

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 Kukla, a Toronto area freelancer 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.

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

EK: 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.

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

EK: 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.

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

EK: 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.

FLYING HIGH: 5 Sure Ways to Get Your Business Soaring

BY CATHLEEN FILLMORE

1 Joining appropriate associations and organizations 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:

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



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

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- Advice from a real reporter Page One
- Effective public speaking Page Four
- Plus news from **Sources**, maximize your listing and more!

Who's Missing?

Do you know an organization which would benefit from listing with Sources? Please contact the Sources office by phone at (416) 964-7799, fax at (416) 964-8763 or by E-mail at sources@sources.com.

We'll send them an information package on what you already know – that Sources is an excellent way to increase your media profile.



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News from Sources

Welcome to the first *Sources HotLink* for 2001! *Sources* has settled into our new digs in Toronto's little Italy, which we were happy to share with many of you doing our first ever open-house in November. Our offices aren't the only things new at *Sources*. We've launched our much-anticipated news release service, enabling us to distribute the breaking news of our listees to media outlets across Canada in the blink of an eye. We put the finishing touches on *Media Names & Numbers 2001*, better, smarter and even easier to use than last year's. And we welcomed a new staff member, Kim Quashie.

E-Hotlink is up and running! Our new interactive *HotLink* will enable you to browse past articles, share valuable tips with colleagues and access a world's worth of media relations wisdom – all from your computer! Watch your E-mail inbox for exciting developments!

I encourage you to drop me a line with your thoughts and questions about the *Sources HotLink*, or any of our products and services. Call me at the Sources office, (416) 964-7799, or write me via E-mail: kcowan@sources.com.

Kirsten Cowan

Editor, *The Sources HotLink*

Sources Mailbag

Every month we receive requests from journalists to be added to the *Sources* distribution list. Here's a selection of some notes we've gotten in the past few months.

Would prefer to receive 8 [copies of *Sources*]. Our guide is so dog-eared from use by the time another one comes, it's almost unusable.

Newfoundland Herald Magazine

Please send us one copy! Thanks.

Alan Wilson, Editor,
Wavelength Padding Magazine,
November, 2000

Love *Sources*. Often the only place to find specific names and numbers.

Peter West, Editor in Chief,
Electrical Business and Energy Manager Magazine. November, 2000

I'm a producer at TVOntario's Your Health. This is our second season in production and we have been operating with an old 1998 version of your excellent resource (and I brought that one with me from CBC!) Please, can you send us the most current edition of *Sources* and add our names to your mailing list? Thank you, and keep up the great work.

Lesley Williams, Producer,
Your Health, TVOntario.
November, 2000

New from Sources

Sources Launches PRESS RELEASE SERVICE

Sources now offers a new service: E-mail distribution of your news releases and statements to the media and to government decision-makers. Utilizing the *Sources* media database, which lists print and broadcast media outlets across the country, this is a powerful new tool for getting your announcements to the news media.

You can target your news releases geographically, and by media type: TV and radio, daily, weekly, ethnic, and campus newspapers, trade and consumer magazines, and news and wire services.

For organizations and companies involved in government relations, *Sources* also offers distribution to a comprehensive list of federal MPs and Senators, and provincial legislators, as well as to senior staff and government ministries coast to coast.

We can transmit your message to your selected audience quickly, effectively, and very affordably. The cost of sending a release to the basic English-language news media list is only \$95 for companies and organizations with a current *Sources* listing. The cost of sending a release to federal and provincial legislators is also \$95.

To place your order, or for more information:

Sources, 489 College Street, Suite 305, Toronto M6G 1A5

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E-mail: sources@sources.com WWW: www.sources.com

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The Emperor's New Speak:

How embarrassing when your messages unravel

BY STEVE BENNET

When it comes to clothing, most people can't resist tugging on a loose thread, even though they know that the action might lead to a sartorial disaster. When it comes to corporate messages, however, most companies are loath to tug on a loose thread (a shaky idea) for fear that their nice tight beliefs might come undone. After all, it took two months to get everyone on board – no way they're going to go backwards now. So it's: "Damn the loose threads – full spokesspeak ahead!"

Not so fast admirals. You won't be doing your spokespeople any great favours by sending them on the road with flimsy messages that can be easily teased apart. Here are some of the loose threads that can leave your spokespeople standing naked when their messages unravel at the hands of journalists, editors, and industry analysts.

A hidden "if" clause. The message is true or plausible if the listener thinks about it in a certain way, as in "we really do dominate our market space if you exclude the B and C segment." A sure sign that you're dealing with an "if" clause is that a champion of the message (usually the person who thought of it) vehemently insists that those members of your team who don't "get it" aren't looking at the message from the "right" perspective. The problem is that journalists and analysts don't operate on the old fast food principle, "have it your way." It's their way or no way.

A flaky assertion. It's remarkable how many companies send their spokespeople on press tours with patently hollow claims of "first mover" or "thought leader" [yuk!] status, and the like. The claims are hollow because they aren't accompanied by supporting data or third party validation. If you can legitimately lay claim to market leadership, then tout it ("According to the XYZ Research Group, we own 46 percent of the market..."). But if the message is essentially happy hour fluff designed to make people feel good about working 90 hours a week, it's likely to end up a pile of threads.

Wishful thinking. "We want to be the leader in our field." Whoopie – which of your competitors doesn't? "We hope to generate significant revenues from our new solution." Aristotle concluded, "hope is a waking dream." Unfortunately, few journalists and analysts are interested in what you dream of doing; they want to know what you've actually accomplished while you're wide awake in the here and now.

Future pretense. This is a close relative of the "wishful thinking" thread. It goes like this: "We're planning to launch a major incentive program for our VARs and other channel partners." Or "We're going to be creating a new customer satisfaction program in the near future." The common element here is the tense – the future tense. Tug on the future tense and ... look ma, no program! At least not yet. Don't tout major programs or initiatives that don't exist today; you'll very likely regret it tomorrow.

Stale stuff. "We offer an award-winning solution." Awarded by whom? Well, the assertion used to be true – last year. This is akin to a restaurant's displaying a yellowing "Best of..." award from ten years ago. The question of course, is: "what's the rating this year?"

Tug on any of these loose threads, and the message ceases to be so appealing; the bare truth is that the message is not really valid or useful at all. That's why it's prudent to test your messages for loose threads in the privacy of your own conference room before making a public showing. When you do find one, it's not necessarily time to scrap the fabric; finding and yanking on loose threads is a healthy exercise that can lead to a strong and elegant message that any spokesperson would feel good about displaying in public.

Steve Bennett is a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based media trainer who specializes in helping spokespeople of high-technology companies deliver effective strategic messages to: the trade, business, and consumer media; analysts; stakeholders; and the public. An active journalist in the computer field, Steve is also a sought-after freelance spokesperson by major corporations. You can reach him at steve@mediamentor.com or by calling 617-492-0442.

From the listings desk...

Thank you!

Many thanks to all of our listees that responded to our Fall Renewal and Update information request. Having the opportunity to add or make changes to your listing ensures that journalists receive accurate information about your organization.

We will be sending out Renewal and Updater packages again in the spring, but in the meantime, REMEMBER – we are here to help! Whenever you have changes or questions about your listing give us a call at Sources. Our team will help you stay connected and any changes that you require will appear on-line within a week, making your latest information just a keystroke away!

*Heather Easton and
Tracey Parn
Listings Co-ordinators*

Listing feature of the month:

HOTLINK your web site!

If your organization maintains a World Wide Web site, don't forget to include the URL in your listing. For only \$25 a year, a direct link can be set up from your online *Sources* listing to your company's own WWW page.

Many of you are currently taking advantage of this great feature. Don't have it? Not a problem! Simply call Heather or Tracey at (416) 964-7799 or E-mail us at sources@sources.com and we'll set up a link for you today.



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Seven golden rules for more effective speaking

BY PETER URS BENDER

We all have to speak in front of others at times. Here are some tips to be more powerful, memorable and successful.

- 1. Don't read your speech.** Write key points down on note cards. Speak spontaneously and use the cards as reminders.
- 2. Have your hands visible to the audience.** Keep them out of your pockets, and use them to communicate.
- 3. Wait 3 to 5 seconds before you begin, then speak more slowly than normal.** This will feel uncomfortable, but it helps you focus and makes you look/sound more powerful.
- 4. Smile, Smile, Smile.** An audience always reflects the speaker!
- 5. Watch you listeners for their feedback.** If their body language says "Borrring" do something different!
- 6. At a personal moment in your talk, wink at your audience,** (left eye to people on your left, right eye to those on the right. It makes people feel like you're speaking to them.
- 7. Make your speech live.** Put your heart and soul into it. If it doesn't live, you die as a speaker.

Peter Urs Bender is author of the best-selling book *Secrets of Power Presentations*. His listing appears on page 187 of the Winter 2001 issue of *Sources*. Visit www.PeterUrsBender.com for more tips.

Reach the French-language media with your message

Sources is used by the French-language media as well as the English-speaking media. French-speaking journalists, especially those working for radio or television, are often looking for spokespersons who can do an interview in French.

If you, or one of your media spokespeople, is able to handle enquiries in French, it's a good idea to include a French-language paragraph in your listing. Including a sixty-word French paragraph costs only \$99 per year.

Call Tracey or Heather at 416-964-7799 to add a French paragraph to your listing.

Flying High... *Continued from Page 1*

morale at the Association of Independent Consultants that I signed up. It's a very professional organization and no matter how tired I might be before a meeting, I always leave with an upbeat feeling. While finding clients hasn't been my primary motivation, I have led Meet the Pros sessions and gained clients from my participation at meetings." Of all the benefits one can get from a good professional organization, inspiration and morale boosting are among the most important.

2 Write articles or a book for publication. It can't be said often enough that being an author adds instant credibility. Write for periodicals that your prospective clients read – this is part of what Helen Walter calls knowing the client better than you know yourself. "Know what their motivations are and what turns them on. Get beneath the surface and really listen to what they're saying." Also find out what they're reading and offer to write a relevant article for that publication, making sure you leave your contact information and a brief bio if possible.

3 Raise your profile by speaking to groups and associations where members of the audience fit your prospect profile. Develop a speech that ties in with the article(s) you've written and offer to deliver it at an annual conference or a regular monthly meeting. Give a handout to each audience member that sums up the points you made and that has all your contact information. If you need training, try either Toastmasters International or the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers.

4 Form strategic alliances. One of the most cost effective way to advertise your business is to get someone else to do it for you. Cross-promotion is the wave of the future and if you don't learn to surf it, you'll get dunked! Find businesses that complement yours and look for ways you could work together, either by sharing a booth at a trade show, combining a mail-out, or offering the other business's customers a substantial discount. This makes your marketing budget stretch much farther.

5 Get a listing in Sources. As a journalist, I have depended for many years on *Sources* to provide a comprehensive list of experts and contact information. As an expert myself, I have had enormous payoffs from my listing, including an article that featured me in Canadian Living, a phone interview from Canada AM, and an Ottawa radio station interview, not to mention clients who found my information in *Sources*. Other experts I have spoken to have had the same experience. And Susan Stern, writer and speaker, notes that her relationship with *Sources* has become a partnership. She says "The people at *Sources* are exceptional – they're a joy to deal with. They're the kind of people who return phone calls and who follow up; in short, they want me to be successful."

To make best use of your advertising budget, the goals for any advertising should be to create credibility, to raise your public profile and to gain clients. When a resource does all three, you know you have a winner.

Lise-Ann Jackson, Media Relations Manager with Andersen Consulting sums up the elements in a good public relations strategy:

"Know your audience, know your message, be clear and consistent in that message, then develop a strategy and execute it, making sure your objectives are well defined and the measurements of your success upfront."

Time for take-off!

Cathleen Fillmore is co-author of 'Going for Gold! A Complete Marketing Strategy for Speakers' and author of more than 80 published articles. She leads marketing seminars for businesses, entrepreneurs, professional practitioners and speakers and also does private coaching. Visit her on the Internet at www.speakersgold.com and check out her listing on page 249 of the Winter 2001 issue of *Sources*.

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