Graduate Students in Extension

“Working with the Media” Workshop by Ann Brody Guy

5/8/15

* Introductions
	+ Mostly ESPM and ERG
	+ Mostly more advanced students
	+ Training is based on the training run for faculty and post-docs
* Why work with the media?
	+ Help tell stories
	+ Shape your message
	+ More control over framing
	+ Not much effort, often good rewards
	+ Famous media personalities like Michael Pollen and Neil DeGras Tyson are powerful and reach a wide audience
	+ Communicate with the public who fund science
	+ Raise profile of your workplace
	+ Help reporters get the stories right
	+ Contributes to accurate science reporting
	+ “Preparing a quote that is quote and accessible allows reports to get the stories right”
* Goals
	+ Learn to convey points effectively
	+ Learn some tools to interact conformably with the media
	+ Learn to be in control of what you want to say
	+ Understand current media environment
* What is news?
	+ New, novel, challenge to status quo thinking, highly public facing topic, normally focused on results
	+ NOT – anniversaries, small awards, small and mid sized grants, something that has been covered extensively, breakthroughs that are significant but so technical that only other scientists will care
	+ News depends on the news outlet
	+ Also anything of interest that is peer reviewed can get picked up and make a splash
* Scenarios for media interviews
	+ Story on your study findings
	+ Expert commentary on topic in your research area
	+ Hot seat/conflict/ controversy
* When a reporter calls
	+ Get information about the reporter
		- Name, outlet, phone, deadline
		- Deadline is often within a couple hours, important to know
	+ Get information about the story
		- Is the premise correct?
		- Are you the right source or can you recommend a better one?
	+ OK to tell them you’ll call back
		- Take time to collect your thoughts but note their deadlines. They often put out multiple calls for experts
* Preparing for an Interview
	+ Create a key message – an overarching idea that can be expressed simply in one or two sentences
	+ Quotes and sound bytes are SHORT and reporters are always in a hurry
	+ Assume you are going to be cut short
	+ Reporters do quote from a press release
	+ However, prepare additional talking points so you are clear on what you want say regardless of the question are asked.
	+ Message examples
		- Drought is changing wildlife behavior in the Wst, and humans must understand and adjust
		- New user-friendly websites uses CA climate change data available to help practioners….
	+ Establish context/relevance: what is the societal or scientific problem?
		- Specific problem, larger scale context, power fact, cultural context
		- “Integrating renewables into the grid poses a fundamentally new problems”
		- “One in 3 American’s is obsess” – power fact
	+ Non-scientists can understand complex things if you give them a familiar idea to build on
		- Forrest fire example: compare fires to earthquakes, anticipation not reaction
			* “We don’t try to fight earthquakes – we anticipate them in the way we plan
		- New website makes climate data available in a user-friendly format for planners, policy makers, and the public
			* “Users can…”
	+ Delivering your message
		- Say it simply. Avoid or define jargon
		- Avoid getting bogged down in protracted explanations
		- Make your point and stop (RESIST the urge to fill pauses)
	+ Staying on message
		- Redirect the conversation (“There isn’t a simple answer to that, but what’s important to remember is…”)
		- Beware of loaded questions and questions with assumptions
			* “I’m glad you are giving me the opportunity to explain that assumption”
			* “I can’t help but notice that there’s an assumption”
		- Don’t accept false facts or incorrect interpretations
			* EX: “Seeding clouds in the best way to combat climate change” -> “I’m glad you brought that up, actually, that’s 1980’s technology and we’ve come a long way.”
		- It’s OK to say I don’t know
		- It’s OK to start over and rephrase your answer
* Media formats and platforms
	+ Everyone is looking for content and always scouting
	+ Our owned-media ecosystems
		- Departments, up to the Colleges, up the UC system
* Broadcasts tips
	+ Ask about format (live? Sound byte? Location? Purpose?)
	+ Voice and appearance are part of the message that comes through the camera
		- Comb hair, dress neatly, **wear make-up** (make up is actually very important so you don’t look dead). Never refuse offered make-up.
		- Talk in a conversational tone, don’t be overly animated with tone , facial expressions, or body language
		- Lock in eye contact with the intereviewer, don’t look at the camera and don’t let your eyes wander
		- Sound authoritivative: deliver answers with confidence, avoid ending sentences on an up note.
* Social media
	+ People are more likely to read stories from a known source
	+ Can exist in its own right or amplify stories in other media
	+ Quality vs. quantity: high-value followers can be just as good and quantity.
	+ Tailor your message for the platform
* All media is visual
	+ Have pictures for all your information
	+ Document your research with photos, videos, vines
	+ Take high resolution files
	+ Record details, locations, and names of people in your photos.
	+ Many people only look at pictures or pictures and quotes
	+ IRG and human subjects, is this an issue? 🡪 If you don’t use it in your research (analyzing it) then it’s not under your IRB, unless the video is connected directly to the subjects
		- Best to get a release form. You can get these from the CNR media website (maybe?), if you are already doing paperwork at all, then have them sign a release form
		- Can use photos that don’t identify people (hands holding plants)
	+ At public events, you don’t need release forms
* QUESTIONS:
	+ Hot seat/conflict issues: what to do if contacted 🡪 generally direct them to the communications department.
		- Don’t sugar coat issues, but can provide emphasis
	+ NOTE: Julie wants ESPM to send her any ideas about news stories
	+ It’s valuable to you to use media to get your science out
	+ How to get into high profile op-ed pieces
		- Make your language accessible
	+ How to approach reporters
		- Personal relationships are good
		- Making a good pitch
		- Make sure media know about what you are doing
		- Press releases for news worthy stories (study a press release)
		- Practice!