

## STC Tips for Working with the Media

As a trade association, the STC plays an important role by speaking to trade laws/standards/guidelines and providing one industry voice when it comes to new regulations and legislation. We provide high-level guidance and avoid any details of specific companies, products, projects, pricing, price changes, warranties and contract terms due to antitrust laws. More often, the STC responds to national news outlets, however, we do field local media inquiries when appropriate (i.e. the topic is a priority issue for the STC and the industry).

A local media outlet calls asking for your company's input on a subject or wants to do a feature story on your business. From the initial phone call, you've determined that this locally-focused piece isn't about the synthetic turf industry overall or a highly charged topic that you should refer to STC for a response. It sounds like a great opportunity for local publicity and you'd like to move forward. So here are a few suggestions to help you proceed:

### Identify a Spokesperson (which should be done after you read these tips):

- You want your organization to be represented by someone who is respected in your industry and has a wide range of knowledge regarding your specific product(s) or service(s). Depending on the nature of the inquiry, that could be the CEO of the organization, your Research Director, a community relations person or some other key individual.
- The spokesperson should be up on the latest trends in the industry and have an overall understanding of current happenings. This allows them to speak about your company and its view on the topic being discussed.
- A professional demeanor when speaking to media is a plus in choosing someone to represent your organization. They may be asked hard questions – so the ability to quickly research the right answers and discuss that information confidently is essential in following up with a reporter.

### Rules of Thumb When Working with the Media:

- **Pause to gather facts and craft the right response.** Even if you know all of the answers off the top of your head, tell the reporter you'll call them back in 15 minutes, and then use that time to plan your strategy. Determine the key messages that you would like to communicate clearly during the call.
- **Don't treat the reporter like the enemy.** Reporters are just people who are trying to do their job. Give them your side of the story and the facts to back it up, which will give you credibility in their eyes.
- **"No Comment"** - Saying "no comment" is the kiss of death, since it looks like you are trying to hide something even when you aren't. It's in your best interest to say that you do not have enough information to comment, but be sure to find the information and get back to them in a timely manner.

- **Don't miss deadlines.** Time really is of the essence for reporters. Each day, they face real, and often narrow, deadlines for getting their facts straight before printing the newspaper or airing an evening news segment. If you don't have the answers they need off hand, one question to be sure and ask is "when do you need this information?"- and then deliver it pronto. If you are stuck waiting for others to respond to your internal requests for information, continue to give the reporter regular updates on the process.
- **Don't drop the ball.** A reporter is calling because they at least want to consider what you have to say for an article. It can be critical to ensure your voice is heard, so don't drop the ball and potentially harm the reputation of your business. Always finish what you've started, even if its to communicate just a few basic, limited facts at the time.

#### Verify Media Contacts:

Most of the time, reporters are who they claim to be. But if someone calls your business asking for information, and either a lack of professional demeanor or vagueness about the potential story causes you to question their authenticity, here are several steps to check out that individual's credentials:

- Search the media outlet they claim to be affiliated with for by-lines or their name on the masthead. It should be easy to pull up previous stories under their authorship.
- If you're not finding information on that specific media outlet, conduct a general Google search with their name. They could be serving in a freelance capacity for the media outlet in question, which might limit your ability to identify them in the first step.
- If neither of the above steps works, and you still have doubts, call the media outlet directly, ask to speak to the editor of the department (business, sports, lifestyle, etc.) that would be in charge of that particular writer, and ask the person on the phone to verify that individual is affiliated with the organization.