Media training
Attracting the media’s attention and what to do when you’ve got it

Two types of media engagement – when we ask for attention and when the media asks us for an interview (expert comment or to defend ourselves over an accusation).
For this course we will assume that you have either asked for media attention (via a media release) or been asked to comment because you are an expert.

The following is why we should be media aware and media pro-active
- Community engagement – a pillar of UWA
- Community expectation – their taxes help pay for us!
- Makes research relevant
- Attract peers either to work here or want to work with you
- Student recruitment
- Could attract funding
- FUN – many people enjoy working with the media
- Journalists are time poor and they will go to regular commentators. If you knock them back they will go to someone else – and keep going to them. You can become a media favourite – someone they turn to for comment automatically.
- Media engagement is increasingly being used as an indicator of academic performance and is certainly not discouraged by academic leaders.

What media likes:
Mass appeal: health, money, commuting, sex, relationships, family... ‘it could happen to me’ stories
Discussion-provoking: moral dilemmas, think 60 Minutes trying to snatch a child, also topical – if there are other stories around like it.
Hey Martha – Gerald Stone of 60 Minutes coined this one – stories you would call your partner in from another room to watch on TV, usually great vision or something spectacular or really interesting
Individual Achievements: Not to be confused with industry prizes in the next category – individuals achieving spectacular feats or discoveries. The achievement itself, not the prize

What they don’t:
(All of these have exceptions.)
Old stories. News is NEW.
Staff appointments – unless it’s someone well-known (to the public)
Prizes (unless it’s a biggie such as a Nobel)
Business as usual – stuff that happens in every organisation. Imagine it happening at another uni – would you still be interested?
Stuff that’s important to the uni, but not to the public (UWA employees donating blood – lots of places do that)

The Media Release:
- Catchy headline, get to the point
- What is your MESSAGE?
- The latest news at the top – first paragraph
- Tell them why it’s important
- Not too long – one page is fine

For more information about UWA: www.uwa.edu.au
- Understandable – lay speak
- No acronyms
- NO JARGON - What we need is a measurable strategy matrix to guide us to a true north and maintain the lens of an end-user leadership ecosystem
- Acknowledge who you have to, but limit quotes to two parties
- Links to more info, contact details at the bottom

**Why do you want media attention?** You are doing it to benefit you. So - What is the message you want to get across? Trying to attract funding? Volunteers? Getting people to read your research paper? Establish what you want out of this!

In general - write things down, in note form only. Refer to them. Write down the name of the journalist – use his or her name during the interview (if it’s a long interview – not for news grabs). Write down the web page for people to go to, or the phone number or whatever it is. It’s easy to forget on air.

Concise, everyday language. NO acronyms, abbreviations, specialist terms. Speak to an adult, but one who knows nothing about your topic. Most mainstream media aim to be understood by a 12 year old.

It’s not always easy to acknowledge everyone (but have a go if you wish – insert it in another comment; “I’m just part of a team and we’ve discovered...”)

Short is sweet. (Most of the time)

Be risk-ready. **Have responses ready for the tough questions.** We can’t answer the questions for you, but we can help you present your answer in the best way possible.

**How your interview can be the best it can be.** That can be achieved by giving the media what they want (while also getting across what you want).

The Exclusive – sometimes it’s worth considering an exclusive. More prominence, bigger splash, more targeted audience. The Australian v The West, for example (State V National)

Radio and TV may want lightness, especially morning shows. Talk to the Media Office about the show. But there are some wolves out there who might go for a cheap shot.

Print/online - may be more in-depth – looking for a ‘different angle’. May ask for photo op. Online use videos nowadays.

TV stations have many more bulletins and are struggling for local content. May ask you to attend studio or do interview very early. Probably the most demanding media – but I’m a TV guy and it’s also the most fun.

Overall: Think of what else you can give them. Media love field videos, graphics, props, labs, fancy machines, appropriate settings for backgrounds or photos.

Think of what appeals to their audience (both in your media statements and in your interview).

**Media needs:**

**Print** – often more detailed. This can be good!

On the phone or in person (because they like a nice photo)

Ask questions – who else is being interviewed, what do you want from me, what’s the story about, important – who is the audience?

Graphics and photos – they might be interested in graphics – email to the reporter.

Photos – they might like to take their own and they are experienced in setting up a good pic. Go with it. But photos from the field might get a run.

**Online** – time poor. Will more than likely reprint the media release. They like photos. They like videos. They take our videos.

Often an extension of other media (ABC, The West, increasingly TV stations, radio) But some stand alone such as WA Today.

Want quick response times – within the hour.

High turnover, journos do many stories in a day.

They allow comments on some stories.

They want video, photos.

Ask them to send you the URL when it’s up.
Radio:
On the phone or in the studio (you’ll get longer in the studio) – they usually need you NOW.
They react to other media more – (are not afraid to follow other media)
Program interviews are usually LIVE. News grabs are pre-recorded.
  • Ask the producer who else is being interviewed before or after you so you can listen in. Ask who
    the audience is, what the story is about, how long you have.
  • Turn off your mobile, put away your newspaper. Turn off your computer screen.
  • Use their name. It makes you more likable.
  • Remember your message – your call to action.
  • The audience really can hear you smiling – do it if you can. But humour usually only works for
    comedians. But laugh along with them if you want to.

TV
TV takes time – they have to come out to interview you, plus edit time.
There are several ways in which you may be asked to appear on TV:
Live interviews, the most difficult media to do. Live technology means more live crosses. Solo live – down
the barrel – look down to pause or look at notes
The new world of Breakfast TV in Perth. Be aware of the time difference. A live interview with national
Breakfast TV is great but it might mean an early start.
News wants pre-records – short grabs. 8 – 15 second grabs at the most. Look at the reporter, not the
camera. If you make an error in a friendly interview, just start again.
They want overlay (shot on the day of you or supplied by you).
Generally - Try to relax and be yourself.
No sunglasses, check your hair, clothing.
Keep your message at the front of your mind.
Body language - Stand still, do not fidget, use your hands if that’s what you normally do. Don’t fold your
arms. Just have a chat. Be yourself.
Shoo flies. Remember that the camera is on you even when the journalist is speaking.

The interview:
In general - write things down, in note form only. Refer to them.
Write down the web page for people to go to, or the phone number or whatever it is. It’s easy to forget on
air. Don’t end the interview regretting that you failed to mention something important.
What if I don’t know the answer? First of all, anticipate the questions –it’s all part of the prep. But if you
don’t know - tell them what you do know. Or, if they insist, tell them you’ll get back to them with the
answer later.
Concise, everyday language. NO acronyms, abbreviations, specialist terms. Speak to an adult, but one who
knows nothing about your topic. Most mainstream media aim to be understood by a 12 year old.
It’s not always easy to acknowledge everyone (but have a go if you wish – insert it in another comment;
“I’m just part of a team and we’ve discovered...”)
Short is sweet. (Most of the time)
Be risk-ready. Have responses ready for anticipated tough questions.
Get help from the Media Office before you start – but if you mess up it’s not the end of the world.

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