

# The Sources HotLink

- The quarterly newsletter published by **Sources**, dedicated to tips and practical ideas on obtaining positive news coverage.
- Distributed to more than 1,000 public relations and communications specialists whose organizations are listed in the **Sources** directory.
- The PR people who receive **The Sources HotLink** read it cover to cover for its informative mix of advice and real-life experiences from colleagues. Advertising in **HotLink** can put you into that mix.

## The Sources *HotLink*

Tips and Practical Ideas to Get Positive News Coverage

Number Eighteen, Winter 2001

### What Does a Reporter Want?

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 Kukka, a Toronto area freelancer whose beat covers both local and national news, as well as cultural events.

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

**EL:** Kukka: 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.

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

**EL:** 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.

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

**EL:** 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, 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.

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

**EL:** A journalist is always on a deadline. If you want to communicate your issue most effectively, send fax or E-mail if 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.

### FLYING HIGH: 5 Sure Ways to Get Your Business Soaring

BY CATHEEN FILLMORE

**1** Joining appropriate associations and networks not only adds to your credibility but also provides you with important contacts. Since there may be many worthy organizations you could join, you need to develop a criteria to help you find those that would be mutually beneficial. Before making a decision, consider whether:

- members are encouraged to participate
- the information at meetings meets your needs
- training is available
- networking opportunities with prospective clients are encouraged
- the benefits outweigh the cost of both time and money.

Heben Walker, Sr. Designer with Capstone Communications Group claims that she isn't a joiner by nature. "But I've found such a high quality level of enthusiasm and

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