

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **My background**
 - 10th year with NCFA as communications director**
 - Prior experience was with NHL Hurricanes and collegiate ranks totally some 20 years.**
- **Common theme among three distinct groups –**
 - Folks don't trust the media and are not comfortable talking with them.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Why Should We Care?

- **When the public doesn't understand what we do, they are more likely to support more regulations.**
- **There is a lot of misinformation out there.**
- **We have a great story to tell – forest conservation needs to be explained by the professionals and landowners that put their money where their mouth is.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **What does the general public know?**
Not much when it comes to forestry...Surveys show public believes government owns most of forests in NC. Most believe clear-cutting is bad at all cases.
- **World Sphere – People understand what they deal with everyday in depth. In other issues they rely on sound bites, news clips, photos, etc.**
- **In essence, the media is the window to their eyes and ears. This is our opportunity to tell our story.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **Establish a policy regarding media communications - One of the main reasons people do not deal with the media is they fear repercussions from their employer and/or their mistrust of the media.**
- **Once engaged with the Media - Deliver information accurately, quickly and honestly.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- ***Develop a Core Message***

Example: “The economic value of trees provides the incentive to landowners to plant and maintain their forests. The forest industry provides that market for landowners.”

- **Have supporting facts & examples - Good from the Woods Box, Inventory Data, Testimonials, etc.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

➤ **What is News?**

News is the abnormal – usually negative that departs from the norm (conflict, irregular, unusual).

➤ **Reporters distinguish themselves by: (1) being first (2) if not first, then with more information.**

➤ **Reporters do have opinions based on their experience. They have world sphere's too.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **Different media have different needs and will have different levels of knowledge on the issue.**
- **TV needs a simple sound bite and your face.**
- **Radio needs your point in a sound bite.**
- **Newspapers need a lot of information and that one catchy quote.**
- **Keep it simple, honest and understandable; think sound bite; supporting facts and statements; avoid jargon.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **If you are called by a reporter via the phone: Don't do a phone interview cold. This is your opportunity to gather information.**
- **Ask for specific information on the story, what precipitated it, your role, what type of interview and the deadline.**
- **This does two things: (1) defines your role in the story (witness/hero/villain) and (2) lets you know what information you may need to gather.**
- **If you are not comfortable conducting the interview at that moment, ask to call the reporter back in a reasonable amount of time.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **Anticipate Media Contact**
Likely triggers include logging operations, trucking/logging accidents, environmental groups' press releases, government reports, changes in market conditions, natural disasters.
- **TV and Radio reporters frequently get their story ideas from the newspaper.**
- **The media are frequent guests in civic meetings, annual meetings, political gatherings, etc.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **For all media, you need to always consider the 3-5 worst possible questions you could be asked with short positive answers that go back to your message. Stay on message.**
- **Keep calm, be honest, be yourself.**
- **You know more than they do.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **Follow ups work. You can follow up with a reporter – good or bad – after a story. Can often lead to another story.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **The Power of Editing - You've followed all the rules, spent an hour with the reporter, and the next day there is a one-line quote. Focus on the story – not how much you were in it.**
- **Clear the Slate - You may get a bad story or be misquoted. Don't clam up – keep lines of communication open.**

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- **For forestry, working with the media is more important than ever.**
- **Urban centers now and will continue to dominate the politics of North Carolina.**
- **Public opinion shapes legislative/regulatory action.**

Working with Legislators

- **Identify your federal and state legislators**
Use internet...www.ncga.state.nc.us Go to “Representation” and follow directions.
- **Two rules apply:**
 1. “If you’re not one of the players, you’re one of the losers!”
 2. “It’s not who you know, it’s who knows you!”

Working with Legislators

➤ **Things to know:**

More and more legislators come from urban areas. Fewer businessmen and even fewer tied to agriculture or forestry.

NC legislators have no staff – one assistant and maybe an intern. Most serve on 2-3 committees – they are busy! Deal with flood of bills each year.

Environmental issues are not party specific

They respond to constituents! Your voice counts.

Working with Legislators

➤ **Personal Contact**

Always introduce yourself

Be brief, be direct, be concise. Your role is to explain, inform and persuade. Try to deal with only one issue – not a laundry list.

Make it easy for the legislator to vote with you by giving good reasons.

Don't overwhelm a legislator with material.

Leave a briefing paper with key points and offer more detailed information if they want it.

Working with Legislators

SUMMARY

- Don't think your voice or comments don't count. *The game is won by those who show up.*
- Know who your legislators are and try to get to know them.
- In general, no one is a friend, or an enemy, all the time. Don't burn bridges.

WORKING WITH KEY AUDIENCES

- **Other groups that shape public opinion are in the local community.**

Civic groups - Usually include the local “movers and shakers” – the opinion leaders. Always looking for programs and speaker

Schools - NCFA camps; high school environmental clubs

CONTACT INFO

Chris Brown

Director of Communications

North Carolina Forestry Association

(919) 834-3943 ext. 3

cbrown@ncforestry.org

www.ncforestry.org