



Relationships with members of the media are mutually beneficial as both parties benefit from the connection. Journalists need us to pitch our stories, successes, and challenges so they can inform the community. Relationships need to be nurtured and take time, but when done effectively, your media relations can greatly benefit your organization's reach and perception. Here are a few tips to get you started:



FOLLOW THEM. It's hard to build a relationship with someone you don't know. So, watch their broadcasts; read their articles; and listen to their programs. What kinds of stories do they typically cover? This will help you find the right person to reach out to when you have news to share. One great way to get to know them is through social media, particularly Twitter. In addition to connecting with them on a professional level, social media give us an opportunity to connect with them on a personal level. After all, they are people, just like you and I, who have families, favorite sports teams, and alma maters. You may find a common connection that will help you spark conversation.



PITCH STORY IDEAS. Don't be your community's best kept secret. Take off your humble hat and prepare to shout your successes from the rooftops. What is happening within your organization that the community should know about? Consider the five elements that make a story newsworthy:

1. **Timing:** is it happening now or within the next week or two?
2. **Significance:** is it relevant and important to those outside of your four walls?
3. **Proximity:** is it happening in a location that the news outlet covers?
4. **Prominence:** is there a person involved that raises the importance of the story (i.e. legislator, college coaches, board members, presidents)?
5. **Human Interest:** does the news have the ability to touch the heart of the viewer?

You don't have to fulfill each element for all news pitches, but you should be able to answer "yes" to the majority of these each time. If not, consider whether or not you actually have "news" to share.



BE RESPONSIVE & SAY THANK YOU. These sound like givens, but in today's "fake news" culture, our media personalities aren't always appreciated. As a general rule, the media is not out to get you or your organization. They want to share your news, inform the community of important issues and opportunities, and work alongside you to tell the *right* story. But, relationships are bi-directional, so we must do our part as well. When they call, we can't push them off. Their business runs on strict deadlines. If you wait until the next day to call them back, they have already moved on to someone or something else. When they call/email/text, respond immediately. After you have worked with a reporter and the story has ran, now is the time to say, "thank you." They just don't hear it enough. Show them your appreciation through a quick email, a retweet of their article, and/or a shout out on Facebook. All of this will go a long way in building that relationship you desire.