

The Sources HotLink

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Tips and Practical Ideas to Get Positive News Coverage

Number Twenty, Autumn 2001

The View from the Press Room

By KEVIN RITCHIE

Wallahons and fundraising dinners are not news. That was the message hammered home by three members of the Canadian media and one social marketer during a media panel at the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy's seventh annual Symposium. Charities like feel-good stories, but those stories are tough to sell to the media. News doesn't necessarily have to be good or bad, but it has to be interesting.

The panel, entitled "What's the story?" consisted of *The Globe and Mail's* André Picard, CBC Television's Alison Smith, *The Edmonton Journal's* Liane Faulder and social marketer Ric Young, president of F.Y.E. They posed their own questions to the sector: What story are you trying to tell? What do you hope to accomplish by getting your name in the paper? Will national coverage on the six o'clock news and a front-page story in a major daily really affect the way increasingly materialistic Canadians view philanthropy?

All four stressed that before charities start killing, they should first start listening.

André Picard, *The Globe and Mail*

There are two kinds of charity people, said Picard — those with no media coverage who want to know when they are going to get it, and those who've had coverage but are annoyed that journalists always seem to get it wrong.

"When Michael Hill, CCP's VP of research was describing the core supporters of the sector — married, religious, socially committed, stable, optimistic — I couldn't help thinking that they are the antithesis of newspaper editors," Picard said.

He characterized most editors as middle-aged white men who are cynical, unstable, socially inept and irreligious. Charities just aren't part of their worldview. So instead of complaining about how the media doesn't seem to care, charities should court publishers, editorial boards and advertising reps at newspapers and TV stations. Tell them your donors work on Bay St., Picard said, or write a letter to the editor.

"You're doing a fundraising dinner. So what?" Picard said. "There are a dozen a week. What makes yours different?" Good stories are about tangible results. Reporters want to know what a charity is doing. How does a charity affect its community? What kind of work does it do and what does your story mean nationally and internationally?

Alison Smith, CBC Television

Before a charity can tell a story to a reporter, it must first understand why the story is being told. News is about the extraordinary, Smith said. If you want to see your story on the 10 o'clock news, you have to compete with hockey playoffs, tear gas in Quebec City and Stockwell Day.

"For the most part, I don't think Canadians or journalists, for that mat-

Why I Am Listed in Sources

By ANN DOUGLAS

Over the years, I have turned to *Sources* time and time again to track down experts to interview for whatever newspaper or magazine article I happened to be researching at the time. So when the time came for me to position myself as an expert — to let the media know about my bestselling pregnancy and parenting books — it was immediately obvious to me what I had to do: take out a listing in *Sources*.

Like many journalists, I turn to *Sources* on a regular basis. It's a great way to find experts quickly without a lot of hassle. I can't tell you how many times I've gone to the trouble of tracking down an amazing expert via the Internet or through word of mouth, only to find that they are unwilling to speak to the media. *Sources* saves me time by providing me with leads on experts who are not only willing to be interviewed, in most cases, they're downright eager!

When I was trying to decide whether or not I should invest my hard-earned money in a listing in *Sources*, I pulled out some of my old *Sources* directories. I discovered that the majority of high-profile experts that I had interviewed in the past are listed in the directory year in and year out — a clear indication that they feel that they're getting a lot of bang

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