Making the Most of Media

Best practices for Kiwanis media relations

11/22/14
Michigan District

Kiwanis
Vicki introduction and tell about background; Steve introduction

Ask ask a few people to share:
(1) who their favorite speaker is and why; (2) their experience with the news media;
and (3) what they hope to accomplish in today’s session

**Agenda**
The art of communication – messaging
Understanding the media – how does this group work
Practice interviews – working to get your messaging in
We will also touch briefly on social media and crisis communications

Housekeeping:
-What time is lunch, where are restrooms
Making Headlines
First, let’s talk about what’s news…and what’s not… Reporters, editors, bloggers and producers are bombarded with ideas and messages all day, every day. Their time is precious, and their attention spans and tolerance for bad ideas are short—so you need to know what will be most helpful—and therefore of most interest in your market. What interests reporters depends on your market. If you’re in a small town, and your club is presenting a check for $1,000 to the library, that might be news. If you’re in a bigger market, like Seattle, a $1,000 check presentation by your club is not likely to make the news—unless there’s something extraordinary about the donation. “Dog Bites Man” isn’t news, but “Man Bites Dog”—now, that’s news.

Talk about some of the best pitches you got; talk about the worst. STEVE – It would not be unusual for me to receive 200 story pitches a day. Most people pitched a business or a product. If they were lucky enough to get me on the phone, I transferred them to the advertising department. Even though Journalists are cynical and jaded, we are still idealistic. Most of us got into the business because we see the power of the press. We feel a responsibility—or at least we did—to be the watchdogs of government and the protectors of the little people. I think you can draw some similarities there between Journalists and Kiwanians. Both of us want to make our communities better. We just go about it in different ways. So, back to Vicki’s question about best pitches—the best pitches I received were ones where people were making a difference in the community. So, theoretically, Kiwanis shouldn’t be the world’s best kept secret. Reporters should be coming to us all the time looking for stories to fill their newspapers, newscasts, blogs, whatever. But what I believe the problem is, we are not making our story pitches sexy. Whether we like it or not, the media is a business and reporters and producers have to attract readers or viewers in order to attract advertisers. People sitting in a room listening to a speaker is not sexy. People handing out scholarship money isn’t sexy. So what we need to do is find sexy ways to tell about the impact we have on the community. So, that is why Vicki and I are here today. To help “sex up” Kiwanis. I should say – these are my words and not the words of International.

As newsrooms shrink around the nation, reporters are hungry for interesting stories that are easy to package—make their job easier with a compelling story, a great person to interview, great visuals and some data, and you have a much better chance of making the cut. Waste their time with a scatter-gun approach, and you might risk that they won’t take your call or read your email when it counts.
Vicki
Let’s play a little game. Let’s look at these examples, and you tell me: Is it news...or is it not?

Your club is presenting a check for $1,000 to the fire department. (Ask how this could become news)
Your club is hosting a free car seat safety check in partnership with the fire department. –What would make this even better? You have booked the mayor to make opening remarks and help you present a check for $1,000 to the fire department to keep the event going next year.
Your club is donating trauma dolls to the local hospital.
Your club is hosting a community pancake breakfast fundraiser.
Your district is planning an event to break a world-record for pancakes served—proceeds go to The Eliminate Project.
There’s some debate about whether news releases are worth it. My take is, they are relevant and useful—if they’re done right. They can provide a reporter, blogger, editor or producer the basics that compel them to want more. Some outlets will even run a news release “as is” if it’s compelling enough. And, while I believe the real hook is in a few quick “pitch” sentences (verbal or written), including the press release makes it easy for a busy reporter to delve a little deeper right away if they’re interested.

Plus, writing the press release gives you a chance to put your Key Messages into practice and become more familiar with your messaging—so you’ll be more prepared for the big interview. But more on that later.
Steve

HAND OUT SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE. Kiwanis blank and Steve’s example
-Contact information—phone and email
-Headline
-Kicker
-Dateline
-Body
-Boilerplate

Steve: What I can tell you, the format of the news release doesn’t matter as long as the key information is there. And that key information is the 5 Ws – who, what, when, where and why. And we can’t stress enough to include contact information – email and cell phone.

So among the handouts there is a news release I wrote to convince the media to cover the Circle K convention this past summer. Does anything stand out to you? Do you think it’s sexy? If you were a reporter, would you cover this story? Obviously, I think it is a brilliant piece of work. There were about 300 people on my media distribution list for Nashville. How many reporters do you think covered the story? Two – a TV station and a newspaper the homeless community produces. I tell you this so you don’t get frustrated if you don’t get any bites. I wasn’t in the morning meetings when this story was being discussed, so I don’t know why it wasn’t covered. It could have been staffing. Or better options for stories. Maybe they already had a similar type of story set up. I don’t know. There are many reasons.
Finding the Right Reporters

- Do your homework
  - Check news outlet websites to find reporters’ beats
- Read, watch, listen to the reporter or bloggers’ most recent stories
- Use a personal touch whenever possible
- Build your list

1. Check news outlet websites— I want to get the feel for the types of stories they cover. Every news outlet has a different personality. I’ve had to sit through too many marketing meetings where we discussed the brand of the station. In Cleveland, we were the troubleshooters. We solved problems for the viewers. So we looked for stories that fit that brand. Stories that showed we help people. NewsChannel 5 – Proud to be on your side. In Pittsburgh, the slogan was “Taking Action Four you.” The brand was investigative – making sure the people who have power were not misusing it. In Indianapolis, the brand was Hoosier values – hard working, family issues, corruption is bad. So, we reported stories that fit into that “feeling” the marketing department was trying to promote. See—I told you, it’s a business that just wasn’t fun anymore. News is news. But anyway, I tell you this so you can figure out a news outlets personality. With that information, you know the kind of stories they cover. You can figure out their personality by seeing the kinds of stories they cover.

2. As you’re going through the websites, you’re going to start noticing the bylines (names) for different reporters. Take note of the ones who seem to have an interest in the kind of things we do. Then, stalk that reporter. Ok, not really stalk. But research the person. Read a few of their most recent stories, follow them on Twitter and Facebook. Stay current with their body of work that way so you can reference a recent story—especially if your story ties in with any of them.

3. Knowing a reporters body of work – which is called a beat – helps you make that reporter feel special. Stroke their ego. If a reporter thinks he/she is one of many getting your pitch, they sometimes aren’t interested. We are a competitive bunch always trying to get a better story than someone else.

4. Another way to do homework is to call or email us at KI. We subscribe to an excellent reporter database, and we might be able to help you find the right reporter or media list.

5. Then build your list. Make a chart of reporters, contact information, news outlets and a space for notes. Vicki keeps these as excel sheets. Excel and I are not friends, so I use word. Make a list that works for you.

As we mentioned earlier, with newsrooms shrinking and communications distractions increasing, reporters, bloggers, editors and producers have little time to entertain pitches that are a miss. Send a bad story idea, and you might not get through next time.
Now that you’ve identified the right reporters, editors or producers, it’s time to reach out to them with your story. Be ready with your “pitch”—a few sexy sentences about why your story is important and would be of interest to readers/viewers/listeners. As I told you, I received 200 pitches a day. I didn’t have time to listen to more than 30 seconds. And, I knew within 15 seconds if I was going to cover the story or not. So, your sexy pitch has to be fast and to the point. Then right away, tell them what you can offer to make their job easier—tell them you can set up an interview and get them visuals.

We just talked about finding the right people – now you need to contact them.

1. **The individual approach:** Call or email reporters individually—sometimes you might have a story idea that you know would be a great fit or get more play by pitching it exclusively to a single reporter. This can work in your favor to give a story to a single reporter first—but just be aware that others who you left out won’t be happy. You’ll want to share the love later with other story opportunities.
   - The research you did earlier should tell you whether it’s best to call or email the reporter.
2. **Bulk contact:** Send an email to everyone on your list using email merge
   - Apparently this is easy. Set up a word document with the short pitch paragraph, and set a merge field for the reporter’s name in a casual greeting. After the pitch, paste your press release—remember: Don’t attach it! If you need help, ask Vicki.
   - Be sure to double check your merge to make sure reporter names match up with their email address! If you send a release to a person and call them the wrong name or identify them at the wrong media outlet, the pitch is trashed. I can’t tell you how many times that happened to me. And only once did I read beyond the wrong name because the subject line had a really sexy pitch. We did the story.
   - Avoid the temptation to just copy lots of reporters; if you can’t do the merge, a blind copy of your list would be the next best option. Or, if your list is short, send emails individually.
3. **Twitter pitch?** Maybe. If you are active on Twitter, follow the reporter’s Twitter account to see if they’re accepting pitches via social media. Twitter is a great way to also follow what reporters are interested in and writing about.
4. **Whatever approach you take,** before you pick up the phone or hit send on an email, be sure you are ready to respond if a reporter “bites” on your idea! That means being ready to talk about your story idea (event, fundraiser, etc) in more detail or connecting the reporter for an interview.
5. **Accept “No” graciously,** and always offer to be a resource in the future.
Vicki

• You provide a necessary component that reporters need: an expert source.
• When a reporter contacts you, respond as soon as you can. Be accessible, build your relationship with the reporter. THEY HAVE DEADLINES ALL DAY
• But don’t get too cozy that you think you can share gossip that you wouldn’t want to see in print/broadcast. NOTHING IS OFF THE RECORD
• Media is 24/7, and with social media, stories often push out on Twitter first, then to actual news sites. We love to get our news instantaneously. Reporters are under more pressure than ever to get stories together quickly. Check and respect their deadlines. Goes a long way to build credibility with reporters.

Try not to miss an opportunity
When a reporter calls to set up an interview, find out what they are envisioning for the final product. This will help you prepare for the interview and help meet the reporter’s expectations -- which means it will be easier to get coverage next time.

If this is for the newspaper, will it be a feature article? A news brief? Or a news article.

A feature article is a longer story where a reporter will likely spend some time around the project or event. They will capture the essence of the event generally by focusing on one person, either a participant or recipient. This is a journalism school staple -- all the teachers teach this -- the reporter tells the story through the eyes of one person. To make this kind of story work, the person must be interesting with a great story to tell about why they are volunteering or why they need the help of Kiwanis.

A news brief will be a paragraph or two. This will cover only the basic elements of who, what, when, where and why. The reporter will not spend much time on this story.

A news article is the basic newspaper story. It will be straightforward coverage. They will conduct several interviews and try to add some color to the story. We have been taught in journalism school that we need three sources for this kind of story -- although that requirement isn’t as stringent as it used to be.

If the story will be on television, find out the length of time they plan on dedicating to it.

A VO, also called voice over, is the most basic story. The anchor delivers the story from the anchor desk. It lasts about 20 seconds. They may choose to add a soundbite, which will add another 20 seconds to the length. A videographer will come to your event and record some video. Make sure there is plenty of activity. People sitting around tables is boring tv. When the producer hears that is the video, the story will be cut from the newscast.

There are also reporter packages. This is a longer story, between 1 and 2 minutes on tv. These type of stories need a lot of visual elements, as a “shot” last for 3 to 5 seconds. A reporter or videographer will typically talk to several people and then will piece the story together in time for deadline.
There are a few things you can do to ensure your interaction with the media is a success. Most important: prepare:

1. Develop key messages to stay focused and drive the point you want media to pick up—we’ll talk more about Key messages in a moment.
2. Remember who your audience is—The reporter, producer, blogger or editor—but also his/her readers, listeners and viewers. Who is reading watching and listening to them? For example, if you are pitching a segment on a noon news show, think about who is able to tune in over the lunch hour: it’s Great for cooking segments – pancake breakfast? Again, a little research at a news outlet’s website will tell you this answer if you don’t already know.
3. Use your club’s name. If you don’t the reporter might not also. You want your club associated with whatever good message is being told in the story!
5. Sell yourself and keep your energy up. Your story idea has a been chance of catching on with a busy reporter if you sound genuinely passionate. Don’t collapse, or mumble something at the end when you think the interview is over...
Vicki

Remember: If a reporter is listening to you, it’s because you have information or a story that he or she is interested in. You are the expert, and there are some easy things you can do to keep control of the interview:

1. **Know the basic facts about your club and Kiwanis International.** Use the “Just The Facts” that’s available online. I keep this handy when I talk to reporters so I don’t stumble over facts I should know. I also often offer to send it to reporters as a follow up, to make their job easier.

2. **Be succinct—don’t ramble.** We’re almost ready to talk about Key Messages, but it’s important to include this as a way to keep control of the interview. If there are some key pieces you want a reporter to pick up on—say them. And repeat them. If you don’t want something printed—or if there is additional information that might take the reporter off your main topic of interest, leave it out.
   1. Recently had a Kiwanian interviewed for a major publication. When the story was printed, it was a nice story, but this person’s quote was a little odd and really not on message. He was surprised and wondered incredulously why the reporter printed that quote when he had said so many other things more pertinent to his topic. Can anyone tell me why the reporter printed it? (ask audience—offer because he said it; his rambling may have confused the reporter; he derailed himself from his key messages)

3. **Be comfortable with silence.** This is especially true in a negative interview situation—in crisis communication—because some reporters use silence to try to lure the interviewee into saying more than he/she wants to say. By nature, we want to fill silence. Resist the urge. More often, you won’t be in a crisis situation, but by filling silence with ramblings, you will dilute your key messages. Most often, reporters are just being quiet, because they’re taking notes or forming their next question. It’s OK to just stop when you have completed your sentence.

4. **Be consistent.**
Staying on Message
Communications is a difficult process…even when you are speaking the same language. Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them.

1. People are distracted… minds are wandering; receiving 1000s of messages every minute…from messaging…up to 3,000 a day, according to the Newspaper Association….ads on grocery receipts, …on Smart phones/Groupons…everywhere..

2. People can have a hard time understanding messaging…may need to hear it a few times

3. Edelman Study shows repetition is key. Must hear it 3-5 times to believe it
Vicki

Liken it to the headline of a newspaper or the teaser on the nightly TV news…what do I want people to remember if I just can say one thing…Keep them to THREE messages, and no more. Your messages can have talk points after them—like key stats and data that support the message—but you need to focus the most on knowing your three key messages: Tell them what you want to tell them. Tell them. And then tell them what you told them.

Authentic passion – speaking from your heart.

Remember there might be different reporters for print and online at a newspaper.
Once you have your Key Messages developed, you can use them beyond a media interview. You can use them in speeches, presentations, communications to your club members and even advertising! Memorize your key messages so that you can fit them easily into your conversation and interview.

Generally, key messages are easiest to remember in threes – three focused points

Your club itself might have key messages—what are the three messages, in general, you want people to know about you. For example, one thing that interested me in joining my Kiwanis club was that the president could very quickly articulate that our club is:
1. Social and active in the community
2. Has a great Pints for Half Pints beer fundraiser
3. Focuses our fundraising on STEM education in mid-town schools
VICKI

We can do this exercise now and you can think about it during lunch, or we can wait and keep this for the next session DEPENDING ON TIME.

1. Kiwanis International is a global organization made up of members and clubs all over the world.
2. Kiwanis members and clubs perform service projects to improve their communities locally and around the world.
3. Kiwanis’ service is mainly focused on work that improves the lives of children.

4. Who we are, why do we exist, what do we do?
What are the key messages from The Eliminate Project?

1. The Eliminate Project: Kiwanis eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus is a global campaign in partnership with UNICEF that will save and protect millions of mothers and newborns.
2. Tetanus infects newborns, spreading quickly, causing terrible pain and killing within days. It’s a terrible disease, preventing even the comfort of a mother’s touch—but it’s highly preventable.
3. Maternal and Neonatal tetanus (MNT) is easily prevented by a series of three vaccine doses to women of childbearing age, costing roughly US$1.80.
EXERCISE

What do YOU think are the 100th Anniversary Key Messages for Kiwanis?

VICKI

1. It is rare for an organization to remain strong for 100 years, and Kiwanis is excited to celebrate our 100th anniversary in 2015.
2. Kiwanis has a proud history of millions of members and clubs around the world making a difference in their communities.
3. As Kiwanis celebrates a century of service, we look forward to kicking off our next 100 years as an organization that’s strong and dedicated to making a difference in the world.
Vicki

Backpack brigade scenario

Exercise 1:
Now it’s time for you to come up with your own Key Messages. In front of you, you’ll find a scenario that outlines a fictional club project. Read through the scenario, and then work through the worksheet to come up with your key messages. Let’s take the next 10 TO 15 minutes to write your key messages, work through the worksheet and then find a partner to share what you came up with and why.

(ask a few to share their messages)

Exercise 2:
Now, with a partner, think of an upcoming Kiwanis project or the Centennial celebration events you will be working on and if or how that might be a good story for a reporter. Work together to develop key messages for your projects. Take about 10-15 minutes to work through this.

Hang onto these, we’ll use them again in a bit.
The Interview
Vicki
So you’ve identified a project, developed key messages, written a press release, found a reporter to send a pitch to – now you are ready for the interview.

Different mediums call for different tips:
1. For TV interviews—dress appropriately
   1. For an on-site interview at a service project, wear a logo’ed shirt. Make sure you are standing with logos over your shoulders in background!
   2. For an in-studio interview: Guys and girls, wear a jacket and shirt of light, solid color. No houndstooth or stripes. Nothing distracting. Keep make-up simple.
   3. Look at the reporter and interact with him/her
   4. Exaggerate your movements just a bit
   5. If standing, stand comfortably—don’t rock or fidget.
   6. Smile!
2. For Radio
   1. Take your notes with you—no one can see them. Be sure to bring a fact sheet for the interviewer.
   2. Smile—it shows up in your voice. Use extra inflection.
3. For newspaper or blog
   1. Treat the interview like it’s a TV interview
4. Always, always, always thank the reporter and ask him/her when the story will run
Speech anxiety ranks high on the list of greatest fears. For some people, it’s just butterflies in the stomach. For others – it’s complete incapacitation. My best friend is a doctor – so she’s smart and talented – but she shuts down and starts crying if she has to give a presentation. It’s how each person is wired… and there’s nothing wrong with that. Obviously, I would not identify Dr. Annie as the spokesperson for an event. I would find someone who thrives in the spotlight.

The University of Pittsburgh did some research. They found the audience generally wants you to succeed. So does the Journalist. If you’re a bad interview, I’ve just wasted my time and have to go find someone who is a good interview. A Journalist will do everything possible to salvage the interview. As an example, I was doing an interview and it was terrible. So I started flirting – a complete turnaround. Whatever it takes to get the story.

And, most of the time, your interview won’t be live – so if you get lost in a sentence, you can start over and do it again. People did that with me all the time. I didn’t care. And remember, the reporter is likely going to use 10-20 seconds of the interview. You’ll find waiting for the interview is the worst part. Once you’re in it – it’s just a conversation between two people. The reporter will put you at ease. They do this all the time.

But if you continue to be nervous, chances are you’ll speak softer and flatter than usual. Compensate for that by speaking with more energy and louder. This shouldn’t be hard because chances are you are excited about your project.

This is easier said than done – but try to replace the uh’s, um’s, ah’s, you know’s and OK’s with a pause. It’s ok to stop talking for a second.

- Use plenty of inflection – not monotone. This shouldn’t be a problem because you are excited about the work your club is doing. Show the excitement.

- Use plenty of inflection. Accentuate key words and phrases. Serving the children of the world… improving the community… eliminating a disease from the earth. These are all pretty important things we are doing. Put emphasis on them.

- Vary your pace and volume. It just makes listening to you easier. It’s what you do with a friend. The reporter is your friend.

- Use pauses to mark transitions in your remarks, or to emphasize a point.

- Pause occasionally so interviewer can absorb. Let the reporter catch up with their notes.

- Be yourself – humorous, relaxed, knowledgeable. Epitomize Kiwanis. It’s who we are. It’s what we do. We’re good people.
Nicole hands out bridge sheet

Vicki:
Remember those key messages? Those points you want to be sure make it into your video clip, quote or sound bite? Bridges are a way to make sure you get to say them—and repeat them.
VICKI

Today show interview that is an great example of message control.

Steve hands out bridging fact sheet
VICKI

Now it’s your turn. Please return to the partner you worked with for your club or Centennial celebration tour key messages. Choose one of you to play reporter and the other to be interviewee. We’ll spend 15 minutes practicing interviewing.

What went well? What didn’t? Was it harder than you thought? Easier? Why?

Who would like to come to the front and demonstrate with us? Time permitting, choose 2-3 volunteers and work through their scenarios. Steve is reporter for one volunteer.
Vicki

We’re not going to spend a lot of time today talking about crisis communications—what to do if something bad happens in or to your club. Unfortunately, it does happen in Kiwanis, and part of our job is to help you if it does. Most important, if you are faced with what could be a tough media situation, call us immediately. Best is before a reporter calls YOU. It will be important that you:

1. Find out what the reporter wants to know—that’s a fair question.
2. Find out the reporter’s timeframe.
3. Don’t answer speculative questions or get sucked into an accidental interview.
4. Call us.
   1. We can either guide you or serve as a spokesperson on your behalf.
Steve

Social media is a great way to let your friends know what you’re doing, so sharing a club project or meeting is a good way to engage potential new members. It’s a great way to share what your club is doing, whether it’s a pancake breakfast or a service project.

Just keep it simple, avoid excessive exclamation points, make sure everything is spelled correctly, and provide a link if you are sharing a story.

Don’t worry about a hashtag unless you are relating to an event where everyone is using a hashtag.

Try to schedule or send your posts in the morning, at mid-day or in the evening – times when people might be checking their social media – such as breakfast, lunch, or the evening.

To keep your content fresh, post at least every few days. You can repurpose our facebook posts – Share a post and say Look what this club is doing for a service project.
Summary

WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT PITCHES

KISS
KEEP IT SHORT, STUPID

BREVITY
"The key to good pitching is brevity. Don’t assume the audience can understand or pick up the pieces.

PITCH ME
If you can’t explain without asking your boss to, Google it and then hand it over the next best thing you can, you can’t explain it.

CONTENT
"The content is far more important to me than the pitch. If it’s a good story, then you can sometimes change facts, and change the numbers. It’s going to work in the end.

TELL A STORY
"The best company tell a story. It’s a great way to talk about the good work you do in your role and the very best of what you think.

11/24/2014
Summary

- Preparation is the key
- Know, use key messages
- Reporters use YOU as the expert
- You can control the interview through key messaging, bridging and knowing when to stop
- Thank the reporters for their interest
In a few days, we’ll send you a survey and the link to download the presentation will be included in that message.