

Researchers and Media

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Why media relations?

- **For many actors, the goal is to use mass communication to mobilize the public support they need to be effective in their work.**
- **For journalists, the goal of media coverage is to produce stories that attract big audiences.**
- **For citizens, the goal is to monitor events and hold key actors accountable without having to use a lot of effort.**

What causes tension?

- Key actors would like journalists to act as a neutral conveyor belt for their statements and press releases.
- Journalists wish to have their own input into the news through investigations, and news analyses – all of which few actors have a great liking for

Media and key actors

- Public service success, to a large degree, depends on strategically sound communication. This communication depends to a large extent on how:
 - the media filters it to the audience – a relevant audience.
 - The audience has to share on the probability that the actor's message resonates with what their immediate concerns are.
 - That is where the conflict has its roots: To the media may not think what you say is important

Is the media biased?

- When you say something important, shouldn't it be relayed to the mass audience you intend the message to reach?
- What gives the media the right to decide what should be heard and the level of its importance?
- Don't the players/ actors have a good reason to be upset with media coverage?
- Is the media biased?

Understanding the Media

- What is the structure of the media?
- Who owns the media?
- Is the media a public watchdog or a business or both?
- What are the rules that govern the collection and output of news?
- Who are the key players?

The business

- Just like any business, the media has an eye on what they believe the public will easily buy.
- The media is constantly under pressure to keep its audience. This is important to grow the audience which in turn results in better advertising revenue.
- They will focus on excitement: So they will keep it short and simple. They will be strict on selection of news stories that have higher news value to the audience.

The customer factor

TV: Television tends to emphasise entertainment value. The less entertaining is weeded out. Coverage must conform to the requirements of 'good television'.

Newspaper: In the newspaper business, good headlines that highlight conflict, shock, excitement are rated highest when it comes to a buyer selecting what to buy.

Radio: 90-95% of FM airtime is dedicated to entertainment: music, sports, promotions, advertisement. News has to conform to this trend: If it is not fast-paced, it will not fly. That is why news on FM stations will last 3 minutes.

The players

- Media Owner and Advertiser (The owner also has to appease the advertiser who needs a radio or TV station the public finds “credible and impartial” to sell his products.)
- Media Owner and actors (Manage Relations and not get closed)
- The Audience: TV Watcher, Newspaper Reader, Radio Listener (Needs Entertainment)
- News Reporter (Needs Headlines)
- News Editor: (Beat the opposition).

What leads to bias?

- Newsroom Logistics and Cost
- Government Censorship (Licensing, State Power, Advertising Money, Ownership)
- Advertiser Power shapes coverage
- Selection of staff and promotion mechanisms therein

Why should you care?

The media's coverage has an Educational Effect.

- The public learns from and is informed by what it hears and sees in the media.

The Agenda Setting Effect

- The public's attention is directed toward issues to which the media give special attention. (Issues of wildlife conservation, rape, domestic violence have become national issues in the past. But our national consciousness is higher due to media coverage).

Framing Effect

- The way the media present the issue suggests who or what should be held responsible. (Issues of corruption, famine, Executive Power, Diplomacy).

Persuasion Effect

- The media can occasionally change the substance of what citizens believe or think they know

What's crucial?

1. How do you communicate with the media and which are the dos and don'ts of it?
2. How do you advertise your organisation or yourself? How do you market it?
3. Media currency runs out. An important story today might lose significance tomorrow. How do you maximize opportunities?
4. The media has no everlasting loyalties. How do you keep the media on your side and maintain access and contact?
5. How does an institution make itself relevant to different situations? Today it's the media freedom, tomorrow it's something else.
6. How is your profile created?

7. The media is made up of human beings with feelings and varied interests. How do you bond with them? How do you invest in the media's favour bank so that you can cash in later?
8. The media and its audience love drama. Good TV is good pictures. How do you create good TV and use it to state your agenda and build your profile?
9. Bad media usage has been seen when the communicator fails to separate the several levels of communication. Some messages are never meant for the mass media. Which ones are relevant?
10. From East to West, people are adapting to modern marketing methods to make themselves look attractive. What media strategies can be employed to sell your issue as a product; create need for it?

PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

BACKGROUND

- **In 1997, an organization then administered by Project for Excellence in Journalism, the Committee of Concerned Journalists, began a conversation among citizens and news people in the United States to identify and clarify the principles that underlie journalism. After four years of research, including 20 public forums around the country, a reading of journalism history, a national survey of journalists, and more, the group released a Statement of Shared Purpose that identified nine principles. These became the basis for The Elements of Journalism, the book by PEJ Director Tom Rosenstiel and CCJ Chairman and PEJ Senior Counselor Bill Kovach. Here are those principles, as outlined in the original Statement of Shared Purpose.**

A Statement of Purpose

- After extended examination by journalists themselves of the character of journalism at the end of the twentieth century, we offer this common understanding of what defines our work. The central purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need to function in a free society.
- This encompasses myriad roles--helping define community, creating common language and common knowledge, identifying a community's goals, heroes and villains, and pushing people beyond complacency. This purpose also involves other requirements, such as being entertaining, serving as watchdog and offering voice to the voiceless.
- Over time journalists have developed nine core principles to meet the task. They comprise what might be described as the theory of journalism:

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth

- Democracy depends on citizens having reliable, accurate facts put in a meaningful context. Journalism does not pursue truth in an absolute or philosophical sense, but it can--and must--pursue it in a practical sense. This "journalistic truth" is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts. Then journalists try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning, valid for now, subject to further investigation. Journalists should be as transparent as possible about sources and methods so audiences can make their own assessment of the information. Even in a world of expanding voices, accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built--context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The truth, over time, emerges from this forum. As citizens encounter an ever greater flow of data, they have more need--not less--for identifiable sources dedicated to verifying that information and putting it in context.

2. Its first loyalty is to citizens

- While news organizations answer to many constituencies, including advertisers and shareholders, the journalists in those organizations must maintain allegiance to citizens and the larger public interest above any other if they are to provide the news without fear or favor. This commitment to citizens first is the basis of a news organization's credibility, the implied covenant that tells the audience the coverage is not slanted for friends or advertisers. Commitment to citizens also means journalism should present a representative picture of all constituent groups in society. Ignoring certain citizens has the effect of disenfranchising them. The theory underlying the modern news industry has been the belief that credibility builds a broad and loyal audience, and that economic success follows in turn. In that regard, the business people in a news organization also must nurture--not exploit--their allegiance to the audience ahead of other considerations.

3. Its essence is a discipline of verification

- Journalists rely on a professional discipline for verifying information. When the concept of objectivity originally evolved, it did not imply that journalists are free of bias. It called, rather, for a consistent method of testing information--a transparent approach to evidence--precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work. The method is objective, not the journalist. Seeking out multiple witnesses, disclosing as much as possible about sources, or asking various sides for comment, all signal such standards. This discipline of verification is what separates journalism from other modes of communication, such as propaganda, fiction or entertainment. But the need for professional method is not always fully recognized or refined. While journalism has developed various techniques for determining facts, for instance, it has done less to develop a system for testing the reliability of journalistic interpretation.

4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover

- Independence is an underlying requirement of journalism, a cornerstone of its reliability. Independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, is the principle journalists must keep in focus. While editorialists and commentators are not neutral, the source of their credibility is still their accuracy, intellectual fairness and ability to inform--not their devotion to a certain group or outcome. In our independence, however, we must avoid any tendency to stray into arrogance, elitism, isolation or nihilism.

5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power

- Journalism has an unusual capacity to serve as watchdog over those whose power and position most affect citizens. The Founders recognized this to be a rampart against despotism when they ensured an independent press; courts have affirmed it; citizens rely on it. As journalists, we have an obligation to protect this watchdog freedom by not demeaning it in frivolous use or exploiting it for commercial gain.

6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise

- The news media are the common carriers of public discussion, and this responsibility forms a basis for our special privileges. This discussion serves society best when it is informed by facts rather than prejudice and supposition. It also should strive to fairly represent the varied viewpoints and interests in society, and to place them in context rather than highlight only the conflicting fringes of debate. Accuracy and truthfulness require that as framers of the public discussion we not neglect the points of common ground where problem solving occurs.

7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant

- Journalism is storytelling with a purpose. It should do more than gather an audience or catalogue the important. For its own survival, it must balance what readers know they want with what they cannot anticipate but need. In short, it must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant. The effectiveness of a piece of journalism is measured both by how much a work engages its audience and enlightens it. This means journalists must continually ask what information has most value to citizens and in what form. While journalism should reach beyond such topics as government and public safety, a journalism overwhelmed by trivia and false significance ultimately engenders a trivial society.

8. It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional

- Keeping news in proportion and not leaving important things out are also cornerstones of truthfulness. Journalism is a form of cartography: it creates a map for citizens to navigate society. Inflating events for sensation, neglecting others, stereotyping or being disproportionately negative all make a less reliable map. The map also should include news of all our communities, not just those with attractive demographics. This is best achieved by newsrooms with a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. The map is only an analogy; proportion and comprehensiveness are subjective, yet their elusiveness does not lessen their significance.

9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience

- Every journalist must have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility--a moral compass. Each of us must be willing, if fairness and accuracy require, to voice differences with our colleagues, whether in the newsroom or the executive suite. News organizations do well to nurture this independence by encouraging individuals to speak their minds. This stimulates the intellectual diversity necessary to understand and accurately cover an increasingly diverse society. It is this diversity of minds and voices, not just numbers, that matters.

NEWS VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS NEWS

- News are facts. News are the answer of the 5Ws and the H.
- Not all facts are news though, e.g. Mulago is the national referral hospital of Uganda is not news. It would be news if government builds a hospital in Karamoja and suggests that it is the new national referral hospital
- News is anything that makes people say “wow”
- News is information that sells the newspaper or makes people switch on their radio or TV
- News is information people talk about

NEWS VALUES

- Impact or consequence: is the event or issue likely to have a major impact on a great number in the community?
- Relevance: this one has more to do with significance. “so What?” why should the public care?
- Proximity: does the event or issue relate to a development that is close to the audience geographically? Is it about people that the audience can identify with in some way?
- Prominence: does the event or issue revolve around well known personalities or groups?
- Conflict: does the even or issue involve controversy? Is it likely to generate heated arguments for or against?
- Timeliness: is the event or issue recent? There has to be an element of freshness for it to attract coverage.
- The unusual/ Bizarre: does he event or issue involve something bizarre or out of the ordinary?- “man biting a dog”
- Human interest: does the event or issue have elements that will touch people’s emotions?
- Drama: does the issue contain elements of excitement, spectacle or crisis?

ILLUSTRATION



MEDIA RELATIONS

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Objectives

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- How to use the media to your advantage.
- How to use the media to promote research
- Working with media to share skills and knowledge
- Selling your messages/ideas to the media.
- Making it into print and other media.

Understanding the media

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- The selection of news events is not a reflex action, but the socially determined construction of reality.
- In any case, what constitutes an 'event'? It is what a journalist, editor considers and decides.
- Not all media presence is useful to your cause. A specific message requires a specific audience to be effective.

Communication Tools

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- **One-on-Ones.** Good media relations is all about the relationship you build with journalists who cover your issue.
- **Fit the news cycle.** When is an issue important? The media stick to few issues. Things that do not fit in this scheme of things are given less consideration.

Communication Tools

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- **Manage Current Affairs:** Management of current affairs. Don't step out of turn and be ready to grab opportunities.
- **Return phone calls.** Call reporters and be ready to receive calls at any time.

Communication Tools

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- **Be visible: Op-ed or Letters to the Editor.** Submitting an opinion piece relating to something that appeared in your local newspaper is another way to raise the profile of your work and personality profile; and keep issues close to your cause in the news.
- **Market your message.** The media loves a spectacle: What do press guys think of you and your function whenever they leave your event? Do they have good pictures? Does it tally with what they believe your cause to be?

Communication Tools

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- **Don't compromise your branding:**
Communication effort should be extremely well-disciplined, designed to project images and use media to depict you and your cause in a favourable light. Do your functions make good TV? Where is the drama? Is your branding in order?

Communication Tools

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- **Manage Situations/Reaction Statements.**
Releasing a reaction statement in response to something in the news can be an effective mechanism for using another issue in the news to draw attention to your own issue. Several ways to do it;

Reactions

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- **Less is more:** . As with all communication, stick to your messages, use stories to illustrate an issue whenever possible, and keep your article brief. But the question is: What is your message?
- **Maintain Image & Positioning/ Remind people of your achievements:** Move towards a certain position. Remind people of past achievements, the news span is short and personal prejudices play a big part in determining how you are covered.

Media Dos

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- **1. Be an avid media watcher.** Be familiar with the media before you contact them. Key questions: Is this the best avenue to reach my audience? What stories do they typically cover? Will your info fit their format?
- **2. Be timely.** Tie your story to a news item or timely issue when possible.
- **3. Be alert.** Stay on top of breaking news that relates to your activities. Take note of stories, where they appear and whose byline they carry. You will know the issue. You know which reporter to talk to.

- **4. Know the appropriate media outlets to target.** Not all communication has to use the mass media. Local posturing should be managed away from the national media
- **5. Know the reporter's field.** Before you contact a reporter, pay attention to his recent stories and make sure your story fits his format/beat.
- **6. Be accessible.** Always let reporters know how to reach you, and return calls promptly. Key reporters should have your office and home telephone numbers as well as cell phone numbers, e-mail address.

- **7. Respect deadlines.** Always ask if a reporter is on deadline when you call. Ask the reporter if he has a time he prefers for you to contact him.

- **8. Be truthful.** Give accurate and complete information.

- **9. Get to the point.** Put the most important information first. Don't include information unless it is factual.

- **10. Provide requested information.** Get back to a reporter if you don't have it when you are asked. Follow up on what you promised.

- **11. Be accurate.** Your facts and figures must be clear and dependable. Can you back them up?

- **12. Answer questions.** There are only three acceptable answers: **a.** "Here it is." **b.** "I don't know but I'll find out for you." **c.** "I know, but I can't tell you now because..." **Note:** "No comment" is not an option

- **13. Protect exclusives.** If a reporter has found a story, don't give it to anyone else.

- **14. Give all the news.** It's far better to assist a reporter looking for information that is publicly accessible than to send him to find it.

- **15. Use professional photographers.** When submitting photos with your news release, use a professional photographer. The odds are greater that your photograph will be used if it is done professionally

- **16. Balance your treatment of the media.** Competing media deserve equal opportunity to receive information.

- **17. Explain.** Do not assume that reporters understand your activities. Give them background briefings and materials; tell them how decisions were made and why.

- **18. Proof. Proof again.** Have other people proofread and edit your information before sending it to the media. Reporters will not give serious attention to a news release with typos, poor grammar and other errors.

- **19. Correct errors politely.** Ignore minor errors. If a major factual error skews the accuracy of the entire story, bring it to the reporter's attention. If that doesn't work, go to his editor.
- **20. Praise good work.** If a reporter has written a good and accurate story, a note of thanks (with a copy to his editor) will be appreciated

Media Don'ts

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- Editors most commonly fail to use a news release because it has limited local interest. The other reason most often cited is that the news release has no reader interest. Other reasons include poor writing, reasons of policy or that the release is too pompous – it reads like an advertisement for cooking fat. You can avoid trouble if you are aware of why news releases get rejected.

- **1. Don't evade.** Frankness is imperative.
- **2. Don't mislead.** Reporters are expert at spotting this.
- **3. Don't write promotion pieces.** Write news stories. Write and think like a reporter whose copy would be used as is, if the editor so desired.
- **4. Don't write in the passive voice:** Write in the active voice.
- **5. Don't play favorites.** Everyone deserves an even break.

- **6. Don't complain because your story wasn't used.** It won't do any good.
- **7. Don't criticize.** It is the reporter's story – not yours.
- **8. Don't try to use pressure from advertising.** The fact that you advertise in the media you are pitching has no bearing on the story.
- **9. Don't go over the reporter's head.** Talking to his boss is certain to breed resentment

- **10. Don't ask when or whether a story will run – unless you do it tactfully.** However, in the case of a feature, it is permissible to ask when it will run so that you can order reprints of a magazine story or watch a television story on the air.
- **11. Don't ask reporters to kill a story.** They won't do it and will only resent your attempt to quash it.
- **12. Don't be facetious.** The reporter might take you literally.
- **13. Don't ask for clippings.** That is not the media's job.

- **15. Don't “snowstorm” the media.** A blizzard of releases will not work.

- **17. Don't “colour” the news.** Give facts, not hype.

- **18. Don't follow up just to ask if a reporter received your information.** If you follow up, make sure you are offering an additional story angle or new information.

- **19. Don't expect enthusiasm about your story if you're not enthusiastic about it.** Tell the reporter why you believe it is important for his audience to know about your topic

And finally.....

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- **PLEASE HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY OR
DON'T SAY IT!**