

*The articles in this special report appeared in The Sources HotLink, a quarterly newsletter on media relations published by Sources. The Sources HotLink is a free benefit of listing in the Sources directory for the news media, and is also available online at [www.hotlink.ca](http://www.hotlink.ca).*



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# Speaking to the Media



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A special report  
from *Sources*  
with articles from  
*The Sources HotLink*

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Being seen, heard, and quoted in the media is perhaps the quickest, best, and most lasting way for a speaker to become better known and more sought after. *Sources* can help you to attract media attention, but it's also important to handle media calls and interviews well when they come. Below is a collection of articles about speaking to the media reprinted from *The Sources HotLink*, the newsletter about media relations published since 1996 by *Sources*. *The Sources HotLink* is published in print, and is also available online at [www.hotlink.ca](http://www.hotlink.ca). *Sources*, the directory for journalists, editors and reporters, is also available in print, and online at [www.sources.com](http://www.sources.com).



contacts — **people like you** — offering a wide range of views and expertise, ready and willing to speak to the media.

When you are in *Sources*, your media profile, including your expertise and your contact information, is there working for you whenever journalists turn to *Sources*, as they do thousands of times every week. One thousand reporters a day use the *Sources* Web site [www.sources.com](http://www.sources.com) to find the spokespeople they need. Every time they do, each of them looks at an average of five or six listings to find the most appropriate contacts to call. In addition, more than 10,000 copies of the print edition of *Sources* are in use on journalists' desks at this very moment. Each time they use *Sources*, in print or online, your media profile is right there, telling them about you.

Journalists give us very positive feedback about *Sources*. They like the fact that *Sources* is targeted to their needs, the fact that everyone listed in *Sources* is by definition willing to take calls from the news media, with their phone numbers and other contact information right there.

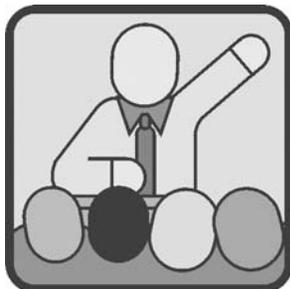
By contrast, we've heard, doing a search on Google or another search engine is "like trying to take a drink from a fire hose". A search on almost any topic returns millions of hits, but rarely the contact information a reporter needs. Journalists, whether they are working in broadcast or in print, need **someone to talk to**. They need someone to interview, someone who can provide quotes or sound bites. A Web site cannot provide that: only a human being can. And that is why *Sources*, the directory of human contacts, is an irreplaceable tool for journalists.

We'd love to be able to include you in *Sources*. The attached Quick Listing Form makes it as easy as 1-2-3.



capable of it. The experiences and lessons in the book enable readers to present with confidence, no matter what the occasion. Whether you plan on speaking at staff meetings, board meetings, a town hall or a press conference, *Power Presentations* will help you develop your skills.

This book is organized in the same manner presentations should be - as a complete package. Bender shows readers how to break down a presentation and turn it into manageable parts. He then lays out a plan of action which is both easy to read and interesting. *Power Presentations* is punctuated by graphs, quotes, charts, lists, checklists and evaluations, all of which make the book useful as a tool for self-evaluation. The *Secrets of Power Presentations* is a no-nonsense guide to public speaking.



## Use the media to raise your profile

Being quoted in the media as an authority or expert in your field, or being booked as a guest on a talk show, can do wonders for raising your profile and helping you to line up speaking engagements. *Sources* is designed to help you do exactly that by putting your profile and your contact information on the desks of journalists coast to coast and beyond.

A *Sources* listing complements and magnifies your other efforts to publicize yourself. Reporters and broadcasters need knowledgeable sources to interview and quote when they write stories or line up guests. The *Sources* directory is the first place most journalists turn to when they need to find experts and spokespersons. *Sources* gives them what they most need in their day-to-day work: a wealth of human



## Top Ten List of Media Relations

BY LYNN FENSKE

David Letterman has his top ten lists, and now so does *The Sources Hotlink*. We begin by offering our top ten recommendations for becoming (and remaining) media friendly:

1. Treat media representatives equally. Don't play favourites.
2. Treat media deadlines as your own.
3. Address a person, not a title.
4. Know the media's requirements.
5. Be accurate.
6. Be accessible.
7. Be consistent.
8. Be helpful and polite.
9. Don't speculate or "pretend" to know the answer.
10. Be professional.

*Lynn Fenske is a freelance copywriter with extensive experience working both sides of the media fence as journalist and publicist. She can be reached at [info@whatiwrite.com](mailto:info@whatiwrite.com). Lynn was editor of The Sources HotLink from 2001 to 2004.*



# What Does a Reporter Want?

BY KIRSTEN COWAN

Good public relations is predicated on the understanding that a reporter is a human being, with needs, desires, and above all, a job to do. By understanding the limits that journalists' schedules and formats impose upon them, we can significantly increase the chances that coverage of our issues will be balanced and complete, and of developing rewarding relationships with the journalists we come in contact with.

In order to gain a better understanding of the forces that shape a reporter's reaction to us, and how best to communicate with them, *HotLink* took a few moments to interview Elisa Kukla, a freelance writer whose beat covers both local and national news, as well as cultural events.

*The Sources HotLink:* What constitutes an interview that will gain good coverage?

*Elisa Kukla:* Someone who speaks clearly and to the point and has a large knowledge base, but is able to communicate it in lay terms. Someone who has a unique angle on their story, rather than "just the facts." Human interest is always important.

*HotLink:* What do interviewees and sources do that inhibit your ability to cover their issue?

*Kukla:* Using a lot of jargon, making it difficult to reach them, being unwilling to provide follow-up information, taking the "party-line" on an issue, can all cause a story to be cut. An interviewee who answers a reporter's questions with "yes", "no" and "maybe" is unlikely to find themselves on the front page.

*HotLink:* People dealing with the media often have the perception that the journalist is trying to "trip them up". How would you respond to this?

*Kukla:* All I'm looking for is the most interesting and informative angle. That means that if I'm dealing with a politician who doesn't want to be as honest and open as possible, I am definitely trying to get the truth. But overall, I'm looking for an interesting angle, not a scandalous one. I find people often trip themselves up by saying things without thinking through the full implications of their statements,

Don't wait until it's too late.

If you expect to open your mouth in public again (other than maybe to eat a sandwich) then remember the "Five Ps of Public Speaking": Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. Do not wait until you are about to present. It's not worth the stress, or to risk looking like a fool. Take time to prepare. Practice. And perfect one of the most important skills in society today: Presenting yourself to others. Good luck!

*The late Peter Urs Bender is author of the best-selling book Secrets of Power Presentations. Visit [www.PeterUrsBender.com](http://www.PeterUrsBender.com) to order his books.*



## Your Guide to Public Speaking Secrets of Power Presentations, 6th edition

Peter Urs Bender

The Achievement Group 1991, 242 pp, \$15.95

ISBN 0-9695066-0-0

REVIEWED BY JEAN COBURN



Public speaking is said to be the number one fear of adults in the Western world; it ranks worse than death for most of us. In *Secrets of Power Presentations*, Peter Urs Bender teaches readers how to conquer this fear by learning the steps to better communication.

Speech is only one of the many components of communication. People experience messages using all of their senses. *Power Presentations* emphasizes all five elements of a successful presentation: Speech, body language, equipment, environment and preparation.

Bender does not overwhelm his readers. He raises awareness of all the aspects of presenting and, in a reassuring tone, explains how we are all

## Don't neglect your presentation skills

BY PETER URS BENDER

When was the last time you had to make a speech? Did it go as well as you would have liked? Are you ready for the next time? Most of us do not like to speak in public. Yet our success in life - getting the job, the contract or the sale, in having others listen to and understand our ideas - depends on our ability to communicate effectively. Here are some ideas to give your next presentation more positive impact.

### You must remember this!

Most people spend hours thinking about what they are going to say. However what you say is frequently not as important as how you say it. Studies show that words account for only a small part of the total message you convey to others. The rest comes from style, perceived confidence, use of voice, body language and other non-verbal forms of communication. Think of it this way. Remember the worst presentation you've ever heard. One that was really atrocious. Was it someone who was totally boring or monotone? Did you feel they didn't really care? Now think of the best presenter you've ever seen. Their energy and enthusiasm. The modulation in their voice as they shared ideas that really mattered to them. The connection they made with you personally. In most cases, it's how they spoke that affected you most. The more you become a speaker that others want to hear, the more effective you will be.

### They must understand you.

Good communication is more than just talking. It's about building a bridge of understanding between you and your listeners. To do that, you will need to: Have a worthwhile message and be ready to communicate it. Relate your message to your audience. If you don't, you won't keep their attention for long. Watch your tone. Do not let strong emotions and argumentativeness interfere with your message. Obtain feedback. Find out if your audience understands your ideas. If they do not, you did not do a good job of communicating. Keep persuasion to the end. When you are confident that your audience understands you, then focus on getting them to adopt your point of view. Be specific about actions. Tell your audience exactly what to do in reaction to your message, or no changes will occur.

especially taken out of context. Not answering questions directly also makes a source look bad, without any effort on the journalist's part. However any reputable journalist should be willing to read your quotes back to you on demand. If they are unwilling to do so, speak to their editor. That way you can avoid misquotations.

*HotLink:* What is the most important thing about the reporter's job that you would like to communicate to the people and organizations you contact?

*Kukla:* A journalist is always on a deadline. If you want to communicate your issue most effectively, send fax or E-mail background. Take the fax or E-mail of the reporter interviewing you and send along any additional information you may have forgotten - within the hour. If you put off getting back to a journalist for a day... your story may very well be cut or shelved.



## Getting the Most from Interviews

BY YVONNE HILDER

I recently interviewed media trainer Jim Gray Jim Gray, a senior consultant with **Media Profile**, a public relations firm which helps organizations get the most from contact with the media. Jim formerly worked for the *The Halifax Herald Chronicle*, *The Toronto Star* and he *CBC*. I asked Jim what he'd done to achieve such positive coverage. Did **Media Profile** have tips to share with readers of *The Sources HotLink*? He did, and here they are:

**Prepare Your Messages.** Determine what your three or four key messages will be before the interview and deliver them, even if the ‘right’ questions aren’t asked.

**Know Your Audience.** You’re speaking to the public and your employees through the journalist.

**Stay Focused.** Answer the questions asked of you, but use each answer as a way to market one of your key messages.

**Correct Bias.** If a question contains false or biased information, calmly correct the journalist before answering.

**Stick To The Facts.** Don’t speculate. If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so. Then quickly get back to the reporter with the needed information.

**Empathize.** Respond to emotionally loaded questions with sensitivity. Show concern for the misfortune of others.

**Be Careful.** There’s no such thing as “off the record.” If you don’t want something to be printed or aired, don’t say it. Be on guard at all times.

**Think Ahead.** Consider the questions you’ll likely be asked. Rehearse your responses. Practice your key messages.

**Show Confidence.** You’re the expert. You should look, act and sound it. But don’t overdo it. Don’t be arrogant.

**Be Professional.** Treat every reporter with courtesy and respect.

**Be Responsive.** Be open and honest. Return all media calls promptly. Keep in mind that an interview with a journalist is an important sales opportunity. Take advantage of it.

*Jim Gray can be reached at Media Profile at 416-504-8464.*



Marc Saltzman, who is one of North America’s most successful freelance technology journalists in both print and broadcast, receives between 150 and 200 E-mails per day, plus about 10 telephone calls per day. He hates the phone. “The phone ruins my writing flow, E-mail is much more conducive,” he says.

Which leads to follow-up call tip #1. Find out the journalist’s preference in communication. Is it E-mail, telephone or fax?

Saltzman also stresses that practitioners should “choose their battles” for follow-up calls. “Isolate the important stories.” He also notes that PR people should do their homework. Don’t follow-up on an inapplicable lifestyle story to a tech product journalist for example.

John Valorzi is the Business Editor at *Canadian Press*, which is the nerve system for the Canadian news business and one of a handful of newsgathering co-operative organizations that feed the world’s news outlets. He receives about 200 E-mails a day and gets between 75 and 100 telephone calls per day. He likes phone calls by the way, as long as they are worthwhile and provide context. “I don’t mind receiving (follow-up) calls, but more than half are from juniors who simply ask if I got the release, not from seniors who can debate things or tell me the context.”

Valorzi points out that two or three times a week he gets follow-up calls from practitioners wondering if a release is of interest when it’s actually been on the *Canadian Press* wire for three or four hours. He begs that we media monitor before we call.

He also begs for data that makes a story newsworthy. For example, if a product is being launched, how many jobs will it create, how much money will be spent on building the new plant. He notes that is worthwhile follow-up contact information that will interest him.

And he reminds us to do post-mortems on stories that bomb out. “Did it have hard edge, quantifiable information that lifted the release beyond just a product release? Before being called 100 times, the PR person has to understand that content is king,”

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4. Offer sources that will support your cause. Normally, print reporters will be more open to this. Broadcast reporters may not have as much time in their stories to devote to another sources.
5. Offer to provide visuals. This is important for both broadcast and print interviews. It helps both the reporter and you emphasize your point. It also tells the reporter that you are aware of their needs. This should also be done before the interview; however, new issues may come up during an interview that are important to illustrate.

Remember that you are leaving the reporter with an impression. If you are positive and cooperative the reporter will give more credibility to what you say. If you are defensive the reporter may think you have something to hide.

*Courtesy of Al Rothstein Media Services, Inc., specialists in spokesperson training and media relations seminars.*

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*WWW: <http://www.rothsteinmedia.com>*



## The Follow-Up Telephone Call

BY MARK LAVIGNE, APR

When I was a journalist, the inundation of information was mind-boggling. There was a constant incoming mountain of information. News releases arriving by fax, media kits arriving by courier, news wire stories provided by Broadcast News and their commercial counterparts, all followed by hundreds of phone calls made by well intentioned people wanting to know if I had received their information and was interested in their story. Sometimes these calls worked when their news was put into a tight sound bite. Sometimes I would scramble and dig into the blue box looking for a kit that seemed interesting after the “verbal sell.” But not usually.

And now that E-mail has significantly increased the flow of information into newsrooms and freelancers’ home offices, how can one follow-up telephone call cut through all the “noise”? What follows are some suggestions from two journalists in the field.



## Dressing for TV

BY BARRIE ZWICKER

### The sound bite version:

Choose what you feel really comfortable in.  
Avoid distractions.  
Ask.

### The Russian novel version:

Do you have an outfit that draws compliments? Even one article of clothing - sweater, jacket, blouse, vest, tie, scarf - that causes people to say “I like your vest” or ask “Where did you get that?” That’s probably what you should wear on TV.

You’ll be more confident and relaxed. More “you.” Your clothing has been compliment-tested for colour co-ordination with your complexion, for fit, for all sorts of other factors that image consultants charge big bucks to advise upon.

Good, additionally, are solid colours, soft patterns. Makeup for women that complements your clothing. Makeup for men that prevents shiny nose syndrome, lessens circles under eyes and noticeable blemishes.

This can still leave choices. Of your “you” clothing,” casual or formal? Work or play? To help narrow down, try to watch the program in advance. And rule out distractions, which include:

1. White, except in very small patches. White “flares.”
2. Small checks, fine lines, hound’s tooth, light stripes, geometric designs, chevron tweeds. They “jump,” “buzz” and “vibrate” in the camera’s eye. Distracting.
3. Bright colours make you look too bright.
4. Colours similar to your skin tone will wash you out.
5. Anything that glints, shines, reflects. This includes jewelry with shiny surfaces, non-glare-resistant eyeglasses, metal eyeglass frames, glossy lipstick. Distracting.
6. Anything that makes the slightest noise, such as beads (which can click), other jewelry (which can clink). I once drew a sound person’s caution by rubbing my chin. It made a whisker noise.

7. Anything that moves, such as pendants, large ear-rings. Distracting.
8. Message buttons. Even poppies on Remembrance Day raise an issue, visually.
9. Clothing that makes you stand out in the wrong way. Even if you're a bank manager you may regret dressing in a double-breasted suit and button down tie on a panel with farmers in plaid shirts and overalls.

The single most important rule: Ask! Programs often have special requirements or suggestions. Things will tend to go smoother if you can accommodate these. For instance, on Vision TV's daily human affairs program "Skylight," black outfits are "out." The reason is that Skylight's studio background is deliberately black. The head of a person dressed all in black would seem suspended in space.

If you're going to be on TV with some regularity, consider adopting a "trade mark." The late Pierre Berton's bow tie worn on *Front Page Challenge* may be Canada's best-known example.

TV is impressionistic. People will tell you they "saw you on TV." They won't usually remember what you said. They'll be left with an impression. So attention to clothing, grooming and deportment is essential.

Of course, you might flout all the rules, yet dress perfectly. If your message button is central to why you're going on TV, it may be an excellent idea. Put on that clown suit and go to the funeral directors' conference. People will be sure to tell you they "saw you on TV." They might even remember what you said.

### Dressing for TV, the Wallet Version

Distractions: Avoid! White. Glint. Clicks, clinks. Dangly jewelry.

Remember your audience. Remember your cause or organization.

Extremes in looks will seldom help your cause or organization.

Select what makes you feel good, what you're really comfortable in.

Select what has drawn compliments: Outfit. Or vest, blouse, scarf, tie.

No tiny checks, hound's tooth, fine lines, lip gloss, big earrings. Try to avoid: Metal framed glasses, dark-tinted lenses. Above all, ask beforehand!

*Barrie Zwicker is Publisher Emeritus of Sources.*



## After the Interview

BY AL ROTHSTEIN

Call it insecurity, call it nervousness. What some people say and do after a Q&A session with a reporter can be surprising. In my reporter days, people would occasionally take the opportunity to tell a joke or make an off-the-cuff remark when they thought the camera was off. That can be a big mistake. Remember that what you do or say after the Q&A can be just as important as the initial interview.

**Here are some rules to live by as your session with the reporter concludes:**

1. Thanking the reporter. Don't thank him or her "for the publicity". A reporter's job is not to give you publicity, but to find the most interesting aspect of the story. Instead, wait until the story runs and if you feel it's appropriate, write a note thanking them for being fair.
2. The interview is never really over, even after you think the camera has stopped rolling. The photojournalist usually shoots "cutaway" questions after the Q&A. This is for background video. So it's not a good idea to laugh, tell a joke, or make an off-the-cuff remark. That is how the wrong kind of news is made.
3. Any questions? Ask the reporter if he/she has any more questions, particularly if you are dealing with technology or other complicated issues. This will allow you another chance to make sure the reporter is accurate, and it shows the reporter that you want to help.