

**CLA Presentation Outline: Effective Media Relations (April 27, 2022)**  
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Preview:

1. Show of hands: Those who work for media outlets (radio stations, TV programs, etc.) vs. those who do not (non-profits, others who want media attention, etc.).
2. In the Christian conservative world of non-profit, we are up against some formidable communications clutter known as “hard news” in the courtroom of public opinion. The key to help your organization break through that communications clutter is to understand why you should be doing media interviews in the first place. Here’s a “secret”: it’s not to generate news coverage or 15 minutes of fame. The only reason why any person, company, corporation, or non-profit organization should engage with the media is to accomplish the organization’s mission, or more precisely, to motivate people to respond in ways that benefit your organization so that your organization can accomplish its mission.
3. We will explain why and how an organization’s approach to media relations should revolve around this central goal, and why it is not at odds with providing solid, engaging content to media outlets that are looking for good material.

Strategy:

1. The big picture of what an organization is doing. Strategy answers the question of why you are doing media interview in the first place: to accomplish the mission of your organization.
2. The mission drives everything that you do in media relations. That means you only engage with the media when you believe that there truly is an opportunity to move the mission forward. The big picture about a “mission-focused” strategy is to use the media interview to frame the issue that your organization is dealing with.
3. Think about why your organization exists. Mission-driven media relations means no mission drift.
4. Will the media opportunity further your organization’s mission? Is it a target worth talking to? (Example of ADF receiving call about the Second Amendment: ADF is an alliance-building, non-profit legal organization committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, parental rights, and the sanctity of life. So, if news reporters would contact ADF for a response to a gun control issue, would we agree to do the interview? Of course not, because it wouldn’t help us accomplish the overall mission of ADF.)
5. On the other hand, if ADF has an opportunity to effectively frame an issue with the public regarding the right of people to freely live out their faith, we will carefully consider it. Why? Because it’s an opportunity to accomplish very specific things, including generating new cases, new allied attorneys, prayer support, new ministry friends, new media contacts, and financial contributions.
6. We don’t chase interviews, we choose them. It’s similar to case selection that lawyers use: They don’t accept every case that comes across their desks; they pick the cases that will allow them to accomplish specific objectives in court.
7. Productive media relations are driven by your organization’s mission...not by news coverage or by the personalities of your organization.
8. The key to success is to fully align media relations with your organization’s mission, then move the right message to the right media targets who will bring your message to the people who will respond in ways that benefit your organization.
9. None of this is inconsistent with quality guests and quality content. The fact that an organization is attempting to further their mission does not mean media outlets should settle for a lousy

interview. Members of the media who are professional will look for guests and organizations that know their stuff and can present it in a compelling and credible manner.

10. Focusing on furthering your mission does not mean providing dull content. Don't think you can further your mission through media if you do not understand why media outlets exist and what they need.

#### Mindset:

1. Once we choose the interviews, establishing the right mindset is critical.
2. Why does the media call anybody for an interview? It's because the media is always looking for someone who knows what they are talking about and how to talk about it. They are looking for the "expert." If your mindset going into the interview is, "I'm the expert," you are going to lose the interview before it begins because the only reason you should be doing the interview is to accomplish your organization's mission, not to enjoy 5, 10, or 15 minutes of fame as "the expert" in a news story.
3. Your mindset in the interview has to be, "I have a message to get out, and I'm going to use this interview for that sole purpose...." The reporter's mindset is, "I need a soundbite from a credible source that really knows what they're talking about, and I want information or a quote that no other reporter will have in their story." The question is who is going to be more disciplined: you or the reporter?
4. If your mindset is, "I'm the expert. I have all the answers to whatever the questions I am going to be asked," you will give the reporter exactly what he/she wants (which is not usually to accomplish your mission), and you're not using the media interview to get your message out. (In other words, if you plan on responding to the questions without including your message, you've already lost the interview.) On the other hand, if your mindset is clearly set on accomplishing the mission, framing the issue, and getting the message out, your interviews will generate results that are productive and powerful in moving your mission forward.
5. This approach also makes preparing for media interviews so much easier. When your mission is to get your message out, you don't have to worry about having a perfect answer for any possible question that might get thrown at you. Henry Kissinger once famously asked reporters at a press conference, "Do you have questions for my answers?"
6. How can the media help you?
  - a. Whether the media is your friend or enemy depends to a great extent on how you deal with the media.
  - b. The media can help you lobby/activate/engage supporters, donors, ministry friends, raise money, build direct marketing lists, start a debate, continue the debate, change the debate...all of this and more to help you accomplish your mission.
7. What the media cannot do.
  - a. Can't fully educate. There simply isn't enough time in an interview to communicate everything a person needs to know about an issue.
  - b. Can't fully inform. There are too many other options available outside of the media that allow people to obtain complete information on a topic or issue.
  - c. Can't change the world's mind in a five-minute interview.
8. Understanding the reporter's job.
  - a. The news business is a for-profit industry.
  - b. In reality, a reporter's job is to put something together, content, that allows newspapers, TV, cable, and/or Web-based media to sell advertising.
  - c. So the reporter's job is to help generate revenue for the media company for which he or she works.

- d. Content is created through news and information gathering, good quotes, visuals, reliable sources for interviews.
9. Understanding your job.
    - a. Deliver mission-focused messaging.
    - b. When you engage with the media, it is your job to frame the issue, stay on message, repeat the message, and move your mission forward.
    - c. Your job is not to be the expert or to become famous. Your only reason to do the interview is to get your mission-focused message out and do it in a way that also provides interesting and reputable content to the media.
  10. What happens if the interview doesn't go well?
    - a. When the interview doesn't go as well as it should, it's very easy to say, "Well, that's media bias." But was it media bias, or did the story turn out to be something other than what you wanted because you went into the interview with the wrong mindset and gave the reporter the very thing you didn't want them to say? If the latter, you should have used the reporter's questions to transition to framing the issue the way you wanted to so that you could have delivered your mission-focused message to the reporter's audience. [video clip]

#### Elements of Effective Messaging:

1. Messaging format essentials.
  - a. Agreement (shared values). Example: "A woman's life is worth more than Planned Parenthood's bottom line."
  - b. Emotion/Story.
  - c. Logic (personalizes the shared values; here's how the shared value affects you.): Example: "The proponents of death work diligently to restrict the information people have about life."
  - d. Facts (the information you need to understand that support the logic).
  - e. Repetition is the key to retention. Audiences are getting younger and attention spans are getting shorter.
2. In reality, most of us don't communicate this way. We've all got our own communication style—maybe we lean heavily into facts, maybe into emotions, maybe into logic. Getting a message across in a media interview is like learning a new language—what works interpersonally doesn't always work on a camera.
3. Messaging format explanation.
  - a. We have less than 10 seconds to get a person's attention, so if we start with a shared value, you and I are agreeing that we have the same belief at heart, and that opens the door to...
  - b. Emotion/Story: This gives the audience something to care about—sure, they agree with you, but *why* should they do something about it?
  - c. Logic, which is how my shared value will have an impact on your life.
  - d. The facts simply provide all the information that you need to understand.
  - e. Repetition or frequency of messaging is important. How many times have we told you this morning that you should only use the media interview to accomplish your mission or your organization's mission? Some communications consultants will tell you that it takes seven impressions to notice a message, 10 impressions to understand a message, and 12 impressions to retain a message. Repetition in effective messaging is key.
4. Miscellaneous "brass tacks": news releases, one-page summaries, websites, etc.
5. Example of effective execution of messaging discipline that achieved the desired results. [video]

#### Conclusion and Q&A