ Nonprofit is important to me/us because _____

I/we choose to support this organization because _____

I/we really believe you ought to consider investing in XYZ Nonprofit, too! Here are just a few reasons why: _____

Include Staff Input When Interviewing New Candidates

Looking to hire a new communications, PR or community relations professional? Prior to interviewing candidates for positions within your nonprofit, obtain feedback from your staff on the most pressing issues and tasks. This dynamic approach will help you determine which candidate best suits current vacancies and priorities.

Use staff feedback to craft targeted questions to include with your standard interview format. Create a simple online survey that staff can respond to anonymously or schedule a meeting to discuss their ideas. Staff members will appreciate the opportunity to share their views, while their targeted input will help streamline the interview process.

Make Your Copy Believable

Whether you're writing copy for a brochure, your nonprofit's newsletter or magazine or a news release, add credibility to assertions you're making by attributing them to a reliable source.

Facts that may not appear obvious need added verification.

Wrong way: "Ninety-eight percent of our graduates find jobs in their field of study within eight months of graduation."

Right way: "According to a recent survey completed by our Office of Career Development and Placement, 98 percent of our graduates found jobs in their field of study within eight months of graduation."

Storytelling Success on a Limited Budget

It doesn't take high-definition video or professional editing software to convey the impact of your organization's work. It's a misconception that you must spend thousands of dollars in order to capture the attention of high-level donors. Telling a powerful story is as easy as taking a look at the people you serve and the lives that have been changed for the better as a result of your ongoing dedication. After all, the moving details are what people will remember — not the line item amount on your annual marketing expenses.

"It doesn't take a big budget to tell a good story," says Communications Manager for Food Bank of Iowa (Des Moines, IA) Danny Akright. "Stories can come in a thousand forms, from a photo and brief profile to a fully-produced video. Finding the right venue for your stories can help you stretch a \$0 budget to a \$1,000 impact." Akright shares his tips for telling successful stories on a shoestring budget below:

1. **Feature a strong character.** "To me, the key to a great story is a great character," Akright says. "Building a story around a real person to whom people can relate allows them to dive headfirst into the narrative and allows you to get your message through more easily."
2. **Focus on one message at a time.** "Many of us have several messaging points that we're always trying to incorporate into our work, but trying to shoehorn every single one into an individual story can be near impossible," Akright says. "Think of your stories as being part of a larger library. Create a story (or multiple stories) focused on one messaging point, then move on to another message. Over time, you'll have a bank of stories — your library — from which you can pull to portray a specific point. A simple story is a memorable one."
3. **Practice patience.** "In order to get the clients I portray in our stories to open up, they have to trust me and believe that my intentions are good, that I respect them and that I will share their message with honesty," Akright says. "That requires conversation, honesty and patience. I have had many trips out to our partner agencies to interview our clients, working for hours before getting just one client to share a meaningful story with me. Even then, it's worth it. That one story can resonate with dozens of potential donors."
4. **Utilize everyday tools and technology.** Smartphones and social media photo galleries can help you tell impactful stories for very little investment. "Take portraits of your characters, record video of them sharing their stories or just use the voice recorder to capture an interview," Akright suggests. "Relatively inexpensive video editing apps like Adobe Premiere Clip can help you turn raw footage into something incredibly powerful."

Source: Danny Akright, Communications Manager, Food Bank of Iowa, Des Moines, IA. Phone (515) 867-2885. E-mail: dakright@foodbankiowa.org. Website: www.foodbankiowa.org

How Best to Pitch the Media for Results

On Midterm Election Day, Pace University's (Pleasantville, NY) Westchester Campus was swarming with activity. A designated "voter van" swept across campus, delivering students and staff to the polls every half hour in an effort to encourage more young people to practice their civic duty. Between these trips, members of the local television station News 12 took to the streets to interview students and their professors about the importance of voting. It was the perfect local news story — timely, poignant and highly visual — and it's no surprise that members of the media were quick to extend coverage.

"Your pitch should intersect with what you already know the media is seeking," says Senior Director of Media Relations Cara Cea. "Really set the stage for your media contacts by offering pitches that pop with little bits of color. Let them know what they'll see and what they'll be able to capture as a result of coming out to tell your story." Cea shares how to pitch the media and get results below:

1. **Give the media what they need.** "A lot of PR professionals make the mistake of pushing what they want covered rather than looking for angles that will satisfy the needs of their covering media outlets," Cea says. "Create a mutually beneficial partnership by crafting stories that already fit the day's newsworthy topics."
2. **Keep pitches personal.** "Today it's harder to capture the attention of larger newspapers with press releases alone — you're better off making a highly personalized pitch," Cea explains. "Take the guesswork out of the process by providing a variety of potential angles and opportunities for supporting content like interviews, photos and video."
3. **Paint a picture.** "If we are trying to entice cameras, really paint a picture of the kinds of visuals they'll be likely to capture at your venue or event," Cea says. "Providing great photos with detailed captions and video to hyper-local outlets after the fact is another way to keep the coverage coming."
4. **Scout for compelling human interest angles.** Never underestimate the power of an intriguing human interest angle — get to know your community and keep your ear to the ground for amazing yet relatable stories about real people. "Powerful feature stories are those that bear heartwarming aspects or truly unique elements," Cea says. "Stories of regular people overcoming great odds and achieving success never fail to grab the attention of writers and their readers."
5. **Cultivate relationships.** "Get to know the editors, lead reporters and beat reporters with whom you'll be working regularly," Cea says. After all, a personal conversation about why the story matters will drive more response than a mass press release sent from a generic e-mail address.

Source: Cara Cea, Senior Director of Media Relations, Pace University, Pleasantville, NY. Phone (914) 773-3312. E-mail ccea@pace.edu. Website: www.pace.edu

Conduct Interviews That Result in Engaging Stories

There's nothing worse than completing an interview only to realize there's not a single quote worth using. In these instances, you've wasted both your time and that of your subject. The people you interview should be treated as invaluable resources. Each subject is capable of helping you tell an amazing story, but it is the interviewer's job to guide that process.

"Personal stories always make the best writing material," says Senior Director of Communications for GroundFloor Media Amy Moynihan. "They help engage the reader and provide examples of why problems stemmed or were solved, how a passion was born or how a person or community was impacted." Over the course of her career, Moynihan has written op-eds, articles, blogs and other pieces for a wide array of for-profit and nonprofit clients in every category from retail to healthcare. She shares five tips for conducting interviews that result in engaging stories:

1. **Do your research first.** "Learn everything you can about the topic of discussion, the industry of focus or the person prior to conducting the interview," Moynihan says. Having a clear understanding of your subject's background and expertise will lead you to ask questions that drive passionate, highly quotable answers.
2. **Align your expectations.** "Before you start the interview, give your subject an overview of the projected article or story, what you hope to learn from them and why," Moynihan says. Taking time to get on the same page will let your subject know what to expect and will also enable him or her to filter out the most relevant information for you.
3. **Ask introspective questions.** "I always love questions that make the subject think before responding. For example, 'What keeps you up at night?' 'If you could start again, what would you do differently?' 'What partnerships would help you solve X problem?'" Moynihan says. "But ultimately, the most important question you can ask, and always should, is, 'Why?'"
4. **Location is important.** "Avoid placing yourself in an area that is distracting — you should be able to give your utmost attention to the subject," Moynihan says. Also remember to take note of your immediate surroundings so as to paint a backdrop of the conversation for readers — things like nature, skylines, etc. can help the reader see the interview in his or her own mind.
5. **Pay attention to non-verbals.** Give your readers a sense of who your subject is by describing his or her reactions. Did they reply with a chuckle? Did they look surprised when you asked an unexpected question? These little touches add a necessary human element to your subject and story.

Source: Amy Moynihan, Senior Director of Communications, GroundFloor Media. Phone (303) 865-8123. E-mail: Amoynihan@groundfloormedia.com. Website: www.groundfloormedia.com

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Use Storytelling to Inspire Your Audience

Facts and information aren't enough when addressing an audience. Incorporate storytelling to bring meaning to what you're saying.

Storytelling can be a powerful tool to persuade and inspire. Check out these storytelling techniques:

Split storytelling — This is when you tell a portion of a story at the beginning of your talk, move to other topics and then bring the audience back to your story as you conclude your remarks. This method helps to build anticipation.

Play the part — If your story calls for different characters, look in a different direction for each character and change your voice for each as well.

Use people and places with which the audience is familiar — Doing so will involve your listeners to a greater extent.

Create Positive Relationships With Local Newspapers

Building a good relationship with your local newspaper can help you reach more of your community and ensure most of your events will be covered. But before approaching publishers and editors for help, know what you can offer in return by:

- ❑ Doing your homework on the newspaper. This means more than subscribing and reading the sports and living sections. Get familiar with the types of stories that make the front page. Study editorials for insight on the paper's perspective on politics, local issues and elected leaders. Are you usually on the same wavelength?
- ❑ Using a courteous, low-key approach. The publisher has agreed to listen to your ideas for spreading the word of your valuable work. Make your case without appearing entitled to or expecting lavish praise. Other deserving institutions seek the same attention you plan to solicit. Point out a variety of ways you fill a unique community need, operate with minimal overhead and responsibly use donor funds.
- ❑ Inviting the editorial board to your facility. Allow them free access to department heads, service areas, volunteers, patients or clients to investigate your merits without interference or pressure. Meet with them afterwards for their evaluation and impressions. Encourage them to offer suggestions for improvement. They may find positive stories and human interest features on their own that you never considered.
- ❑ Investigating your newspaper's weak links. Are they losing subscribers to online editions? Not responding quickly enough to new methods of delivering information? Look for areas where they may need help, and see if your organization can help them get up to speed. An equal partnership is usually the most satisfactory.

Establish Coalitions That Advance Your Cause

Coalitions remind us that there is power in numbers. When organizations come together to advance a cause, they do so with more power, influence, voice and reach. These unions can have dramatic impacts on building awareness around certain issues. However, words of passion and data points can make those cries much louder.

“Both facts or evidence and emotionally resonant personal stories are required to attract attention, provide credibility and move the needle on the attitudes of your audience,” says Principal of The Reis Group (Washington, D.C.) Sharon Reis. “Most people aren’t motivated by numbers or emotions alone — the combination of the two creates a powerful position.” Reis has overseen the formation of numerous coalitions within the healthcare industry. She says the most successful coalitions are those that seek to raise awareness of issues through both emotional and science-based lenses.

She says there are two distinct elements to successful coalition messaging:

1. **Share personal stories.** “Show how your work directly affects the lives of real people,” Reis says. “When you make a personal, emotional connection, people become instantly drawn to your cause. . . . For example, an organization that we work with that advocates around rare diseases must take extra steps to explain what the disease is, how it affects lives and why an audience should care. That is a lot of information to deliver quickly and concisely. Starting with a patient story and then supporting it with facts and data can reveal how the disease affects real families and members of the community, where the hope lies for treatment and how supporters can make a difference.”
2. **Source sufficient data to support your cause.** “Articles in peer-reviewed journals can help make the case for your coalition, however, it can’t be just one article,” Reis explains. “There needs to be a body of evidence that demonstrates the problem and outlines where the coalition can have success.”

Reis believes in the strength of coalitions but is careful to remind organizations that they are not easy to start or, in many cases, join. They take a lot of work and require patience as you navigate inevitably conflicting priorities and positions of participating organizations. “While there are numerous benefits to joining or forming a coalition, you need to make sure you devote senior-level staff time to the effort,” Reis says. “If you aren’t committing resources — staff time or money — then you may want to reconsider.”

Source: Sharon Reis, Principal, The Reis Group, Washington, D.C. Phone (202) 868-4000. E-mail: info@thereisgroup.com. Website: www.thereisgroup.com

Use Your Smartphone for Video Projects

By Megan Venzin

Three out of four Americans own smartphones, but do they realize the potential of the marketing tools in their pockets? Smartphones are more than just vehicles for communication, they are powerful content generators. The high-definition, built-in cameras are perfect for gathering short testimonials or grabbing eye-catching b-roll for online video projects. Not only do smartphones provide nonprofits with a cost-effective option for creating beautiful videos, they are also intuitive and easy to use.

“Research as much as you can on how your smartphone’s camera actually works,” says Associate Director of Digital Communications for Northwestern University’s (Evanston, IL) Alumni Relations and Development Tristan Riddell. “Anyone can pick up a phone and hit record, but you still need someone behind the camera who knows what they are doing.”

Riddell offers tips for making the most of your smartphone:

1. **Understand limitations.** “A smartphone will never replace a full professional setup and proficient crew, but a smartphone is great for catching spur-of-the-moment beauty shots as well as exteriors in the sunlight,” Riddell explains. “Understand its limitations in terms of light, lens stabilization and how much storage you’ll need on your phone to accommodate certain projects.”
2. **Get a gimbal.** In order to achieve smooth, stable shots, you’ll need a gimbal on which to mount and balance your phone. This is to remove any kind of hand shaking from the footage. Riddell recommends researching companies like DJI, Freefly and EVO to find the best gimbal for your needs. They typically cost between \$100 and \$400. “Don’t worry, they balance themselves electronically,” Riddell adds.
3. **Explore video-centric apps.** “Avoid using the phone’s native camera app, as it is too limiting,” Riddell says. “With apps like FiLMiC, you can control shutter, F-stop, frame rate, white balance and even resolution and quality.”
4. **Test, test, test.** “You will not create a masterpiece your first time if you’ve never done this before,” Riddell says. “These projects are best when not capturing audio, so pick up your phone, your gimbal and go shoot some flowers in the park while you’re walking on the sidewalk.” He also recommends testing equipment in varied weather to understand how stabilization may be affected by different conditions.
5. **Look to the clouds.** Riddell warns that some standard footage transfer applications may alter and convert the frame rate when videos are moved to a computer’s hard drive. “One method for overcoming this obstacle is to upload your video to a cloud service first and then download to your desktop,” Riddell says. “I choose to transfer with a USB cord and an app called iMazing, so it doesn’t rely on Wi-Fi or Bluetooth.”

Source: Tristan Riddell, Associate Director of Digital Communications, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. Phone (847) 491-7403. E-mail: tristan.riddell@northwestern.edu. Website: www.northwestern.edu

Strategies to Up Your Crisis Management Game

Regardless of your organization's size, mission or budget, a crisis management plan is imperative.

"Preparing for a crisis doesn't prevent it," explains Melinda Beckett-Maines, communications manager at American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (Aliso Viejo, CA). "It does, however, help with a more organized, informed and fluid response. With the benefit of a plan, you are more likely to move quickly, involve and inform others and support your community in its time of need without stopping other necessary work or creating internal aggravation."

Whether you are drafting your organization's first crisis management plan or simply reviewing one, Beckett-Maines offers a five-step strategy to up your game:

1. **Identify potential crisis scenarios.** Consider community-wide crises such as hurricanes and tornadoes, as well as crises specific to your nonprofit, its constituents and its setting. She says, "One exercise that may help uncover crisis scenarios is to imagine the worst possible news headlines and social media posts for your community and your organization, and then develop a plan to be prepared for those situations."
2. **Be on the lookout.** Try to determine what the public is thinking and be on the lookout for the beginnings of a crisis. Reading online reviews and following social media are great ways to stay informed.
3. **Define your role.** "Create vetting questions that assist with decision-making, so your response will have the greatest impact and be aligned with your purpose as an organization," Beckett-Maines says. For example, ask how this crisis will impact individuals and your community. In turn, what do people need to hear from your nonprofit? Or, if your organization does not respond, will people notice? What role should your organization play? Will your nonprofit collect and disseminate information or will it serve as a facilitator, an advisor or perhaps the voice of reason?
4. **Create a plan.** Include your nonprofit's process, roles and vetting questions, as well as its levels of response. Don't forget to identify spokespeople. In addition to preparing for the scenarios, remember the plan is fluid and will likely require a few tweaks to meet your organization's changing needs.
5. **Think beyond communication.** Beckett-Maines says, "Consider other ways to plan for and mitigate the negative impact of a crisis, such as safety protocols, facility and team preparedness, proactive training, logistics, supplies and designated funds."

Source: Melinda Beckett-Maines, Communications Manager, American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, Aliso Viejo, CA. Phone (949) 448-7358. E-mail: melinda.beckett-maines@aacn.org. Website: www.aacn.org

UTILIZE LOCAL RESOURCES

Create an In-House Publication

If you want to start a staff-only publication and need creative ideas, begin by looking at local resources.

Obtain publications that have a similar look and feel to the one you want to create. Borrow the ideas that work for you and reach out to staff for suggestions. A good way to get started is to come up with ideas for the style and content you want the publication to have (e.g., a local news section, a staff update column, an event calendar or a regular trivia contest).

Once you decide on the layout, look for resources that will supply you with updated information on a regular basis. Create a source list that contains pertinent information — local newspapers, libraries and online newsletters. Develop a system for checking your sources and plugging the information into your publication so it can be updated with ease.

Hometown Press Release Kits Boost Efficiency

Are you looking for every opportunity to recognize those you serve and get added publicity at the same time?

Recognizing individuals for their achievements has always been important to Gordon College (Wenham, MA).

Six years ago, the nationally ranked liberal arts Christian college didn't want to miss an opportunity to share the news of its student graduates. However, the process was time-consuming. Media relations writers found themselves tracking down basic facts about each graduate. Yet, the overall format and text of each press release remained the same. This led to the creation of the college's first hometown press release kit.

"The press releases provide our campus community with a printable template — defined by audience and occasion — with customizable content fields for use during graduation, employment, performances, awards and newsworthy occasions," explains Cyndi McMahon, director of marketing communications. "Each category provides universal language for that audience circumstance or standing. The recipient only needs to provide his or her name, major, hometown, parents' names (if appropriate) and news outlet of his or her choosing. It also allows the recipient to view the release in its entirety before it goes to the media outlet of his or her choosing."

Available at www.gordon.edu/hometownkit, Gordon College now offers 25 digital hometown press release kits divided into four audience categories: graduating students, current students, incoming students and faculty/staff. Each category contains a bulleted list of press releases for a variety of milestones and topics including Fulbright Scholar honors, mission trip volunteering, stage productions and sabbatical returns.

While these kits work well for many situations, McMahon says, "Templated releases are not a replacement for original writing of a custom news release, but when you have a large volume of releases that need writing in a short window of time, all about the same subject, they can be very efficient."

Source: Cyndi McMahon, Director of Marketing Communications, Gordon College, Wenham, MA. Phone (978) 867-4235. E-mail: cyndi.mcmahon@gordon.edu. Website: www.gordon.edu

Five Ways to Showcase Your New Logo

You finally have a fresh new logo and can't wait to show it off in all your communications venues. However, you also need to orchestrate a plan for introducing the new image to the community so they visually connect it to your organization.

To make the transition:

1. **Invite the public to a sign unveiling.** A new logo means a new sign on your facility. Unveil it at an open house with refreshments. Hand out promotional logo items like pens, T-shirts, note pads and balloons as party favors.
2. **Run newspaper, TV and radio ads.** While it may seem wasteful to buy advertising to announce your new logo, doing so helps the public connect the image to your institution. Use this opportunity to reaffirm your mission, and people will better recognize your direct mail pieces, publications or invitations that bear your new look.
3. **Send a useful gift to constituents.** A magnetic calendar, pen or key chain is affordable and easy to mail and something that people will be likely to notice, keep and use.
4. **Offer apparel, mugs or totes for sale or as gifts.** Some of your supporters may be happy to buy a new polo or sweatshirt, apron or set of golf balls to enjoy or give as gifts. Sell some in your gift shop and on your website, and give some away to special friends.
5. **Write press releases to announce the change.** Your new logo also is a business or general news story. Include camera-ready art to accompany the article, briefly explain the reason for the change, and any special meaning behind the new logo's symbolism. Space permitting, include the number of proposed designs, how the process evolved, and why you chose the design you did.

Presentation Idea

- When speaking to an audience, engage them in what you're saying by inserting questions into your remarks that get participants to search their minds.

Pitch Monthly Story Ideas to the Media

By Megan Venzin

Concise and clever tips have become increasingly more valuable in today's fast-paced newsrooms. Reporters simply don't have time to read every lengthy pitch that comes through their inbox. One local university is combatting the trend, however. Bucknell University's (Lewisburg, PA) media relations team has uncovered the secret to getting noticed: monthly media tip sheets. These compelling pitch ideas are delivered to reporters at local, regional and national outlets in a bite-sized format that can be reviewed at a glance, and the results have been phenomenal. Past sheet examples can be viewed at <https://www.bucknell.edu/forthemedial>.

"Media outlets are thrilled by this," says Director of Media Relations Mike Ferlazzo. "Many reporters are delivering coverage about us on a monthly basis, and we are providing them with highly relevant stories that can be prepared quickly." Ferlazzo brought the concept of monthly tip sheets to Bucknell University in 2017 after successfully implementing the same tool for a regional healthcare system. Bucknell's monthly tip sheets include three potential story ideas, often relating to breaking news or current events, and are accompanied by contact information for the topic's expert source. In the past year, Bucknell University has seen placements in nearly 3,300 print and online publications, in part thanks to this tool. "I can report that we've scheduled up to three interviews every month as a result of our tip sheets," Ferlazzo adds.

Here Ferlazzo offers some dos and don'ts of monthly tip sheets:

DO

- Start organizing and sending tip sheets to local media as soon as possible.
- Share tip sheets via e-mail blast, website and social media platforms like Twitter.
- Keep tip lists short — headlines, descriptions and contact information should fit in a paragraph format. The entire tip sheet should fit on one page.
- Brainstorm with interns and employees to uncover creative story ideas.
- Take inspiration from annual events and holidays to formulate evergreen pitches.
- Run pitches past your in-house experts before offering them up to the media.
- Keep an eye on current events and breaking news for relevant tie-ins.
- Use bold fonts for tip headlines.
- Maintain relationships with reliable reporters.

DON'T

- Send irrelevant pitches to beat reporters (e.g., Political writers don't care about your Christmas parade.)
- Include too much information in your tip sheet. Save something for interviews.
- Use boring subject lines in your e-mail subject lines.
- Share a potential source's contact information without his or her permission.
- Leave your media relations team out of the loop.

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