



Media 101

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NYSUT Communications



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Interacting with the Media

- Proactive
 - Initiating the story
 - You reach out to the reporter
 - Getting in front of the crisis
- Reactive
 - Responding to the story
 - The reporter reaches out to you
 - Mitigating the crisis



Proactive Media Relations

- A member receives a national award for their work; you put out a press release announcing the good news.
- Amid stalled contract negotiations, you put out a media advisory for a rally ahead of the school board meeting.
- Members are doing amazing things.

Watertown Daily Times, N.Y.

After national music award, the beat goes on for Charles Heck at Indian River

Chris Brock, Watertown Daily Times, N.Y.

June 2, 2023 · 16 min read



Jun. 2—PHILADELPHIA — A prestigious national award that Charles R. Heck received in April could have been a high note to retire on after more than four decades as a music educator at Indian River Central School District.

Cheektowaga-Sloan teachers union cuts ribbon on new food pantry to help meet district need

Ben Tsujimoto May 20, 2023 Updated May 21, 2023 16

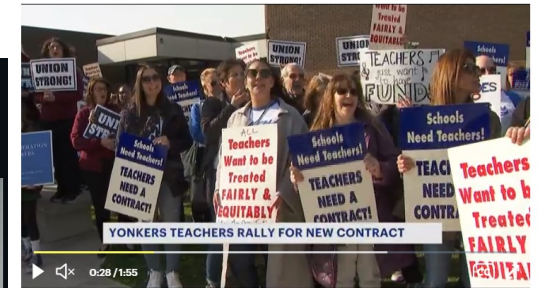


Community members gather around the newly-built "Little Free Pantry" as it is unveiled outside the Teamsters Local 449 on Saturday, May 20, 2023. The Cheektowaga-Sloan Teachers' Association and Teamsters Local 449 teamed up to debut a new food pantry to help address food insecurity in Cheektowaga.

Yonkers teachers rally to demand fair contract

Apr 19, 2023, 5:56pm · Updated on Apr 19, 2023

By: News 12 Staff



What is your goal?

- Who is your intended audience?
- Why do you want to tell a story?
 - Is this important to anyone besides me/us?
 - How do we make it important to others?
- What is the message you want to convey?
- What is the best way to deliver your message?

Advisory vs. Press Release

- Media advisory
 - Send to press before an event
 - Who, what, when, where and why
 - Must entice the media to cover the event
 - What is the hook?
- Press release
 - Send to press after an event
 - Quotes, pictures, video
 - Write in a way a busy TV producer or overworked newspaper editor can copy and paste

Timing is Everything

- Be strategic.
- Send reminders and follow ups.
 - Assignment editors are busy and have tons of emails flooding their inboxes.
 - They need multiple reminders.
 - A phone call the morning of the event can help!

One Bite at the Apple

- Reporters and assignment editors are overworked, underpaid, and very busy.
- Get all your ducks in a row before contacting media.
- What is your "hook?"
 - Are there a lot of people attending?
 - Will important dignitaries be there?
 - What makes your story relevant?
- If you hold a similar event just a few weeks later, do not expect press to cover it unless something drastic has changed.

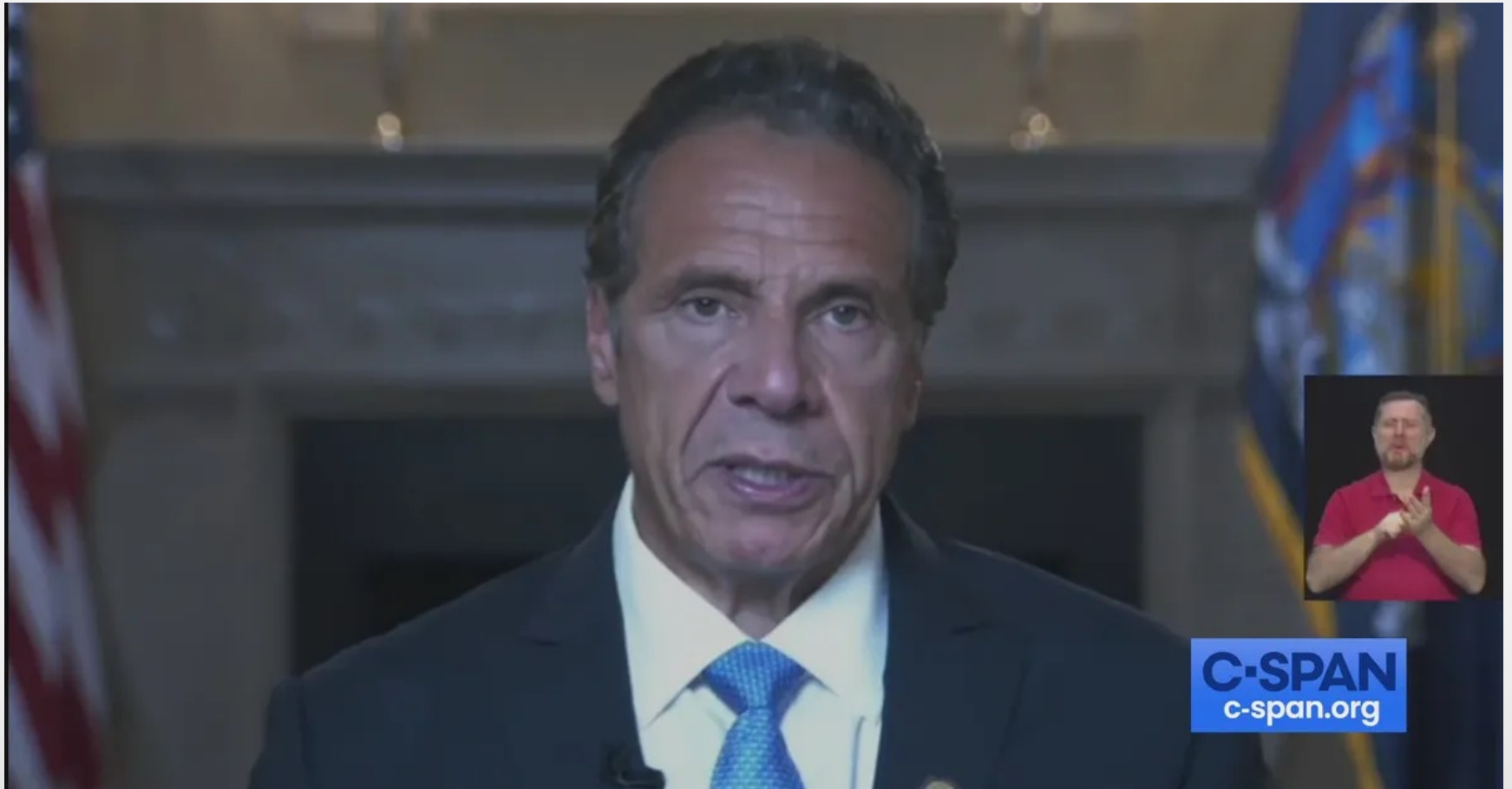


Reactive Media Relations

- The school board takes a controversial vote that rankles parents; a reporter calls for comment from the union.
- A member is brought up on disciplinary charges and word spreads quickly among students and parents; a reporter calls asking if the union is defending that member.



Part 3: The Crisis



Crisis communications

- It takes a lifetime to build a public image but only minutes to dismantle it
- In the court of public opinion, you're guilty until proven innocent
- But ... crises also can present an opportunity

Handling the crisis

- Step 1: Gather facts
- Step 2: Consider your obligations
- Step 3: Consider your options
- Step 4: Prepare your talking points
- Step 5: Respond as appropriate, using an appropriate medium

“No comment” — friend or foe?

- No comment is a comment
 - Not commenting protects you from blowback resulting from taking a hard position
 - Not commenting can be considered an indictment on its own
- Deliver it carefully
 - “‘No comment’ is a big no-no”
 - “We are in the process of gathering information at this time.”
 - “This is not a matter I can discuss the specifics of.”
 - “We are reviewing the matter.”
- Stick to it
- Don’t get caught flat-footed



After the crisis

- Work doesn't always end when the crisis does
- Consider your options for rebuilding your image
 - 1 negative message = 3 positive messages
- Work with third-party validators
- At the very least, work on your response plan for next time

How do you handle the crisis?

- Emails between teachers discussing a student's behavior and academic record are leaked; the emails include inappropriate jokes about the student
- The district puts out a statement condemning the educators and promising strict discipline
- After the district refers a newspaper reporter to the union, the reporter calls asking to speak with the teachers involved and with the local president for comment about the allegations

What's the step-by-step media plan?



Crisis story example



Part 4: The Interview



The interview request

A reporter is on the phone, now what?

- Consider the interview topic (don't know? **ASK**)
- Consider the reporter
- Consider the audience
- Consider the medium
- Ask for a deadline
 - When does the reporter need to speak with you by?
 - When is the story going to run?

Preparing for the interview

- Think about what you want to say
 - Cheat sheets are OK (though not always accessible)
 - Go into the interview with a plan for what you want to say over and over again
 - Be concise!
- Prepare for the medium
 - Phone interview? Make sure you're on a good line
 - Radio interview? Ditto; and make sure not to obstruct your speech (don't chew gum, don't wear jewelry that will bump the mouth piece, don't do the interview outside in the wind)
 - TV interview? Consider your outfit and the setting; seek permission for in-person interviews at school as necessary

Doing the interview

- Speak clearly
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification
- Don't worry about dead air
- Say what you want to say; use a “bridge” if you need to
- Keep it polite and professional
- Repeat your most important point
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How to “bridge”

- Bridging = affirm-answer-redirect
- Verbal bridges can help you hit your talking points
- Examples:
 - “I think X is important, but I think it’s equally important to understand Y”
 - “I know there is a lot of focus on X, but we can’t lose sight of Y”
 - “I can’t discuss X at this time, but what I can tell you is ...”
- Remember, an interview is about what you want to talk about
 - In other words, answer the question you want to answer

After the interview

- Ask when the story will run and whether you'll be able to get a link
- Read/listen to/watch the story to ensure your quotes are accurate and used in the appropriate context
 - If you believe there is a discrepancy with what you actually said and what is printed, you can politely reach out to the reporter
- Just because you don't like the story doesn't mean it will be corrected/retracted
- Think about how to improve the next time

General media tips

- Always assume the mic is “hot”
- You are “on the record” unless otherwise discussed
- Once you’ve said it, it can’t be “off the record”
- What you say in public (board meetings, social media, work email) is fair game
- Stay in tune with your local media

The modern
reporter



Wrapping up

- Use media to advance your message or to add your voice to the conversation (proactive vs. reactive media)
- You control your crisis response; the crisis doesn't control you
- Take time to prepare for an interview as appropriate; it's **your** prerogative how and when you comment
- Repeat your key message(s)
- Mics are hot, conversations are on the record, just keep calm



Questions?

