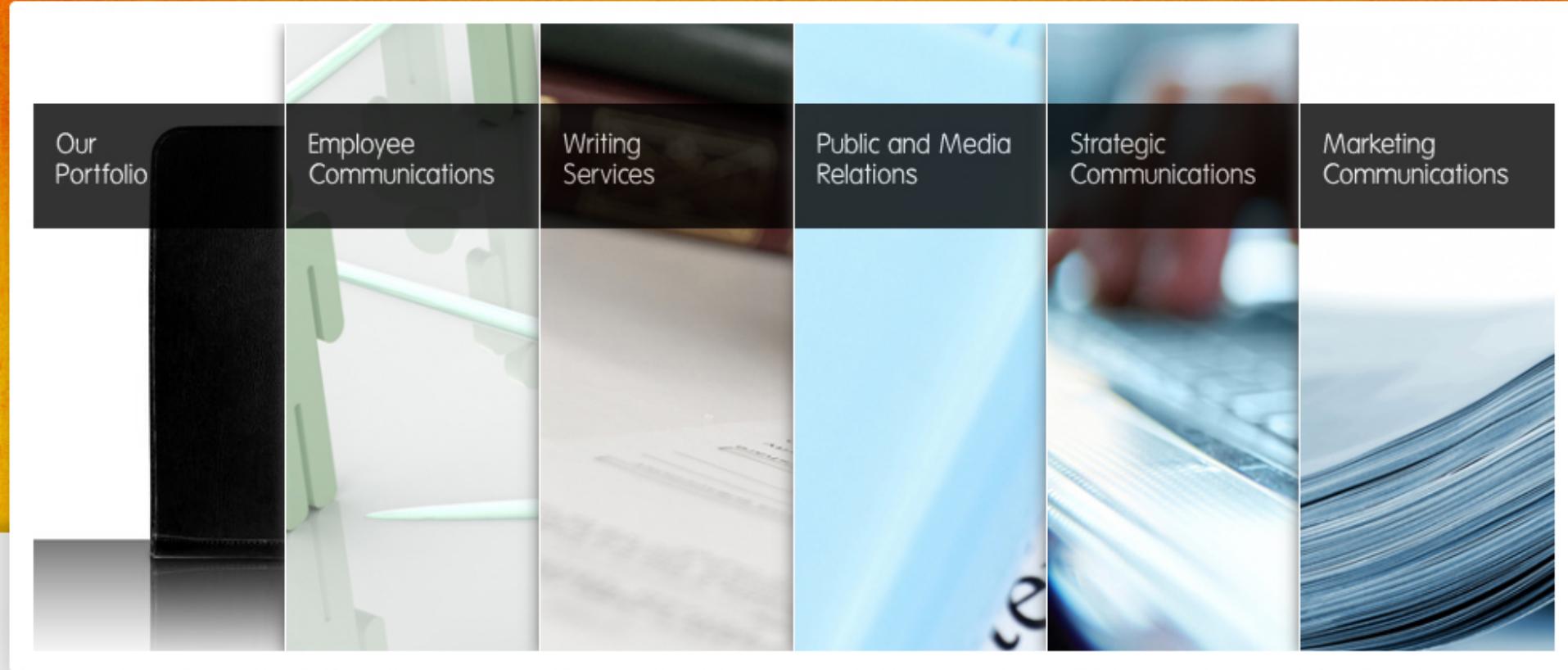


Crisis Communications: *When Bad Things Happen to Good Schools*



Rural Community College Alliance

Are You Prepared?



1. Do protocols exist to fully inform your campus community when disaster strikes?
2. Are you prepared in the event of a fire, tornado, earthquake, hurricane, health-related event or crime that presents an immediate or ongoing threat?
3. How will you handle media and parent inquiries about employee misconduct or on-campus crime?
4. Are your on-campus leaders ready to face a media firestorm?

When Things Go Wrong

JEFF DUROSKO
COMMUNICATIONS

- Virginia Tech

The Washington Post
Tuesday, April 17, 2007

SHOOTING RAMPAGE AT VIRGINIA TECH

Gunman Kills 32 at Virginia Tech In Deadliest Shooting in U.S. History

By IAN SHAPEN AND TINA JACOBSON
Washington Post Staff Writers

BLACKSBURG, Va., April 16 — An embittered loner at a Virginia Tech dormitory, followed two hours later by a ruthless string of attacks at a classroom building, killed 32 students, faculty and staff and left about 30 others wounded, today in one of the worst shooting rampages in the nation's history.

The shooter, whose name was not released last night, was Mayses, a blue jacket and a seat belt ammunition, who was said to have killed 20 in the dormitory and another 12 in the classroom, authorities said. Federal law enforcement officials said. Witnesses described the shooter as a young man of Asian descent — a silent killer who was calm and showed no expression as he pursued and shot his victims.

He killed two first at the dormitory and 20 more at a science and engineering building, where he entered people taking and tracking classes after closing some doors that behind him. At one point, he shot at a man who was being held at gunpoint. Witnesses described scenes of chaos and panic, with students jumping from windows and windows-to-exit panes and others blocking their classrooms doors to keep the gun man away.

Even before anyone knew who the gunman was or why he did it, he did the same post-columbine in Southwest Virginia, questioning whether most of the deaths would have been prevented. They wondered why the campus was not shut down after the first shooting.

In Norris Hall

'Pop, Pop, Pop': Students Down, Doors Barred, Leaps to Safety

By MICHAEL E. REEVE
and JANE ALEXANDER VARGAS
Washington Post Staff Writers

Some of the wounded are carried from Norris Hall, an academic building where 20 of the slayings occurred. Two other people were killed in a dorm, and about 30 people were injured.

The Response

2-Hour Gap Leaves Room For Questions

By ROB MORTON
Washington Post Staff Writer

When Things Go Wrong

- Long Delay by the University to notify students of the initial dorm shooting of two people.
- Some say this was due to not having a solid crisis communications plan in place that caused administrators instead to hold a meeting to discuss how to notify students
- This ultimately possibly gave the shooter time to pull off his second, more deadly, attack.
- The school also received criticism for how it communicated for days following the attacks.

When Things Go Wrong

- West Virginia

September 10, 2017 12:14PM | 61°

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Obituaries | PG Store | Archi

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Executive's M.B.A. claims differ from WVU records

LEN BOSELOVIC AND PATRICIA
SABATINI/PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

4:30 AM

APR 10, 2008



Mylan Inc. executive Heather Bresch's explanation of her claim that she earned a graduate business degree from West Virginia University is inconsistent with changes that WVU made to her records in October to show that she earned the degree.



Ms. Bresch's remarks this week came after months of public silence by her on the matter and days before a panel is expected to report on whether the university was justified in awarding the



Tire Rack

Four Quick Questions

When Things Go Wrong



- When the West Virginia governor's daughter received a degree from WVU without merit, employees of WVU continuously spoke to a Pittsburgh Post Gazette reporter
- Employees gave out reams of proprietary info
- Reporter spoke to a group of PR pros at a conference a year later using this as a case study of why education systems need media policies.
- Reporter confirmed that the story would have gone away quickly had they not kept stoking the fire with information just because no one stopped them.

Three Key Elements in a Crisis

- Remain calm and in control
- Know your audience
- Know your message



Identifying a Crisis

- Workplace or Campus Violence
- Natural Disaster
- Crime
- Employee Bad Behavior
- Sexual Assault
- A Class Action Lawsuit
- Data Breach
- System Failures
- Legal Issues
- Fraud
- Embezzlement
- Leadership Challenges



Characteristics of a Crisis

What you may be feeling

- Surprise
- Insufficient information
- Escalating flow of events
- Loss of control
- Intense scrutiny from media and others
- Panic or siege mentality
- Short term focus

Crisis may threaten

- Employee morale
- Customer base
- Financial success
- Long term performance
- Executive jobs
- Corporate reputation



What can I do?

- Crisis Plan
 - Create one
 - Keep it updated
- Media Policies
- Spokesperson Training



Crisis Communications Plan: Where do I start?

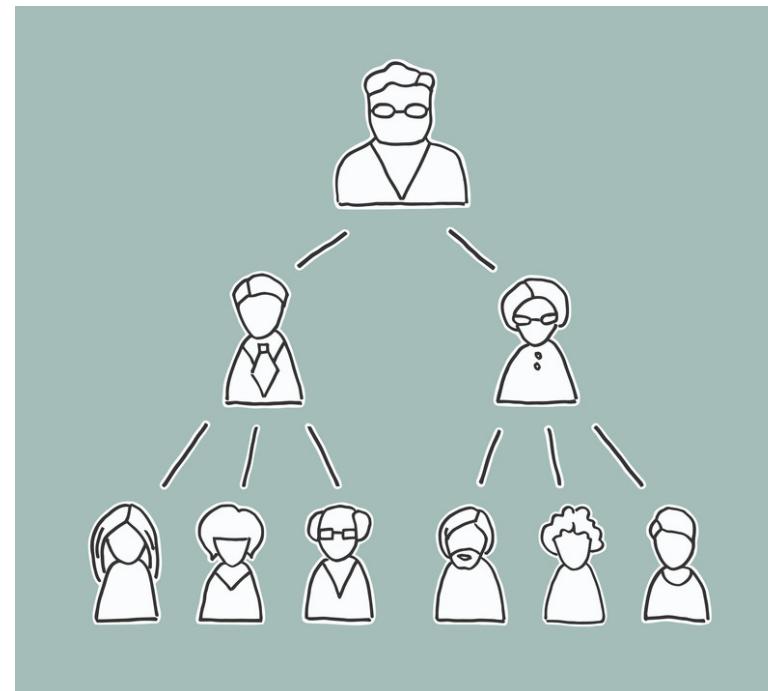


- Establish policy and protocol.
 - Who is the key communicator?
 - Who is the backup?
 - Put it in writing
 - Share



Crisis Communications Plan: Where do I start?

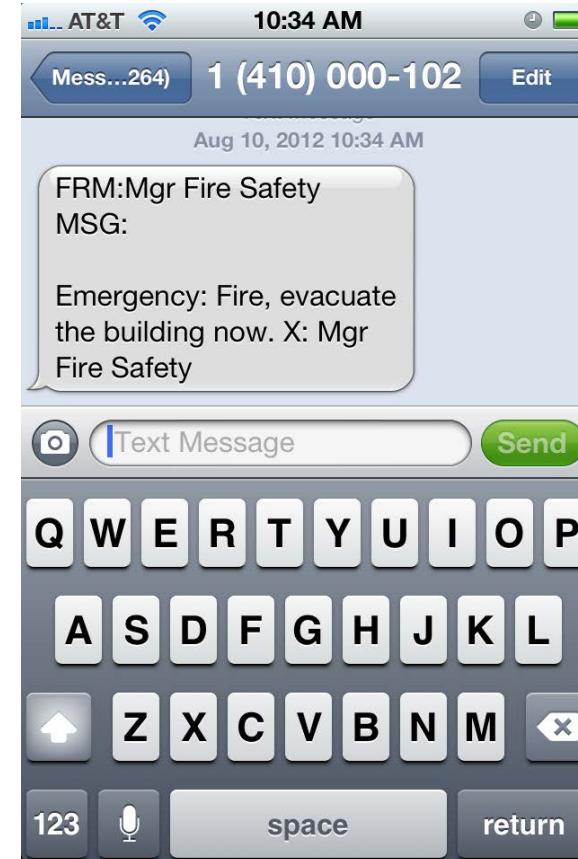
- Create a chain of communication
 - Written communications tree
 - Share with all employees
 - Keep it updated



Crisis Communications Plan: Where do I start?



- What is the forum for communication?
 - Text blast
 - Email blast
 - PA announcements
 - Voicemail to cell phones



Crisis Communications Plan: Where do I start?



- What is the message?
 - Be concise and clear
 - Be consistent
 - Share with all.



Crisis Communications Plan: Where do I start?

- How do you keep public informed?
 - Crisis website
 - Phone system messages
 - Social media
 - News media



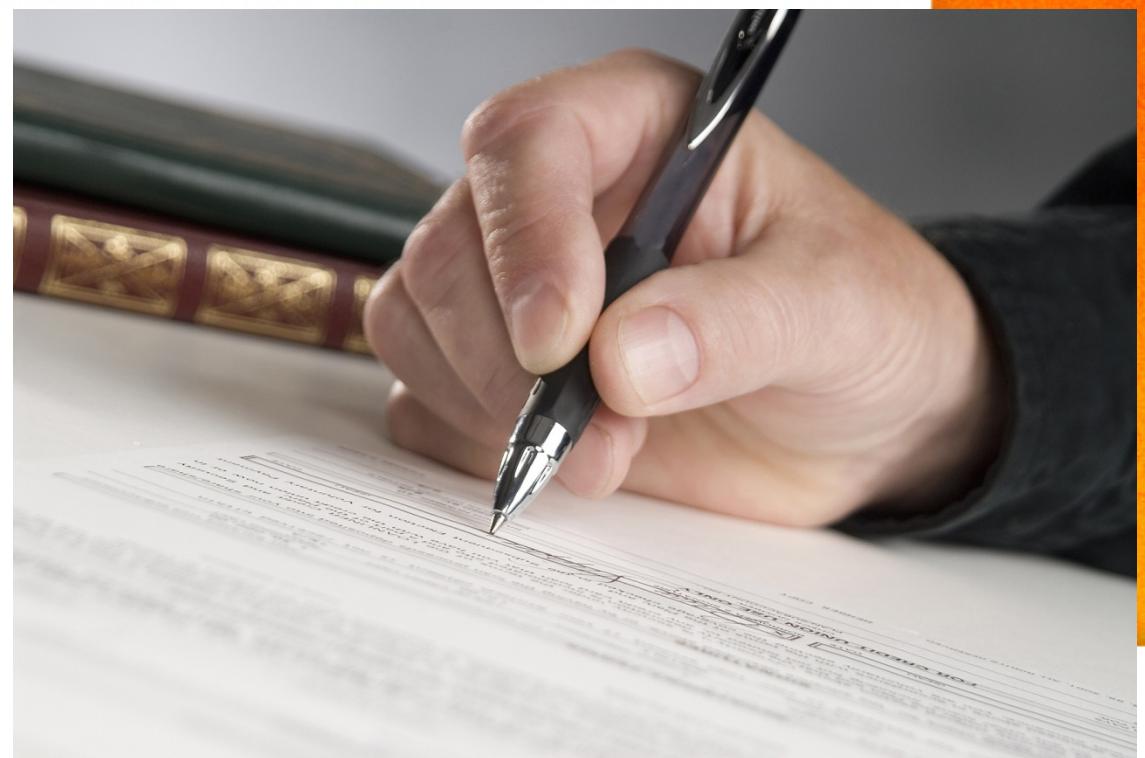
Crisis Communications Planning

- Response Team and Roles
- The Crisis lifecycle – what to do and when?
- External Resources – when and how to use
- Establishing a crisis center
- Assessing your bank of goodwill



Crisis Communications Management

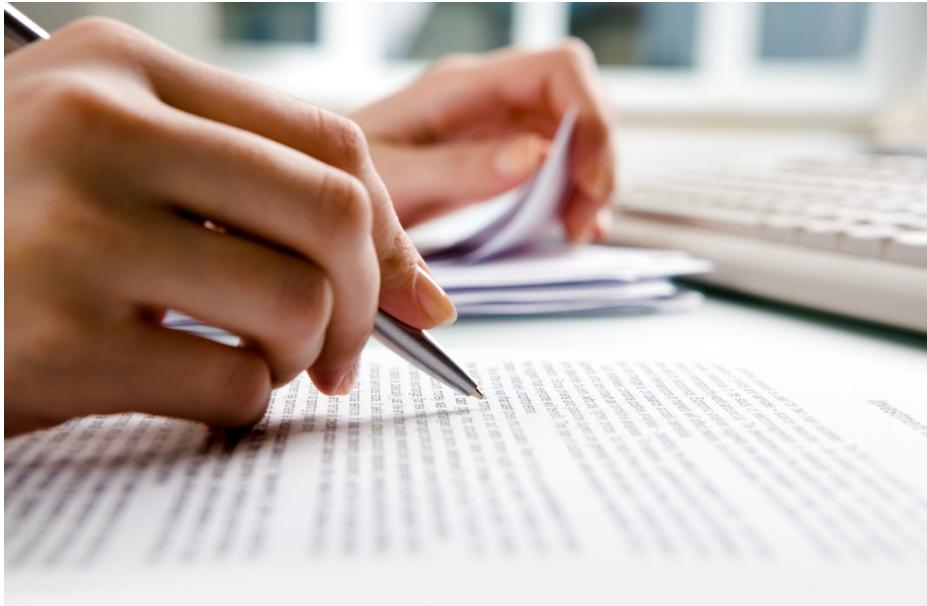
- Crafting media statements
- Media management
and when?
- Beyond the media
 - Employees
 - Students & Parents
 - Board of Trustees & Visitors Boards
- Being accountable
- Reputation management
- Using the Internet & Social Media in Crisis



Crisis Communications Checklists



- Crisis Communications
- Activation Process
- Response Team Contacts
- Crisis Comms Center
- Critical Information Resources
- Media List
- Direct Comms with Key Audiences
- News Conference Planning
- Crisis Web Site Activation Process



Crisis Reality

- Media hype escalates crisis
- There IS a short response time
- What you do and say at start is critical
 - Never “No comment”
 - Better: “I’ll get back to you”
- There is a slim margin of error
- Stakes are high
- Bad news travels fast
- Perception becomes reality
- There is a long term effect

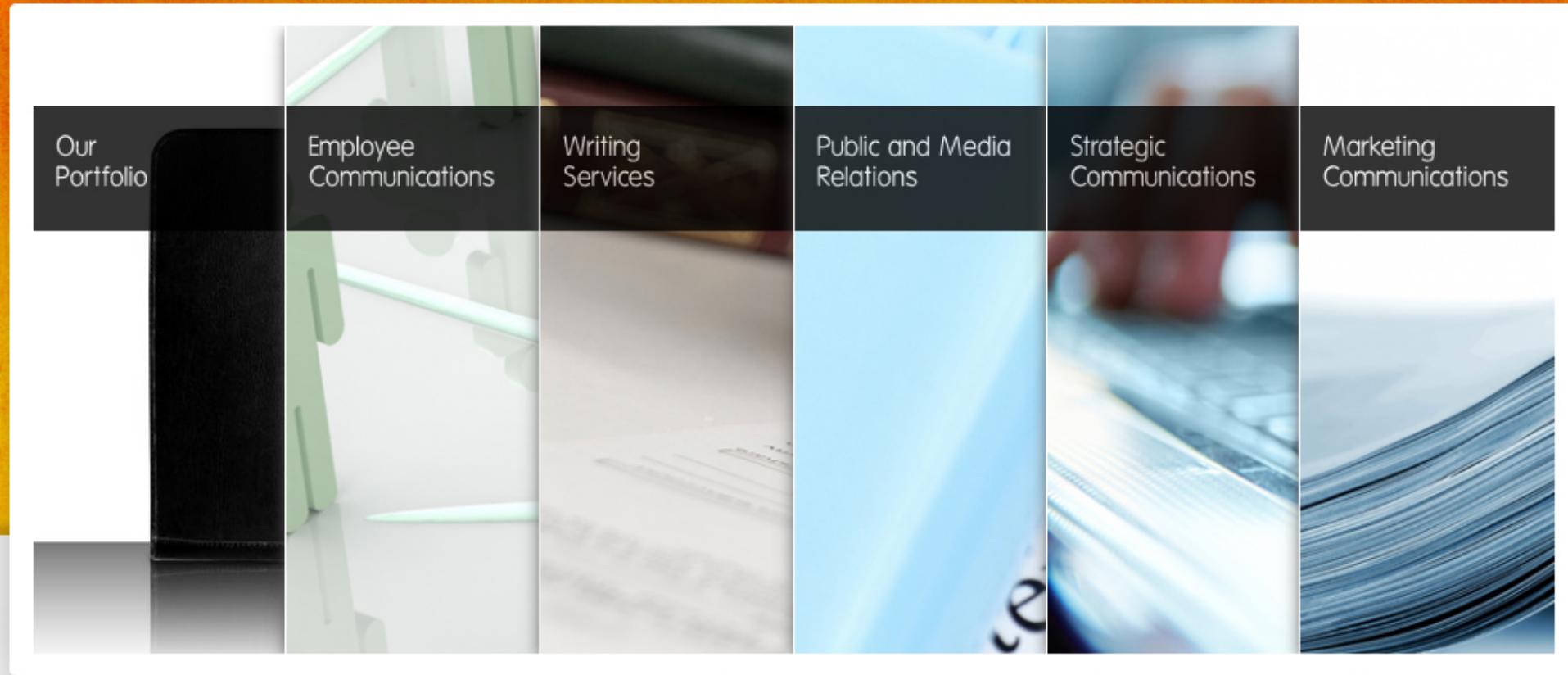


Part two: Media Policy

- Written protocol
- Keep employees informed
- President as spokesperson
- Internal vs. external roles
- Never waver



Part Three: Spokesperson Training



Don't let this happen to you



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DlPpi0yuql>

Spokesperson Training

Training the Trainer

- Formal training sessions
- One-on-one training
- Ongoing
- No one is ever DONE
- Do it yourself
- Hire outside counsel
- Go through media training yourself
- Choose participants wisely



Preparing for the Interview

- Identify Key Messages
- Prepare Support Material
- Anticipate questions
- Review and rehearse
- Read the reporter's work
- Ask PR Director to participate
- Schedule wisely
- Set ground rules
- ID and screen supporters
- Debrief



Be prepared



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVNSixVDcfE>

Three Parts to an Interview

- Beginning
 - Establish Relationship
 - Assess background
 - Give overview
 - Key messages
- Middle
 - Repeat Key messages
 - Bring in the details
 - Avoid tough specifics
- End
 - End it when it's time
 - Summarize key points
 - Use open invitation
 - Watch out for tough questions



Starting the Interview

- Break the ice
- Assess knowledge
- Initiate discussion



Conducting the Interview

- Sit up straight
- Make eye contact
- Speak clearly
- Stay calm
- Repeat/rephrase
- Agree on ground rules
- Set high expectations for fairness



Stay calm, speak clearly



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNamN3RCbt0>

Don't!!

- ...read from a script
- ...read from slides
- ...hand out a press kit at the beginning
- ...interrupt a reporter
- ...nod in agreement
- ...talk down
- ...use industry jargon



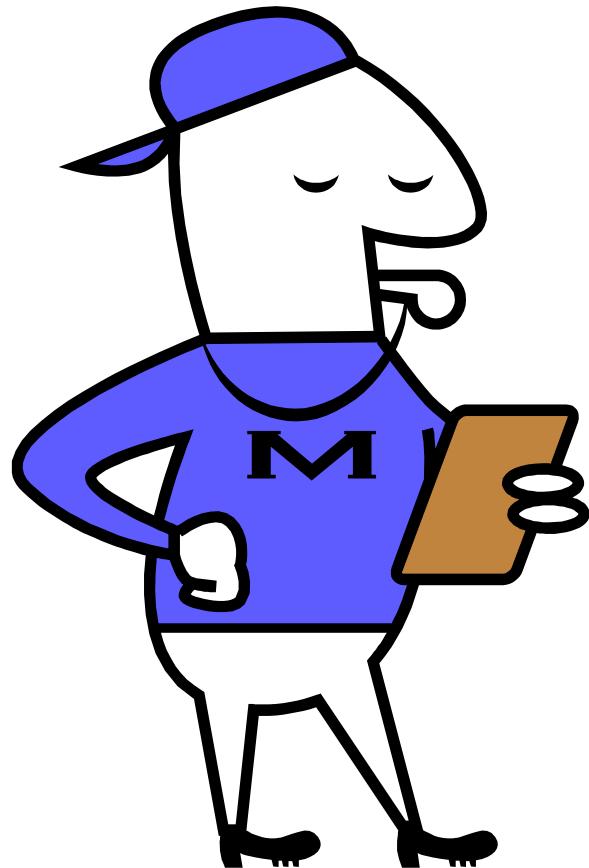
Staying on message is one thing...



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rRC7mZpF1s>

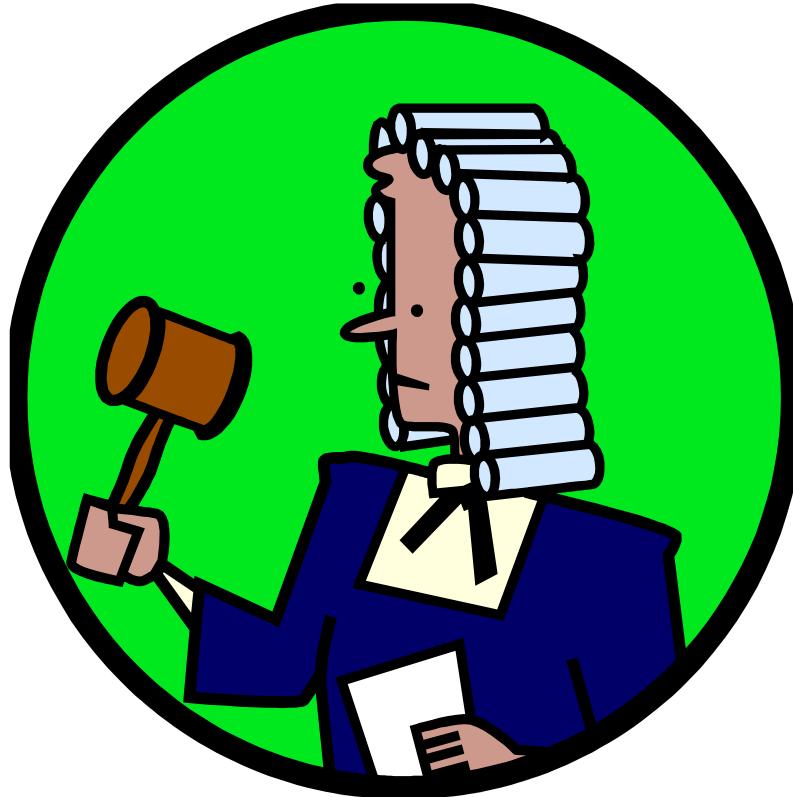
Interview Guidelines

- Take control
- Keep comments direct
- Watch out for leading questions
- Long unfilled pauses
- Sensational statements
- Avoid repeating negatives
- Statements that open the door
- Show concern



Interview Guidelines

- Discuss initiatives
- Re-enforce reporters fairness
- Stop the interview
- Repeat message points



Body language matters



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxkULBtpF3s>

Follow-Up

- Get copies
- Assess fairness
- If in doubt, consider a follow-up
- Go to the editor
- Assess pros & cons of contacting editor prior to publication
- Accuracy, balance & bias
- Factual errors – contact



Follow-Up

- Not balanced – assess pros and cons of a response
 - Call
 - Meeting
 - Letter to the Editor
- Communicate views to key audiences
 - Meetings
 - Letters
 - Phone calls
 - Ad



Tips

- Feel good about your organization
- This is not a new experience, just a new audience.
- Avoid jargon
- Talk to a reporter like you are talking to an older child
- Establish the rules
- Challenge mistakes



Spokesperson training doesn't mean zombie training.



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWolmUPHtYo>

Questions



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