



MALPH

Communications Training

How to make & manage news



April 28, 2021

Introducing New & Improved

Newsmaker

- Imagine *leading public conversations* about the importance of your work, reaching and moving the public with storytelling about your mission and challenges that inspires confidence and support for your agency.
- Newsmaking does just that. By **telling your story** through owned, traditional and social media, you can be a newsmaker.
- Start newsmaking today, and tomorrow will be the first day of a ***whole new world*** for you and your organization.

*** Disclaimer ***

Making news is not for everyone. Talk to your communications professional before you start making news. In clinical studies, some who made news experienced unresponsive media, misquotes, inaccurate reporting, negative attention, upset stakeholders, runaway bad narratives, public cancellation and leadership turnover. If you notice any of these outcomes, stop making news and consult your communications professional immediately.

Disclaimer II

This presentation is developed increase awareness about the mechanics of public discourse and strategies to influence it. It is not meant to endorse in any way or at any time the circumvention of existing department protocols, arrangements, agreements (formal or implied), procedures (operational or statutory) or authorities previously established with communications personnel.

If you are fortunate enough to have formal communications staff, you are about to learn exactly how complex their task is, with the understanding that you can use this knowledge to help them help you help everyone else.

Goals today

- Understand how and why news is made - and how to lead it
- Identify news value in your work (and how to help your comms people)
- Examine tools & tactics for engaging media
- Discuss strategies for effective newsmaking (and avoiding pitfalls)
- WHAT ELSE?

Newsmaking is...



GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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www.gtchd.org

For Immediate Release
March 4, 2020

Grand Traverse County Health Department Advises Residents to Prepare, not Panic for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

The Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) is continuously working on preparedness and response planning for COVID-19 both locally and with other local Health Departments across Northern Michigan – this includes the Benzie-Leelanau Health Department, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW), District Health Department #10, District Health Department #4, District Health Department #2, and Central Michigan District Health Department. In addition, communication occurs daily with federal, state and local officials/partners. GTCHD is monitoring the situation at a local level. Michigan, including Grand Traverse County has no confirmed cases at this time.

As COVID-19 cases increase worldwide, including in the United States, it is important to be mindful of preparing for a shift from an epidemic to a pandemic. We find ourselves in a unique situation of being able to advise our community before the event happens, allowing us to **PREPARE, NOT PANIC**. It is still uncertain when it will impact the United States, for how long, or the severity, and information is rapidly changing on a daily basis. Taking action early can help protect your health and those you care about.

These measures will help decrease and slow the spread of infection, and reduce the impact on our community:

- Pay attention, and comply, with public health requests and recommendations – see local health department websites for the most current information.
- Get your information from credible sources (CDC, MDHHS, GTCHD, etc.).
- Practice good hand hygiene; wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol based hand sanitizer (60% or more) if soap and water is not available.
- Stay home when you are sick (work, school, social gatherings, events, etc.).
- Clean all “high touch” surfaces everyday with household cleaning spray or wipes.
- Cover coughs, sneezes; avoid touching your face.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Be current on your routine vaccinations.
- Call ahead to your Healthcare Provider if you have a serious respiratory illness (most COVID-19 infections will not be serious).

Starting a new public conversation on an issue or topic...



An unexpected ally of COVID-19: Misinformation

By Diana Cannizzaro

LANSING, Mich. (WILX) - Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail is responding Monday night as rumors and misinformation continue to spread regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and its side effects.

Vail told News 10 the misinformation leads to increased doubt surrounding the vaccine, and as a result; less people signing up to take it.

"I think the reason it circulates is something called confirmation bias," Vail said. "We have people that have biases to believe the worst that can be believed about these vaccines, and anything that they see that confirm those biases basically they run with without checking sources."

Some of those rumors including the safety of the vaccine. Other rumors are about its effectiveness. A common fear for both rumors is that the vaccines were developed too fast...

Steering a public conversation your way...

► Michigan is tiptoeing around PFAS in dairy agriculture

MLive

“Kay Fritz let the cattle out of the bag in Boston. Fritz, a toxicologist with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), told the National PFAS Conference audience that Michigan punted on testing an Allegan County dairy farm because it worried about killing the farmer’s business. Testing found PFAS in the farm’s hay and pond water,” Garret Ellison reports. “Instead of testing milk from those cows, Fritz said that regulators, leery of repercussions seen in other states, decided the exposure wasn’t serious enough and ‘we weren’t going to go there’...The disclosure — ironically spoken June 12, which Gov. Gretchen Whitmer declared Michigan Dairy Foods Awareness Day this year — struck a discordant note and prompted a rebuke from an audience member, who noted that regulators were depriving consumers of the opportunity to avoid potentially contaminated products by not testing.”

**Or, making news unintentionally
(which still counts)**

When amateurs make news

FOX 2
DETROIT

Watch Live



Man builds poop wall in Washtenaw County after dispute with neighbor

By Charlie Langton and Amber Ainsworth
| Published 1 day ago | Washtenaw County
| FOX 2 Detroit



Michigan man builds wall out of poop after dispute with neighbor

A dispute between neighbors in Washtenaw County led to one of them building a wall out of cow poop.

LODI TOWNSHIP, Mich. (FOX 2) - A 250-foot long wall of poop divides two properties in

The difference between doing an interview and making news

Wurfel's Law:

Whosoever brings the news owns the story

- Headline
- Lead paragraph
- Angle
- First quote

- Foundation stories are important
- Taking (back) the narrative

Understand what media wants

- Bringing news is a competitive business
- Headlines ‘sell papers’
- Bring them what they can sell. Show them who will buy it
- ‘Breaking news’ is the top of the avalanche

“Every avalanche starts small”



What are spokespeople, and where do they come from?



Working with traditional media



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Some newsroom rules

Earn points by observing news etiquette

- Reporters get dozens of pitches every day. Sending an email is rarely enough
- Never call a TV station after 4 pm
- Never issue a release and be unavailable
- Know the deadline for your local weekly paper
- Observe AP style / Inverted pyramid
- Mass distribution v. select distribution

How to be a good source

- Be responsive
- Speak for your organization
- Help them make news
- Don't say it if they can't use it.
- Be reliable, accurate and factual
- Model professionalism

Build media relationships before you need them

- ▶ Reporters need good sources
- ▶ Coffee is cheap
- ▶ Pay attention to the media paying attention to you
- ▶ Show them you follow their work. They like it.
- ▶ Make and actively maintain key media relationships
- ▶ Craft pitches thoughtfully. What is the reporter's audience? How does this fit into the existing narrative? Why should the reporter care?

What's your story?

- ▶ WHO: Who is the audience?
- ▶ WHAT: What is the message? What is the desired reaction?
- ▶ WHEN: Is the action happening now?
- ▶ WHERE: Is the story about a place?
- ▶ WHY: Why is the biggest question. If nobody is affected, nobody cares.

How do you tell it?

Technology offers tools

- ▶ News release
- ▶ Video news release (social media post)
- ▶ Live event (press conference, media roundtable, on-site announcement, editorial board meeting, community meeting)
- ▶ Phone call / email to selected reporter(s)

News release prep worksheet

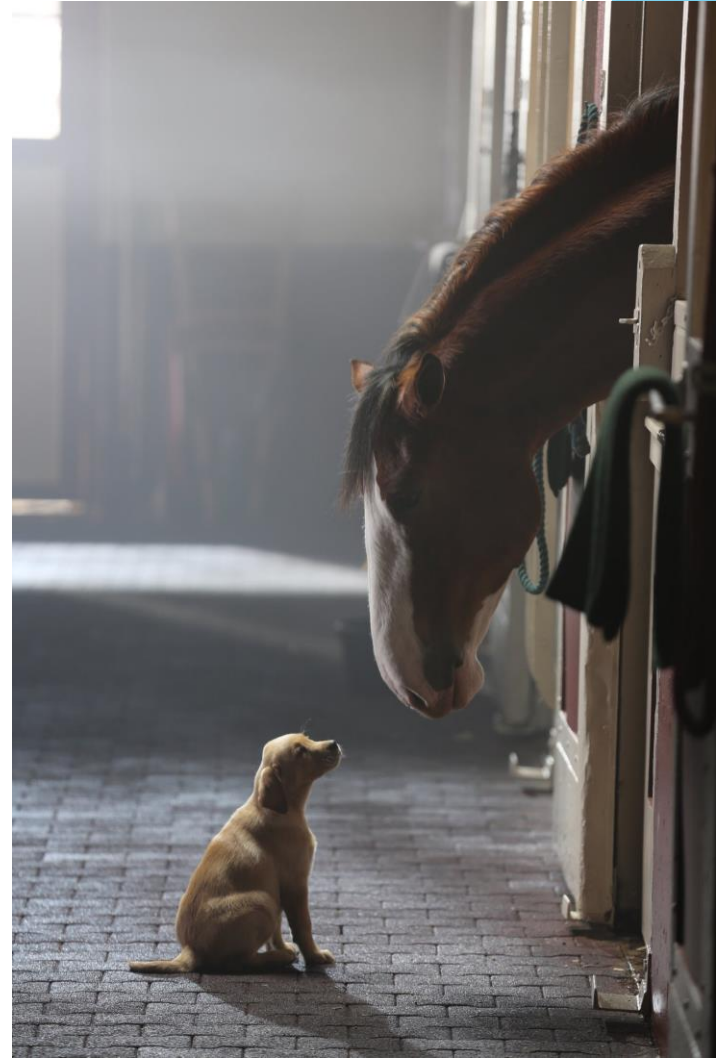
1. **Headline:** 10-15 words max.
2. **Lead:** WHO WHAT WHEN WHERE WHY in 19-32 words
3. **Support:** expands on lead.
4. **Quote:** Leans into why people should care about the story
5. **Stats / Figures / Dates:** Offers logical reinforcement
6. **Close:** Direct audience to links to learn more

The head and the heart

“People buy with their hearts and justify it in their minds.”

-- *Old sales axiom*

- Move / unite people with emotional appeal
- Support your arguments with data and figures
- Lead with emotionality, reinforce with logic
- Avoid stats and data as quotes
- Avoid ‘emotion’ points as support.



News management tools

- The Q&A: Usually a single page, natural questions about a topic with clear, short, concise answers. It increases reporter accuracy and reduces ‘stumper’ questions.
- Formal background paper / white paper: Normally 2 pages max, offers history, action, reason, stats and dates. Good for helping reporters learn fast and convey large amounts of detail reliably.
- Fast facts / “By the numbers”: one page, good for comparative analysis or stories with lots of data.
- Info graphics: emphasize key messages, factoids, stats with a visual element.
- Statement: 1-2 paragraphs, asymmetrical communication to control message and not take Qs.
- Guest columns / editorials: good for establishing position without questions.

The strategic approach

- Mass v. focused v. staged release
- Is there a best medium?
- What else is happening? Check community calendars
- Play out the cycle – first hit, follow-up coverage, wrap.

Social media



The right tool for the job

- Twitter: used by a lot of journalists to develop news stories. Character limit, but video enabled. Like a flare gun for announcements.
- Facebook: Everyone uses it. Government and business have limited success on this medium - people go here for diverse reasons.
- Instagram: If your storytelling involves still images or short video clips, this medium can work.
- YouTube: If it happened on Earth, someone has made a YouTube video about it.

The role of social media in newsmaking

- Social media is about passion, and passion is what gets people talking about issues that are important to THEM.
- Your social media power is a combination of how many followers you have, and who they are.
- Are you following reporters / news outlets? Are they following you?
- Are you using social media to engage audiences? How can you tell?

What professionals know about making news

- Effort does not always equal success
- Planning doesn't always account for circumstance
- The story you envisioned isn't always the story you get
- Silence is not always golden
- Today's news cycle is an exercise in real-time, 3-dimensional, multi-media chaos management. Cutting through clutter requires a nimble, creative angle.
- As much as things change, the old rules still apply. Relationships, reputation and reliability all matter.

Discussion



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