Best Practices for Media Relations

Securing media coverage that highlights the social, environmental and economic value your wastewater resource recovery agency provides is a key way to create positive connections with a diverse range of stakeholders in your service area. Media coverage provides important third-party credibility for the work being achieved at your agency. Developing relationships with journalists who cover your community is an effective way to help secure positive media as well as to be viewed as an important resource for related stories.

Responding to Media Inquiries/Creating Media Coverage

Local journalists are busy professionals covering a variety of community topics every day. Be a resource for them about our wastewater resource recovery industry and respect their time constraints.

- Promptly respond to their requests for information or an interview and inquire if they have a specific deadline.
- Honor promises made in relation to sending follow-up information.
- Take time to research what other stories the journalist has previously covered on the topic or your agency.
- Be prepared to provide background information on a topic before responding to specific questions.
- Create informative media releases or pitch story ideas which are of interest and relevant to local audiences.
- Share successes, but also contact journalists on a topic (such as the drought) on which you can be an expert.
- Show appreciation of their craft – follow their work and sincerely compliment them when warranted.

Role of Spokesperson

Senior representatives are often best placed to interact with journalists as spokespeople for your public agency.

- Have approved protocols in place which identify media delegate(s)
- Invest in media training for designated spokespersons. Preparation and rehearsal are well worth the time!
Creating Messages That Resonate with Audiences

Interviews are about relaying your messages - not just answering media questions.

• Create three key messages: If you only had 30 seconds with a journalist, what do you need them to relay to your audiences on the topic in question?
• Information is not messaging. Create content based on the topic and appropriate media platform being used
• Keep it simple. Use succinct and concise sentences to answer questions. These can easily become quotes.
• Avoid industry jargon and acronyms.
• Be a storyteller. Connect on a human level. Often a personal story is more engaging than a list of statistics.
• Never answer hypothetical questions, and never say “no comment.”

Deliver your Messages

The goal of media interaction is to get your message delivered to your public through the reporter. No one should know the topic more than your designated spokesperson. They should be positive and confident in their knowledge. They should always be ready to bridge from the reporter’s question to the message they seek to deliver.