Developing and Delivering Media Messages

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Developing Media Messages

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

- Albert Einstein
Morning Agenda: Developing Messages

- Identify media and audience
- Develop your message
  - Message triangle
  - Message enhancements
  - Identify difficult questions
- Writing exercise
- Partner exercise
The Value of Effective Communication

- Research-based knowledge can inform public debate and influence both legislative and regulatory agendas
- Effective communication can benefit the public by helping make sense of our complex world
- Effective communicators benefit Cornell: consistent and coherent messaging rises above the noise
What It’s Worth

• Dollars and cents
  – 725 words in *New York Times* = $14,000
  – 500 words in *Ithaca Journal* = $512

• Intangibles
  – Public support
  – Team morale
  – Reflects well on your institution
Reporters Are…

• Not evil
• Busy
• Generalists (not an expert)
• Looking for someone to answer questions
• Filling newscast/column with compelling, interesting stories
Questions to Ask a Reporter

- Name?
- Outlet/Organization?
- What is the story about?
- Do you have any background in the subject?
- Who else will you interview?
- What is the format of the interview?
- How long is it?
- What is your deadline?
- Can I call you right back?
Identify Your Audience

• What language, information, and ideas connect with them?
• What is their educational attainment?
• Are they older? younger?
• Where do they live?
• What do they read? watch?
• The audience is not: students in a classroom, members of a panel, attendees of a poster session
Flip the Triangle

Scientific/Scholarly Communication

Process
Details
Conclusion

Communicating with the Media

Conclusion
Process
Details
Message Triangle: A Helpful Tool

**Audience:** Who are your audiences?

**Goal:** What you want to achieve?

**Message:** What do you want to say?

**Difficult Question(s):**

**Talking Point:**
- Detail:
- Detail:
- Detail:
- Example/Enhancer:

**Talking Point:**
- Detail:
- Detail:
- Example/Enhancer:
Develop a Message Triangle

• Establish your goal
  – What do you want your audience to think, feel, or do?

• Identify your message
  – What do you want your audience to know?

• Develop three talking points
  – Consider problem-solution-benefit structure
Enhance Your Talking Points

• Details make your talking points relevant and understandable

• Enhance your message
  – Examples: Be specific; avoid jargon
  – Analogies: Simplify complex ideas
  – Three Cs: Colorful words, clichés, contemporary references
  – Personal Experience/Story of the Quest
**Talking Point: Products**
- *Proteins* from local farms, free-range
- *Produce* from JBO, a 150-acre organic farm located in the city limits of Austin
- Enhancement: Our staff volunteers at JBO; we participate in a CSA start-up for goat products

**Audience:** Local television audience; major market  
**Goal:** Provide an inside look at my process; encourage viewers to eat at my restaurant  
**Message:** The food I cook is the result of great products, mindful preparation, and personal passion.  
**Difficult Question:** What is your favorite food to cook?

**Talking Point: Preparation**
- I’m “particular,” and pay attention to detail  
- *Practice* and test menus with staff and “regulars”  
- Enhancement: Food is experienced first with our eyes

**Talking Point: Passion**
- I love to cook for others: my family, my friends, my clients  
- Eating food with others can create connections and life-long memories  
- Enhancement: Favorite saying on food delivery truck: Cook food; serve love
Reproduction is more than a sperm fertilizing an egg:

- Sperm are accompanied by a cocktail of seminal proteins
- Female is different creature after mating
- Why Drosophila? Because sex is complicated.
- Interactions are “up close and personal,” unlike broadcast pheromones

Mating is both a battle and a ballet:

- Battle between males: seminal proteins are a “weapon” that makes females reluctant to mate with other males
- Battle between male and female: What is good for the gander may not be good for the goose
- Ballet between male and female: male protein is processed only in the female

More than an interesting question about chemical communication in Drosophila:

- Interactions in Drosophila are analogous to Mosquito, including those that carry diseases like West Nile virus and Dengue fever
- Millions of humans are affected by WNV and Dengue, and there are no vaccines for either
- One way to address spread of disease is to impede ability of insect vectors to reproduce
Writing Exercise: Developing Your Message Triangle

- Establish your goal
- Identify your message
- Develop three talking points
  - Consider problem-solution-benefit structure
- Use message enhancements
- Identify and prepare for difficult questions
Partner Exercise: Interview Practice

• Pair up. Take turns interviewing and being interviewed.
• Provide interviewer with Message Triangle.
• Interviewer asks an open-ended question about scientist’s research.
• Interviewee practices delivering a talking point with a detail and an enhancement.
• Try two or three questions before changing places.
Delivering Media Messages

Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.

Alexander Graham Bell
Afternoon Agenda: Interview Practice

- Stay on message
- Prepare for difficult questions
- Bridging techniques
- Interview techniques
- Practice interviews
- Evaluate “best of” interviews
- Wrap-up
Stay on Message

• You are in the driver’s seat
• Know your talking points
• Practice delivering talking points
• Avoid jargon
• Don’t be afraid to repeat your message
• Do not assume that your interviewer is scientifically literate
Three Questions Interviewers Always Ask

• The one you don’t know the answer to
• The one that requires you to speculate
• The one that invites you to share a controversial opinion
How to Handle Provocative Questions

• Be politely assertive
• Be prepared to calmly correct mistakes
• Never say “No comment”
• Do not argue with a reporter
• Keep calm and talk slowly
• You can be emotional, but not angry
• Model behavior you would like to see
• Don’t lose sight of the audience
Use Transition Techniques

• Bridging
  – Answer question briefly
  – Follow up with one of your key messages

• Flagging
  – Highlight your most important message

• Hooking
  – Introduce a statement that influences the next question
Techniques for On-Air Interviews

• Smile
• Look at reporter (excluding satellite)
• Pay attention to the nodding of your head
• Plant yourself; no movement/swivel
• Posture: lean toward camera (engaged)
• Use natural gestures
• Voice: expressive, animated
Techniques for Skype/Google+

• Use high-speed internet
• Test technology before the interview
• Look at the camera, not the screen
• Camera should be at eye level
• Prepare your surroundings; use natural lighting
• Dress the part
• Close/turn off distractions
Dressing/Grooming for TV

• Attire:
  – No white
  – No patterns, including herringbone, stripes
  – Best choices: pale blue, neutral shades
  – Conservative jewelry

• Comb your hair

• Say “yes” to make-up
  – Keep it light, natural-looking
Practice Interviews

• Create groups; assign roles
  – Interviewer
  – Interviewee
  – Camera Operator
  – Reviewer/critic
  – Observer/Timekeeper

• Conduct **two**-minute interviews

• Evaluate (see next slide)

• Switch roles until all participants have been interviewed
Tips for Evaluation

• Did I get my message across?
• What did I forget to mention?
• How could I have better incorporated my talking points into my answers?
• Did I use transition techniques when replying to difficult questions?
• Was I relaxed, calm, and natural?
• What can I do to be more effective?
“Best of” Interviews

• Each group selects its “best” interview
  – It may be the most successful
  – Or, it can be an example of a “lesson learned”

• Each group shares their interview with the class

• Review and provide feedback

• Wrap up and final questions….
For more information

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