Starting your media campaign

The public is better served and the media do a better job when newsmakers have the tools and know-how to convey your story to news organizations. All too often, useful and important information is not brought to the public's attention simply because you - the source of that information - haven't made the media aware of it.

Getting your story in the news should not be a mystifying or frightening experience. You don't need Madison Avenue slickness or "contacts" in high places. However, you do need creativity, energy and hard work, because you are competing against hundreds of other groups that want coverage in the limited pages of local newspapers and limited airtime of local radio and television stations.

Find a news "angle" to your story

Don't ever assume that just because you think your story is interesting, others will think so, too. Or, vice versa, don't ever assume that no one else is interested in your story. Almost any event has some "angle" that could make it newsworthy. Your job is to find it.

To be newsworthy, a story should be either:

- New, fresh, different, trendy;
- Timely;
- Unusual;
- Able to arouse deep human emotions - love, hate, fear, anger - that people can identify with;
- Of broad usefulness to consumers, investors, workers.

If you are stuck trying to find an angle, try writing down all the facts about your story. Your angle may appear. Once you have established a news angle, you will have a much easier time "selling" your story to an editor or reporter.

Determine which news outlet to approach and how to approach them

Most people want their story covered in the major metropolitan dailies or on network radio and television. But because those outlets generally cater to large, general audiences, your story may have a better chance of getting coverage in a smaller community print or broadcast outlet or in a special section of a major news outlet. Don't overlook them.
Try to read, watch and study as many news outlets as possible. Get a feel for what makes news at each one.

Also decide which vehicles are best to get access at each outlet. You don't have to get access through the news departments. If your group is providing a valuable public service print ad or a public service announcement on local radio and television may be best.

Media have limited space and time for public service ads, so they may not be able to accommodate all requests. Also you may want to be a guest on a talk show or a guest editorial or op-ed page contributor.

Before alerting the media about your story, be prepared to handle reporters. If your event requires a library card or ticket, have them ready. If your event is in a location with limited space, set aside an area for reporters. If your event is a speech, have a text of it ready to give to reporters. In all cases, have a spokesperson available to answer questions.

Be prepared for coverage and its consequences

Also be prepared for the consequences that coverage of your story might produce. If you are publicizing a service you offer at the library, be ready for a possible demands for it. If you are calling attention to your stand on an issue, be prepared to deal with your opposition. Good reporters will present opposing views on any controversial topic.

The News Release
Your basic tool

News releases are by far the quickest, cheapest and most widely used technique to initiate media coverage. You can send them to several news outlets at once, increasing your chances of getting coverage.

Editors can tell quickly from reading a news release whether an event is newsworthy. By writing them effectively, you are more likely to convince an editor to cover your story. Editors say that more than half of their stories were initiated by news releases.

An effective news release should be clear, concise, accurate, complete and to the point. To ensure that, follow these steps:

- Typed and mailed releases are passe. With technology, you stand a much better chance of getting your news item used by supplying it in a Word Document format. That way it can be easily edited or changed and it does not have to be retyped by the media outlet.
- Think Who, What, When, Where and Why (if there is a Why). Get these basic bits of information in the first paragraph or two. From there you can add other information. But those four or five requirements are essential in every news release.
- Don't assume others know anything about your topic. If you use names of people in you release, identify them by occupation or by other relevant facts. Likewise, don't assume others know about your organization. Say who you are and what you do.
- Be accurate. Double check facts. An editor is more likely to discard your release - and your group's credibility - if names, places or things are misspelled or incorrectly identified.
- Don't exaggerate. Avoid superlatives such as "this exciting event" or "this is something you won't want to miss." Let the facts speak for themselves. If you state opinions, attribute them to somebody or use direct quotes.
- Keep your release as short as possible while still telling all essential information. Releases for most events, such as fairs or rallies, usually can be told in a couple of hundreds words. Be even shorter for radio and TV - think in 15 to 30-second soundbites.

Putting together a news packet:
Sometimes, you may want to include further information relevant to your story without making your release overly long. Then you should assemble a news packet. A news packet can save reporters time in gathering background information about your event. Besides your news release, a news packet can include:
- Fact sheets or pamphlets on your organization and/or event
- Biographies of key persons involved in you story
- Photographs
- Texts of speeches
- Reproduced copies of previous newspaper articles on your topic

Sending the release:
The time and effort you put into your news release or packet will be wasted if it is not sent at the right time to the right place. To ensure that your release is received in adequate time, send it:
- At least two weeks in advance of events that are open to the general public. This will also increase the likelihood that your event will be listed in the "community calendar" sections at various news outlets.
- At least 48 hours in advance of events for reporters only, such as news conferences.
• As soon as possible for breaking news, such as what happened at your group's event or press conference. For breaking news, you may want to have your release delivered to save time.

In some cases, your release may be of interest to an editor or reporter in a special section—such as business, entertainment, sports, or consumer news. If so, send the release to that editor or reporter. In some cases, you may want to send the release to several editors and reporters at the same outlet. But if you do, state on the release that you have done so. This will prevent two reporters from the same outlet covering the same story.

Community Calendars - Tips on getting your event listed

Study each news outlet—print, radio, or television—to determine the type of events they list, the format for the listing, and to whom to send it. Be sure to send your release far enough in advance. That's usually at least two weeks ahead of the event.

News conferences - When a release isn't enough

Sometimes you will have a very important or pressing story when a news release or news packet is not enough, or not even appropriate.

How and when to hold a news conference

News conferences are convenient because they let you or your spokesperson talk to all the media at once. This can be especially useful for breaking stories when your spokesperson doesn't have time to answer individual calls from reporters throughout the day.

Another advantage of news conferences is that they sometimes force some news outlets to cover your story out of fear that their competition will get the story. Also news conferences are "visual" and therefore useful for TV news. However, news conferences should be used with extreme care. Reporters, like any busy professionals, hate to waste time and will be less inclined to cover your group's news conferences in the future if your earlier ones were unnecessary. Overuse also creates bad media relations.

Tips on holding your news conference:

• When possible, send a news release announcing the conference to all news outlet at least 48 hours in advance. The news release should state clearly and concisely what topic you will address at the conference.
• Schedule your news conference in the morning; between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. is best. News conferences held at 4 p.m. are less likely to make the deadlines for evening TV news and afternoon newspapers.
• Select a place large enough to accommodate about 15 to 20 people. Make sure it has outlets for electronic equipment. A simple, uncluttered room is sufficient. Or add visual interest to your story by holding your news conference at a location with relevance to the story.
• Select one to two spokespersons. These people should make the official statements and be well-versed in the specifics of the story to field questions competently.

However, you may want to have others present at the conference to relate personal experiences and provide human interest to your story. For example, at a news conference discussing financial cuts that affect the elderly, have some elderly citizens discuss how the cutsback will affect them.
• Select someone to act as press liaison. This person's responsibility is to make sure the news media have all the correct names, dates, etc. He/she should hand out news releases and other information. He/she should have reporters sign in to determine who attended. This information could be important for any follow-up to your story.
• Start on time. Limit your presentation to 10 minutes, and allow 20 minutes for questions. The conference should not last more than 30 minutes.
• Prepare a written statement for your 10-minute presentation, and try not to deviate from it. That statement, or an synopsis of it, should be handed out along with news releases and other information.

Telling it yourself - Using letters, editorials and public affairs shows

You don't always have to rely solely on reporters to tell your story. You can tell it yourself as well, through a multitude of devices: letters to the editor; freelance articles; talk shows and other public affairs programs; TV and radio guest editorials; and op-ed pieces. For the boldly creative, you can even produce your own programming.

Letters to the editor:
Letters to the editor are by far the quickest, easiest and most widely used method for ordinary citizens to get their ideas published. Most newspapers, including the large metropolitan dailies, are quite eager to publish them, particularly because readership surveys indicate they are very popular with readers.
Helpful letter-writing tips:
- Supply your letter to the editor or op-ed article in Word document format. Attach it to an email, send the email to the main contact you have at the newspaper and ask them to use it.
- When in doubt, keep your letter short and to the point. Editorial-page editors are more likely to read short letters than long ones. Most newspapers will condense overly long letters anyway.
- Arm yourself with facts and stick to the issues. Avoid personal attacks.
- If you are writing in response to something recently published, send it promptly. Even though your letter may be brilliant, it stands a lesser chance of being used if several other letters have already been published on the topic.

Talk shows and other public affairs programming
You or your group's spokesperson may wish to seek a guest appearance on one of the many local talk shows, news/feature magazine shows, or on local public affairs shows. Watch and listen to various shows to determine which are more likely to have you or your spokesperson on as a guest. When you have determined which show or shows to target, write a letter to the show's producer (not the host), preferably at least one month in advance of when you want to appear. State in the letter why your story would interest that show's audience. Remember, you must "sell" your story in the letter the same way you must sell it to editors in a news release.

Send with the letter a news release or packet with any essential background information on you and your story. Call the producer a few days after he/she receives your letter.

Radio and TV editorials
Just as newspapers and magazines publish letters to the editor, radio and television stations broadcast guest editorials from responsible individuals, usually in response to a station editorial. In fact, many stations encourage rebuttal editorials and say they would like more citizens to respond.

In most cases, you can attempt to get on the air for a guest editorial by making initial contact by telephone with the news or public affairs director. Prepare in advance what you will say. Explain which editorial you wish to respond to and which points you wish to rebut or which alternative viewpoint you want to present. Often the editorial director will select or reject you based on your initial phone call. So be coherent, accurate and concise. Stick to the issues, avoid personal attacks and be interesting and creative.

If selected to do the editorial, be prepared to go to the station for taping. A written copy of your editorial will be read for grammatical and factual errors, but the editorial content will not be altered.

To check each station's policies, procedures and time restrictions on guest editorials, watch or listen to its editorials or call or write its editorial director.

Saying it straight - Tips on talking to reporters and editors, and on calling in story ideas
Most likely, you will talk directly with a reporter or editor when you call in an idea for a major story or when you are being interviewed for a story.

BEFORE YOU CALL:
- Make sure your story is one of major importance or interest that absolutely can't be handled through a news release alone. Reporters and editors get dozens of calls each day and are easily annoyed by leaks concerning minor things. There are no hard and fast rules for what is considered major; one of the best ways to judge is by looking at what types of stories get major coverage on the outlets you plan to call. If you are still not sure whether your story is of major importance or interest, ask a friend.
- Do your homework on the story. Be prepared to demonstrate why it is newsworthy.
- Find out which reporter or editor is most likely to cover the story. This is the person you should call. If the reporter or editor thinks the idea is good but can't cover it, he/she will probably pass it on to a colleague who can. Also, find out the outlet's deadlines. That is usually the busiest time of the day for that outlet. Plan to call at other times, when things aren't so busy. Reporters or editors will then have more time to listen to you.
- If your story is not "breaking" - that is, it is not happening within hours of your call - then write a letter to the reporter or editor first. It is much easier to "sell" an idea in writing. Likewise, a reporter or editor can better evaluate an idea in writing. Another advantage of writing is that the letter can be filed for later reference. Like any effective correspondence, the letter should get to the point right away. "Sell" your idea, but don't be pushy. Let the facts speak for themselves. Don't ever tell a reporter how to cover the story, and don't ever ask to read it or see it before it appears.

WHEN YOU CALL:
- Immediately state who you are and why you are calling. Refer to your letter if you sent one.
- Get to the point. Be prepared to be interviewed on the spot if a reporter wants to ask questions (see below for tips on being interviewed).
- Be prepared to offer the reporter or editor an "exclusive" - a situation where you will not offer the story idea to anyone else. Reporters are more likely to give more in-depth treatment to a story when it is likely their competitors won't have it.
Tips on being interviewed - BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:
- If the interview is scheduled for several hours or days later, ask the reporter what the story is about and what questions he/she plans to ask you. That will help you prepare what to say.
- Do your homework. Prepare any evidence and examples. Be prepared for any and all possible questions. If possible, run through a "mock" interview with a friend to get practice.

DURING THE INTERVIEW:
- State your key points first. Be concise and get to the point.
- To increase your chances of being quoted, talk in colorful language. Use bold, short, catchy statements. Cite human interest examples.
- Honesty is the best policy. Be candid. If you don't know an answer, say so but offer to find out for the reporter. Evasive, dishonest or "flowery" responses will make the reporter suspicious and could lead to a negative story.
- Don't assume the reporter knows anything about the topic. Restate key points for emphasis.
- Volunteer important information. You don't have to wait for the reporter to ask the right questions. Reporters appreciate volunteered information that adds to the story and leads to further questions.
- If the interview is on TV look at the reporter, not at the camera.

PSAs - How to get "free" advertising

A common method of publicizing organizations, events and activities, public service announcements (PSA) are commercials on radio and television stations offered at no charge to non-profit groups. Announcements are scheduled the same as commercials, appearing in 10-20C, 30- and 60-second lengths in intervals during the broadcast day.

Contact:

Each station has its own policy and requirements regarding public service announcements. Contact the public affairs office for specific information.

If you should have any questions about eligibility, call the radio or television stations and speak with the public service coordinator, who is able to answer questions and to provide specifics regarding the planning and preparation of public service announcements.

Unfair or inaccurate coverage - How to lodge your complaint

Reporters, like other human beings, are not perfect. They make mistakes, and if those mistakes are inaccurate, biased or incomplete reporting, they and their editors want to know. Even if the problem is not serious, being aware of it might prevent it from recurring in later stories.

Keep in mind, however, that newspapers and broadcast outlets are not required to cover every side of every community issue. And for broadcast outlets, only political candidates are entitled to "equal time/"

If you believe your story or another story has been mishandled, here are some suggestions on how to lodge your complaint:
- Determine exactly what is wrong with the story. Is it inaccurate, is it biased, or incomplete? Prepare evidence to support your argument. You might even want to suggest other stories, or sources who would give the story a more complete or accurate presentation.
- Call the reporter first. State your problem, but don't assume the reporter was at fault. It could have been the fault of a copy editor who changed the wording of the story or a film editor who cut key footage.
- If you believe the story was seriously misleading or inaccurate, ask for a retraction, correction or clarification. News and broadcast outlets are increasingly willing to use these. Some even have appointed news ombudsmen or readers' advocates whose jobs are to receive and assess complaints and make changes if appropriate.
- For newspapers, write a letter to the editor or ask for a Forum piece. For broadcast outlets, ask to get on the air for a guest editorial.
- If these methods fail or you believe your problem is recurrent or part of policy, arm yourself with evidence and write or call a member of the news outlet's management. At newspapers, try the city editor or other senior supervisors – the managing or executive editor – or the publisher. At broadcast outlets, try the news or public affairs director or the station manager.

Building and keeping good media relations

Building good relations with news media involves much more than writing good news releases or appearing on talk shows. Here are some DO's and DON'Ts to help you.
- DO take opportunities to help reporters and editors in ways that are not self-serving. Call in tips or story ideas on topics not involving your library or civic group. Reporters and editors appreciate this, and that can increase the chances your own stories will get covered.
- DON'T be pushy and insist your story is God's gift to the news business. If your story idea is rejected by news outlets, you probably need a better news angle.
- DO be honest. Trust is one of your most valuable assets with news media. Lose it and you will invite suspicion and negative coverage.
• DON'T neglect other ways to publicize your story. Posters, fliers, balloons, brochures, billboards, etc. are still useful ways to tell others about your activities.
• DO plan ahead. Avoid the last-minute rush of deadlines.
• DON'T get discouraged if the media doesn't cover your event. There will be other opportunities, and you should keep trying.
• DO follow up. Reporters and editors do like to know what happened to the people and topics they covered. By following up, you will probably enhance your relationships with these news people.
• DON'T forget to look for ways to "sell" your story as a feature – one that will require in-depth coverage – and not just as a "hard" news story that will just cover the details of a particular event. Often stories have an element that is ongoing, such as growing community efforts to shop crime, that lends itself to feature treatment.
• DO say "Thank you." All too often, those in radio, TV and newspapers only hear when something is incorrect with a story. Or when people believe it's negative toward their organization. So when something is aired or published and it's a positive for your library or civic group or community, call the reporter and just say, "Thanks." Don't send them anything of value to say thank you. Many media companies have policies against staff members receiving anything of value. They want to make sure the reporters stay objective and aren't swayed because of a gift or free lunch or dinner.
FIVE "COMMANDMENTS" FOR GOOD MEDIA RELATIONS.

1. Integrity. Thou salt not prevaricate, nor exaggerate.
2. Deadlines. Thou shalt not procrastinate.
3. Accessibility. Thou shalt not build walls.
4. Familiarity. Thou shalt do thy homework.
5. Honesty. Thou shalt learn to say, "I don't know."

THREE RULES FOR ESTABLISHING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH NEWS PEOPLE.

1. Know your organization; really know it.
2. Do the publicity job efficiently, reliably and credibly.
3. Make the reporter's or the editor's job as easy as possible.

Quick tips for dealing with the press effectively:

HAVE AN AGENDA. Before giving a press interview, it's a good idea to brainstorm and create a list of "talking points" you want to cover when speaking with the press. Without that list it will be easy for the reporter to steer the conversation.

DON'T INSIST ON HAVING YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRO SERVE AS SPOKESPERSON. Someone who is articulate and knowledgeable about your organization (or has a special understanding of a technical issue) can do as well or better.

DON'T SAY "NO COMMENT". It makes reporters think you have something to hide. Safer bet: Be prepared with a brief statement.
AVOID MAKING THE MEDIA DEAL SOLELY WITH YOUR LAWYER. Many attorneys are more comfortable speaking for their clients. But this often makes reporters suspicious - even if there's no reason to be. Better: Have your lawyer present when talking with reporters.

DON'T GO "OFF THE RECORD." Never discuss something with a journalist that you wouldn't want to see or hear in the media.

**EVALUATION TEST FOR A NEWS RELEASE.**

> Is it of interest to at least 10-percent of the publications readers?
> Is it timely? Past events are history not news.
> Does it include names of people? Better still does it include names of well known or local people?
> Does it have a local angle?
> Does it have a human interest angle?
> Is it an AD?

**MORE TIPS ON MEDIA RELATIONS:**

- Never send a story to an editor unless it is newsworthy.

- In your initial dealing with the press, arrange a convenient time with the editor to hand-deliver your news release, but after the first meeting, don't waste the editor's time with personal visits.

- Don't play favorites when distributing news releases. If there are several media outlets in your area, make sure each has the information at the same time.

- If an editor uses your story it's because it contained newsworthy material. There is no need for thanks. It is, however, a gracious gesture to compliment a reporter on expert handling of a story.

- Never ask an editor to run a story as a favor to you.
- If a reporter contacts you for a story, don't provide, or "leak", the same story to other media.

- Don't ask to see - or hear - the reporter's story before it is printed or broadcast.

- Don't call the editor to complain if your story is not used in its entirety or if it is not used at all. Sometimes space and time limitations can cause this.

- If an editor calls you after receiving your press release, provide the answers to questions quickly and completely so the story can be completed.

- Treat the media fairly. If you promised an editor a story by a certain time, have it ready as promised.

**ASSISTING THE NEWS MEDIA AT PLANNED EVENTS:**

> When you schedule an event, make plans to invite the news media.

> Send complimentary tickets in advance. Make arrangements for them to be included as guests - individually seated with persons from your organization whom they know or would like to know.

> Assist them in every way in covering the event, or assign a capable staff person to to the job.

> Prepare a press release in advance if the occasion warrants.

> A day or so before the event, call the editor and ask if there are any special arrangements they require--backstage pass, interview with a speaker, or contact with specific individuals who will attend. Do your best to make arrangements for all that is requested.
Media Information

Name of newspaper:

Address:

Telephone: ________________________ Fax: ________________________

Name of editor/reporter/columnist interested in our operations:

__________________________________________

Other(s) to contact under other circumstances:

__________________________________________

Publication day (if weekly or suburban):

Deadlines:

Other Notes:

__________________________________________

Name of television or radio station:

Call Letters and dial location:

Address:

Telephone: ________________________ Fax: ________________________

General Manager:

Public Service Director:

News Director:

Preferred length/type of material:

Public Affairs program: Make arrangements to be on show through (name):

__________________________________________

Other Notes:

__________________________________________
THE MOST FREQUENT CRISIS CONTROL MISTAKES

Mistake 1. Inattention to prevention.

- In sequence of risk and harm, consider what can/might occur and why.
- Study crises, emergencies and issues encountered by others within your scope of work. Learn from their failures and achievements.
- Prevention is "exercising foreseeability." It is one of your best defenses against civil and criminal lawsuits as well as reputation ruination. It can save lives, reduce material losses, eliminate operational disruption, build organizational morale, prove your capabilities for responsibility, and . . . usually, save . . . your . . . job!

Mistake 2. Overemphasizing crisis communication at the expense of other elements in the plan.

- Crisis communication is essential when conducted properly, professionally, clearly and persuasively.
- However, too many in leadership over-rely on communication without giving proper thought to the dire consequences from crisis, emergency and difficult issue events.
- Weaknesses within the crisis prevention-response-resolution plan also harm the communication aspect. Find those weaknesses. Correct them!
- Read what credentialed, experienced experts have written or spoken about regarding a crisis plan. Glean ideas best suited to your situation or environment.
Mistake 3. Failure to gain widespread input at all levels of the organization.

- Worthy suggestions can come from any number of employees, not just at the managerial or executive offices.
- Be on the lookout for hidden traps that can cause or exacerbate a crisis, disaster or contentious issue.
- Welcome the person bringing you one or more of his or her concerns.
- Finally, if you haven't used professional crisis counsel for design of a plan, obtain a proficient, knowledgeable source to critically review internally produced guidelines.

Mistake 4. Insistence on volume rather than substance.

- A large, thick book merely gathers more dust! Simplicity, clarity and ease of understanding will enable others to put the plan into action without delay.
- Outline your plan rather than resorting to a Doctoral dissertation. Drills and exercises should fill in the details.

Mistake 5. Allowing rigidity to stifle flexibility.

- When the unexpected -- the nightmare -- strikes, you must adapt, you must improvise, you must demonstrate creativity.
- Your plan is a guideline but not a mandate especially when circumstances dictate otherwise.
- This point should always be incorporated into training. During crisis/emergency exercises be sure and toss in a couple of completely unexpected obstructions.

- The old saying, "Perception is reality," remains valid. So what are others saying about your handling of a daunting state of affairs?
- Remember, you face informed as well as uninformed publics. You will undergo bias both ways -- for and against your leadership.
- Monitoring opinion is more difficult than ever before. Opinion today is read and heard in greater numbers. Traditional methods of expressing opinions and attitudes now combine the old and new media. Concurrently, you should decide which are and are not worthwhile.
- Caution: Don't let your own prejudices overwhelm common sense. Seek independent advice.

Mistake 7. Inadequate testing of plan.

- Your plan is as good as its last evaluated run-through.
- Testing ranges from tabletop to deeply defined fire drills. They can incorporate internal and external participants.
- Practice must, for ultimate efficiency, be informative, instructive, real-life, stimulating and yes, enjoyable.

By sharing your plan with those who can help you through a crisis, emergency or issue, your chances of success increase. Relationship development is a never-concluding priority.

Your employees plus all who benefit from your services come first particularly when the situation threatens personal harm.

Your reputation as well as that of the organization you represent are at risk whenever ineptness, errors of judgment, negligence and/or obvious unconcern are detected. When in doubt, summon help!

Mistakes in these instances lead to "career defining moments."
YOUR RIGHTS IN AN INTERVIEW

The following are rights that you, as an interviewee, can and should assert as part of your agreement to be interviewed:

1. You have the right to be treated courteously. The questions can be tough, but the reporter's demeanor should not be abusive.

2. You can determine the time, location, and length of time available to the reporter.

3. You can ask in advance for topics to be covered, but not specific questions.

4. You are not under subpoena. You control the pace for answering questions, and allowing time to think before speaking. You can break off an impromptu interview after a "reasonable" amount of time, after all the important questions have been answered. You may challenge questionable facts and assumptions that may be "loaded" into the reporter's questions.

5. You can use human language, anecdotes, illustrations, statistics and examples.

6. In a studio environment, you have the right not to be hurried to your place or tolerate discourtesy from the studio crew or host.

7. You have the right to convey some of your points in the interview. You have the right to speak throughout the interview, not only when called upon.

8. You can have a public relations or other company representative present.

9. You have the right to make your own audio or video tape of the interview, or obtain a complete tape from the broadcaster.

10. You have the right to ignore "editorial comments" or asides from reporters or panelists.

11. You have the right to question dubious sources of information.

12. You have the right to make the interviewer and the public aware of your or your organization's contributions to the community.

13. You can increase your credibility by revealing any self-interest.

14. You have the right to ensure that the basic intent of your answers is preserved in the film or tape editing.

An interview is a basic tool of news gathering, not simply a conversation between you and a reporter. It is a ritual with considerable tradition and role-playing. The reporter relies on people like you for information.
Summary of the lawsuits against public library districts

The basis for the lawsuits against public libraries stems from the fact that there appear to be conflicting state statutes about how libraries are to set taxes.

Background
In 1979, the KY General Assembly passed House Bill 44, which became codified in KRS Chapter 132. This piece of legislation discusses how taxing districts can set the tax rate. The Kentucky Department of Libraries instructed libraries that were formed as taxing districts to follow state law, just as other taxing districts have, as outlined by House Bill 44. These guidelines allowed taxing districts’ tax rates to keep pace with inflation as the counties have grown.

Issue
The plaintiffs have filed suit against several library districts stating that KRS Chapter 132, applies only to taxing districts, not libraries, and therefore libraries have been inappropriately raising (and lowering) taxes.

Potential Impact
Although current rulings only apply to specific library districts, their impact is broad-sweeping in that it threatens nearly every public library in the Commonwealth of Kentucky because all of these libraries have been complying with KRS Chapter 132 since its enactment in 1979.

If libraries are forced to return to 1979 tax rates, the loss to Kentucky residents would include drastic reductions in public library services, possible library closures, limitations on hours, elimination of community programming, educational programming, and cessation of current outreach programs to schools, senior citizens, and home school families.

Libraries value to community:

2,472,447 registered borrowers in KY
Total books circulated: 19,703,040
Total materials circulated: 29,708,255
People entering libraries: 19,872,461
Children’s program attendance: 1,269,546
Reference requests: 3,795,367
Number of Users of Public Internet Computers: 4,928,929
Patrons Trained to Use Electronic Resources: 47,306
Number of Groups Using Meeting Rooms: 19,332

Local impact:

79,000 registered borrowers in Warren County
980,000 materials circulated
PRESTON'S CRISIS CONTROL MAXIMS

1. Everyone can do it better than you. Just listen to all their solutions after the event.

2. When communicating, the only audience with a higher priority than your employees is the Almighty.

3. Size (of a crisis plan) isn't everything.

4. Seldom will PR and legal agree, especially about the court of public opinion equaling the court of law. But it does.

5. The media's love affair with your crisis always is more intense than with another's.

6. A bunker mentality signals emasculation; honesty fosters emancipation.

7. If you believe things can't get any worse, then don't take the next phone call.

8. An untested plan has the same value as a playbook before football practice begins.

9. Indecision is the treadmill for an unhealthy outcome.

10. Just as the pressure starts easing, the editorials begin appearing.

11. If you're upbeat, you must have someone in mind to blame.

12. The wrong spokesperson guarantees another crisis.

13. Humans tend to forgive those whose errors are sincerely acknowledged.

14. Moral victories are for losers seeking excuses.

15. To adequately manage a crisis, the clock must have no hands and the calendar no days.