Amplifying Our Voice: Leading Boldly for Our Students, Our Professions, and Our Union

COM213
Media 201: Taking Your Idea from Pitch with PR Pros
Brian Washington and Celeste Busser
NEA Center for Communications
The NEA Strategic Goal and Organizational Priorities we will address in this session:

- **NEA Strategic Goal**
  - Strategic Goal 1: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment
  - Strategic Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students

- **NEA Organizational Priority**
  - Early Career Educators
  - My School, My Voice
  - Racial Justice in Education
NEA Leadership Competency: COMMUNICATION

NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s):
• Level 1: Foundational
• Level 2: Mobilizing & Power Building
• Level 3: Agenda Driving
NEA Leadership Competency: COMMUNICATION

NEA Leadership Competency themes we will address in this session:

- Uses current media, technology and social networks to communicate
- Develops communication approach and style to fit appropriate audience
- Act as an effective speaker
- Acts as a compelling advocate for the organization
- Identifies appropriate messenger(s)
Goals/Expected Outcomes

The content from this session will help you:

• Develop a compelling narrative/story about you, your members, and the work of the association.

• Cultivate relationships with journalists.

• Execute a successful media pitch that results in your narrative being told in a way that moves your association’s agenda.
How can you land the big story?
Practice: Think like a reporter:
What elements do you need for a compelling story?
By developing a strong and compelling story, you’ll be off to a great start to cut through the clutter. Your story will lay the groundwork for attracting news media coverage, so spend some time on this and make sure your story’s a good one.
Ten Elements of a Good Story

• Proximity
• Prominence
• Timeliness
• Oddity
• Consequence
• Conflict
• Human Interest
• Extremes/superlatives
• Scandal
• Impact
How to get journalists to run with your idea

Establish Your Goals

- Is your goal to turn out media for an event? Is your goal to garner positive news coverage for your association and your members? Is your goal to stop a crisis situation?
- Once you’ve defined your goals, it will help you carve out a path to achieve those goals.
- Remember that goals change.
- With those changes comes flexibility.
How to get journalists to run with your idea

**Build the Perfect Pitch**

- Look at your news from a 30,000-foot perspective, and try to imagine a headline that your customer would want to read. This will help you to craft a pitch that will be more likely to capture the reporter’s attention.

- Media pitches offer a brief and compelling explanation of a particular issue, news angle or story and offer a rep from your association to be interviewed on the topic.

- You have to persuade the reporter that your story idea is newsworthy. If your news doesn’t have a built-in story — create one.
Ideally, you won’t even have to pitch at all. You will have built rapport over time, and from there you’ll have a good idea about what type of stories they cover. The reporter will view you as a trusted source with great ideas. You’ll be able to ask if you can share some news that you believe they’ll be interested in. If you’ve done your homework right, you’ll be met with open ears.
How to get journalists to run with your idea

Build a Relationship With Journalists BEFORE You Need Them

• Would you walk up to a complete stranger and ask for a favor? Most of us cringe at the thought. But what about asking a friend for a favor? Less pressure, right?

• Before you start pitching to them, it’s important to engage with them ahead of time. In fact, 64 percent of writers think that it’s important to establish a personal connection before pitching.

• Become a reader/distributor of their work. Interact on social media. Interact face-to-face (if possible).

• Two or three solid connections will far outweigh one foot in the door at dozens of media outlets.
Practice: What’s your elevator pitch?
How to get journalists to run with your idea
Successful media outreach is all about relationships. Your best chance of coverage will hinge directly upon your relationship with the reporters in question.
How to get journalists to run with your idea
L.A. teachers' strike throws a wrench in administrators' dreams of privatization

With administrators intent on defunding and privatizing LAUSD, teachers in SoCal are fed up and fighting back

NICOLE KARLIS
JANUARY 15, 2019 12:00AM (UTC)

An ominous downpour soaked usually-sunny Los Angeles on Monday as nearly 35,000 public school teachers kicked off a strike demanding basic needs for their schools and students.

“We are standing in the rain today, it is miserable and horrible, but the energy you can feel from these folks saying ‘enough is enough’ is amazing,” Lily Eskelsen Garcia, President of the National Education Association, an affiliate of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), told Salon.
How to get journalists to run with your idea

Relationships need care and feeding

• Just like any relationship, you’ll need to cultivate your relationships with reporters.

• Don’t confuse friendly for friends. There’s a fine line between trusted source and confidante. And just like you, reporters have a job to do.

• There’s no such thing as “off the record” with reporters.

• Acknowledge their work. If you notice a great story posted by a reporter, let them know it. Everyone loves compliments!
Making a reporter’s job easier helps get the story right

Yes, relationships are king. They don’t call it “media relations” for nothing. But even the closest relationships can’t make up for a bad pitch — or a story with no meat on its bone.
Viewpoint from the Reporter

“Your newsroom is 30 percent of what it was 10 years ago and so, each body is expected to fill the void and do the job of two, sometimes three individuals. My job isn’t just writing a news story. It’s taking photographs for that story, creating video, editing those two visual contents and posting them, along with my written content, on the web and on social media. Against the backdrop of all this, my days have become typical, 10-hour days.”

—Maudlyne Ihejirika, Chicago Sun-Times urban affairs reporter and one of Chicago’s most prominent journalists
How to get journalists to run with your idea
Practice:
• How can you sweeten the deal?
• How do you make your pitch even more attractive?
“Let your story speak for itself. And like most relationships, it’s about timing. Forget hype and spin. Reporters can smell BS a mile away. Come across as real and authentic because that’s what sells and that’s what builds credibility over the long run. Your job is to be seen as a connector, a translator and a trusted, reliable source.”

—Miguel A. González, NEA flack
I write, tweet, spin. Father, amateur photog, wine drinker, coffee addict. Se habla español.
Create an engaging and newsworthy pitch to a reporter at your local newspaper. You want the education beat reporter to cover your event.
Session Outcomes

The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:

• To help you develop a compelling narrative/story about you, your members, and the work of the association.

• To cultivate relationships with journalists.

• To execute a successful media pitch that results in your narrative being told in a way that moves your association’s agenda.
In Closing...

• Please complete the evaluation for COM213 by using the NEA Summit Mobile APP!

• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment
Lastly *(but most importantly)*...Thank you!

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