

Top Ten Tips for Working with the Media

1. Be a resource to build relationships

- Being a helpful resource is the best way to build relationships with reporters and in turn, get more coverage.
- Do this by responding to their requests in time for their deadline, providing them with photos or video and connecting them to other beneficial institutions when it makes sense.

2. Make things easy for reporters

- Journalists today are busier and more harried than ever. Newsrooms are shrinking, and each reporter's workload keeps increasing. Have a press release with all the facts ready, high-resolution photos you can email or share via Dropbox and even b-roll video ready.
- The more resources you have available for them, the better story you'll likely get.

3. Always ask about their deadline

- Things in the media can move very, very fast. A reporter could call you at 4 p.m. and have a 6 p.m. deadline. Or, the reporter might be working on a longer, more involved story and have some time. Knowing when they need the information and getting them the information by their deadline is key.

4. Always be polite in dealing with mistakes

- Mistakes will happen. Politely ask for a correction, and be sure to ask that the article be fixed online. Don't take mistakes personally.

5. If they don't know about it, they can't report it.

- Don't presume that a reporter knows about an event. Send them a press release, email them a short blurb or give them a quick call.
- If you don't get coverage, consider writing a story yourself and submitting it. Some papers will run those verbatim.

6. Be transparent when managing a crisis

- Never say "no comment." It gives reporters and the public the impression that you have something to hide.
- In a crisis, it's okay to admit your mistakes, accept responsibility and explain how you plan to do better. By being transparent, you can better manage your reputation in the media and in the community.
- That being said, you don't have to reveal every detail about a situation.

7. Be trustworthy

- Be honest with reporters. Reporters need to see you as a trusted resource, or they won't reach out to you for future stories. Plus, you could lose credibility with the public.

8. Have one or two point people for the media

- This will help keep your messaging consistent and is extremely useful when managing a crisis.
- Reporters prefer to have one or two people they can consistently rely on for information about your site. Centralizing your media outreach can also help you build relationships.

9. It's okay to say "I don't know"

- We always want to be helpful and provide a great story for a reporter, but in some instances other people or institutions are better able to or more qualified to provide the requested info. By offering other suggestions when necessary, the reporter still sees you as a helpful resource.

10. Be strategic with press releases

- Press releases are a very useful tool in a promotional toolkit, but you don't want to overwhelm reporters with press releases for all of your news (they get them all day, every day). Be strategic and use them for your most important news and events.

Questions? Contact us!

Emmy Beach

Public Relations Manager, Ohio History Connection

ebeach@ohiohistory.org

Kristina Smith

Communications and Marketing Manager, Rutherford B. Hayes Library and Museums at Spiegel Grove

KSmith@rbhayes.org