How to Work with the Media

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Welcome!

- Colehour+Cohen in Seattle, WA
  - Julie Colehour + Team
- Eastern Research Group (ERG) in Arlington, VA
  - Shannon Johnson + Team
- Energetics on site at Department of Energy in Washington
  - Cassie Goldstein
Agenda

• Welcome and Introduction 10 minutes
• Top 10 Rules for Working with the Media 40 minutes
• Media Tools for Program Partners 10 minutes
• Working with DOE 10 minutes
• Discussion 15 minutes
• Next Steps for BetterBuildings Media 5 minutes
What is Earned Media?

• Getting reporters to tell your story for you
  ▪ Print, TV, radio, online

• Builds program credibility
  ▪ People trust a media story 3 times more than an ad

• Cost effective way to get your message out
  ▪ As compared to paid advertising
  ▪ Especially when program is new or at milestones

• Need “news” – what’s the hook?

• Can’t control message, but can guide message

• Opportunity to sell program benefits since media want to help their viewers/listeners/readers
10 Rules of Media Outreach

1. Have a strategic plan
2. Pick tactics aligned with goals
3. Embrace social media
4. Work with others
5. Do your homework
6. Find the “ah hah”
7. Groom your spokespeople
8. Ensure flawless implementation
9. Be ready for the unexpected
10. Foster relationships
Rule #1: Have a Strategic Plan

- What is your communications goal? “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.”
  - *Alice in Wonderland*

- Who is your audience? What do you want them to do? What media do they use?

- How does media outreach fit into your overall communications strategy?
Rule #2: Pick Tactics Aligned with Goals

- Media events
- Press releases
- Pitching
  - Under “embargo”
  - Exclusive pitching
  - Authored articles
- Opinion editorials
- Online/viral campaigns
  - “Blog-a-thon”
- Trade and business media
- Newsletters/e-newsletters
  - Community/neighborhood organizations
  - Nonprofits with similar missions
Rule #2: Pick Tactics Aligned with Goals

• Pitfalls:
  ▪ Beware the press release
    • A press release does not lead to media coverage
    • Figure out when a press release makes sense
      – When you have hard news
    • Use inverted pyramid style (lead with the news, details later)
    • Always provide follow-up pitching
  ▪ Holding a media event does not mean the media will come
    • What’s the visual?
      – If you want TV coverage, must have a strong visual
    • Do you have new news?
    • Breaking news can overshadow your event
Rule #3: Embrace Social Media

- **What is social media?**
  - It’s how people engage, share, interact, and participate with each other—and with you—online
  - Communications is undergoing a fundamental shift—information is being pushed out to people less and less—instead, it is being shared among the millions of connections people have
- More people now use social media than use email
- Nearly half of Americans have a social media profile
  - 39 percent use it several times a day
- Twitter: 105 million users, 50 million+ tweets per day
- Facebook: 500 million users (150 million U.S.)
- YouTube: 2 billion videos per day
- Figure out how social media fits in with your strategy and plan for ongoing monitoring
# Keys to Social Media Success

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Rule #4: Work with Others

- Figure out who else can help tell your story
  - Ideas from grantee partners?
- Find third party credible spokespeople who are willing to talk to the media
  - Share your messaging, statistics, BetterBuildings messages
- Look for partners/spokespeople with:
  - Complementary mission/goals
  - Audience overlap
  - History of collaboration/community involvement
Rule #5: Do Your Homework

• Build a good media list

• Research editorial calendars
  ▪ When are they planning to cover things that tie into your message (environment, family budget, energy, etc.)?

• Know the reporters before you pitch
  ▪ What have they covered before that is similar?
  ▪ What is their style?
  ▪ How do they like to receive pitches?

• Look for ways to tie your story into current activities/trends
  ▪ Tie to economy

• Know what similar programs have been done and may have been pitched/covered in the past
Rule #6: Find the “Ah Hah!”

- What’s your key message?
- What factoids can you use to support your message?
  - Example: “Did you know that the average home pollutes more than the average car?”
  - Example: “Many American homes are so leaky that they waste $200 to $400 each year in energy costs.”
- What is new about your story?
- Why will the readers/viewers/listeners care?
- What is the local angle?
- How can you make the message personal?
- What is the call to action?
Rule #7: Groom Your Spokespeople

- Who is the best person to deliver your message?
- Make sure they are available
- Train them on key messages/factoids and interview techniques
  - Never “wing” an interview
  - Learn how to “bridge” to key messages
  - Practice delivering sound bites
  - If you don’t know, offer to get back to the reporter; never guess
  - Nothing is “off the record”
  - Be ready for the personal question (what have you done to your home to make it more energy efficient?)
- Practice before each interview
- Review coverage, critique, improve
Rule #8: Ensure Flawless Implementation

- Details, details, details
  - Goal = flawless execution
  - Dry run of visuals
  - Strong written materials

- Follow-up
  - Don’t be afraid to follow-up multiple times with reporters (in a nice/helpful way)
  - Make sure someone at the event is assigned to help each media get what they need for their story

- Be responsive
  - Provide reachable contact for more info
  - Ask for deadline; respond to requests for information within 24 hours or less

- Track and promote coverage!
  - E-mail links to lists, post on social media
  - Send to stakeholders (and BetterBuildings)
  - Use in marketing materials/on website
Rule #9: Be Ready for the Unexpected

• Develop a Q&A with all the hard questions

• Prepare a crisis plan
  ▪ Scenarios of what could go wrong (e.g., contractor injures child in a home)
  ▪ Protocols for handling a crisis
    • Who is in charge
    • Who needs to be notified
    • How to handle media inquiries
    • How information will be disseminated and by whom

• If a media interview unexpectedly goes south:
  ▪ Ask the reporter what angle they are working on
  ▪ Ask who else they are talking to
  ▪ If the reporter has the facts wrong, provide correct information
  ▪ Offer additional spokespeople that can substantiate/reinforce your message
  ▪ Prepare response strategy/messaging for when the story appears
Rule #10: Foster Relationships

- Strong media relationships are a valuable program asset, but they need care and feeding over time

- Do:
  - Be helpful and responsive
  - Keep your promises
  - Position spokespeople as experts in subject matter
  - Stay in touch/provide info even when you are not pitching a story
  - Say thank you

- Don’t:
  - Be critical
  - Ask to see a story before it runs
  - Complain if something minor is not right
  - Double pitch
Snapshot: Recycle More

• Challenge: How to make the old news of recycling exciting and worthy of media coverage?

• Factoid (the “Ah hah”):
  ▪ Did you know that more than half of what goes to our landfill is recyclable?

• Have a neighborhood compete to see which family can decrease its garbage weight
  ▪ Tracked garbage for six weeks
  ▪ Media event at beginning for initial weigh-in and end to announce winner
  ▪ Created profiles of each family and what they did

• Results:
  ▪ 3.8 million media impressions
  ▪ Three-part series in *The Seattle Times*, six television stories that ran 17 times, and five radio stories.
Snapshot: Rock the Bulb

- **Light bulb exchange events**
  - Bring 10 incandescent bulbs and get 10 CFLs free
  - Continue engagement through the “Be an Energy Rock Star” contest

- **Kick-off media event**
  - Boys and Girls club partnership at event site

- **Golden bulb promotion**
  - 20 bulbs hidden with “Bulb Keepers”
  - Clues via e-mail, Facebook and Twitter
  - Find a bulb and get a $250 hardware store gift card

- “Magicians on Bus” viral tactic

- **ENERGY STAR® Exhibit House at one event**

- **Culmination media event**
  - Media walkthrough of contest winner’s home

- **Results:**
  - 500,000 bulbs distributed
  - 4.8 million media impressions; $214,000 value
Video Examples

• We will take a short break so that you can view the video examples. View the videos by visiting the link sent via email from shannon.johnson@erg.com:
  ▪ King County Regional Recycling
  ▪ Puget Sound Energy “Rock the Bulb”
Video Discussion
Media Tools for Program Partners

• From announcements to events, BetterBuildings programs have access to several media outreach materials to ensure that information published about the program is consistent and accurate.
  - Press release template
  - Tips on working with the media (coming soon)
    • How to write a press release
  - BetterBuildings media backgrounder
  - Media question-and-answer document
  - Fact and tips for the media (coming soon)
  - Tips on working with DOE (coming soon)
• Fill in the blanks on the press release template, or just borrow some of the language for your own local announcement.
Tips on Working with the Media

- Learn how to write a press release that will get coverage for your program.
• Provide the BetterBuildings backgrounder for media as part of your press kit during your next media event.
Use the media question-and-answer document to prepare for your next BetterBuildings program interview, or send it to the press as background on the program.
Facts and Tips for the Media

• Insert some of these fact and tips for the media in your next press release or local article about your BetterBuildings program:
  ▪ The average American household spends nearly $2,000 per year on energy used in the home, but $200 to $400 of that could be going to waste due to drafts, air leaks around openings, and outdated heating and cooling systems.
  ▪ By making upgrades that improve a home's heating, cooling, and air quality, families can reduce their annual energy use by 15 to 30 percent and make their homes more comfortable.
How to Work with DOE

• There are a variety of outlets through which DOE is able to promote your events and achievements
  ▪ Formal announcements
  ▪ Online resources
    • The BetterBuildings website: www.betterbuildings.energy.gov
    • The DOE website: www.energy.gov
    • DOE’s Energy Blog: blog.energy.gov
      – Features relatable personal interest stories
    • DOE Twitter accounts
    • Energy bloggers

• Submit material for formal announcements or blog features to BetterBuildings@ee.doe.gov
How to Work with DOE

- **Press Releases***
  - Major announcements, funding opportunities, milestones, etc.
  - Written from DOE perspective and issued by Public Affairs Office

- **Progress Alerts***
  - Brief release for smaller milestones or funding opportunities
  - Generally do not include a quote from a DOE official
  - Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy subscriber list
    - Stakeholders and trade publications
    - General public

- **Local Statements**
  - DOE releases to local media on day of event
  - Includes reusable quote from Secretary Chu or other DOE official

*DOE Office of Public Affairs decides whether announcement is a press release or a progress alert.
How to Work with DOE

Working with DOE and the 10 Rules of Media Outreach

Putting it all Together

1. Have a strategic plan
2. Pick tactics aligned with goals
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Find the “Ah Hah” Moment for a DOE Press Statement

• When you fill out the Press Statement Template, think about the “five Ws”—who, what, where, when, why (and how):
  ▪ Who is participating in the event? Who benefits from this effort?
  ▪ What happened or was completed that is worth noting?
  ▪ Where will the event take place or did the news occur?
  ▪ When is the event or the timeline for completion?
  ▪ Why is this being done, or should people care?
  ▪ How will this make a difference, or will the program succeed?
Find the “Ah Hah” Moment for the DOE Energy Blog

- Is this a breakthrough to announce? Program achievement? New program goal?
- What’s the innovation or breakthrough? What nut got cracked for the first time?
- What’s special about the benefits provided to the community? Is it a new concept in your area?
- What is the news? Why is this relevant to a broad audience?
- Who was impacted, and how? Was it tax dollars? Jobs created?
- What are your program’s future goals?
- What can this effort lead to (don’t overstate)—better lifestyles? Significant energy savings?
- What is the timeframe? Has anyone (including your program) announced this already? Where?
- Is there an interesting family, home, or business owner who can provide a compelling story?
Questions?
What can we do to help you with your media outreach efforts?