

THE RECIPE FOR A NEWS STORY

In order to effectively pitch or respond to a news reporter you must first know what the reporter wants. Working with the media without that knowledge is like asking for trouble.

As mentioned in past newsletters, most reporters see themselves as consumer advocates. They represent their audiences or readers. The information reporters gather must be interesting to and/or affect those people's lives.

In my media training seminars, I refer to the reporter's needs as 'the recipe for a news story.' I will share some of the important ingredients with you here.

Affects a Lot of People

Dynamic weather, an election, a computer virus. All of these affect a large part of the reporter's audience. If you have something that affects a sizeable number of people, you have a major ingredient to a news story.

Let's continue with the computer virus analogy. Who started the virus? Who apprehended the person responsible? This story has a hero and a villain. More ingredients for a good story.

Your Money

Reporters crave stories about government waste. Whether it involves potholes in your neighborhood or a grand jury investigation about a city's fraudulent bidding process, your money is at stake. If you can tell a reporter how your story hits people in the pocketbook, your chances of delivering your message successfully are improved.

Not So Normal

Maybe your story doesn't affect many people. Maybe it has nothing to do with money. And what if there is no hero? What if it's just plain unusual? That can be news, too.

We all enjoy the features at the end of a newscast. Those stories can be about unusual inventions and the people behind them, or maybe it's the story of 45-year old twins who are seeing each other for the first time. Asking yourself what is unusual about your story is a good way to bring out the news value.

Spot News

And what about all of those "spot" news stories that TV reporters jump on? The fires, shootings, and car accidents? They don't usually affect a lot of people, there is no hero unless someone saved a life, they don't affect your pocketbook and unfortunately, they are not unusual. What is the news value, or ingredient? These stories involve human suffering. It is an easy way for a newscast to grab your attention.

Of course, there are a few more vital ingredients to a news story. The five we have covered here will help you recognize the potential selling points before you contact reporters and during your next interview.

Does your story have one or more of the following?

- 1 affects a lot of people
- 2 hero-villain
- 3 government waste or savings
- 4 unusual
- 5 human suffering

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