

Understanding the Media— And Making it Work for You



CSDA

**California Special
Districts Association**

Districts Stronger Together

The Fundamentals

- What are your goals?
- Who is your audience?
- What is your message?
- How do I get my message out?

PR is “Idea Marketing”

- Target market
- Qualify lead
- Pitch customer
- Make sale
- Target audience
- Identify reporter or editor
- Pitch Story
- Get coverage

Goals

- Consumer education
 - Water conservation, West Nile virus, etc.
- Raising district awareness
 - What you do and how to access services
- Legislative advocacy
- Crisis communication
 - Keep community informed during fires, floods and other crisis situations

Remember...

People won't love you—
but they will respect you

Audience

- No such thing as “the general public”
- Address messages to specific people, groups or communities
 - Consumers
 - Ratepayers
 - Regulators
 - Policymakers and the media

Message

- What do you want to say?
- What do they want/need to hear?
- Are you speaking in their language or yours?
- Core messages don't change
- Emphasis changes with audience and medium
- Message discipline

It's not about you

- Always think in terms of win-win
- Always think in terms of how your audience/constituents will benefit
- Always express how what you want will affect people, families, clients, etc.

Not a lecture, a conversation

- Talk to audience
- Not over, around or through
- Talk about what interests them
- Don't confuse data with information
- Learn to listen

Ultimate Goal

- All stories are personal
- All stories are local

Getting out the word

- Free media or advertising
- Broadcast v. print
- Internet and social media
- News release or news conference
- Consider the messenger

What's news?

- Is there conflict?
- Is it compelling?
- Is it important?
- Is it relevant?
- Are there pictures?
- Does “The Media” have an agenda?

Important Tools

- Research & Preparation
- News Releases
- Editorial Briefings/Op-Eds
- Talk Shows
- Media Events
- Internet/Social Media/Web
- Timing & Persistence

Working with the media

- Make yourself a source for information.
- Be available when news is bad.
- Be truthful.
- Be serious--no joking around.
- Use facts.
- Always follow through.