



AMERICAN INDIAN
COLLEGE FUND
EDUCATION IS THE ANSWER

**MEDIA RELATIONS FOR TRIBAL COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

Developed in Collaboration and Consultation
with Thunderbird Strategic, LLC



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Introduction

The information which follows is designed to help you and your tribal college conduct effective media relations efforts. This document offers tips on how to effectively share your stories and build positive, productive relationships with the news media. The document is also designed to help you overcome any hesitation or intimidation about working with the news media.

These tips will help you address the following objectives:

- “Pitch” stories effectively to reporters, editors, bloggers or other media representatives.
- Understand the needs of news organizations and learn how to meet them.
- Establish an effective media relations plan.
- Feel more at-ease when being interviewed.
- Write effective news releases, tip sheets, and public service announcements.
- Improve crisis communication.
- Respond to news media in an accurate and concise manner.
- Present issues with a people-oriented angle.
- Provide proper visuals for print or television news organizations.



WHAT A MEDIA RELATIONS PLAN WILL AND WILL NOT DO:

Developing a media relations plan will help your organization:

- Enhance the public’s knowledge and understanding of your mission, services, and programs. It keeps your message in front of leaders, influencers and decision-makers.
- Build credibility in your organization, since people think that what they see in the media is important.
- Extend the reach and increase the frequency of your message. Using the media may mean your message reaches people in your community, the region, or around the world. The extended reach helps build self-confidence and pride in your organization.

Developing a media relations plan will not help your organization:

- Control the media or the media’s message. You don’t have editorial control of what a newspaper, blogsite, or broadcast media outlet says.
- Eliminate negatives. Media relations will not be a “quick fix” if something has put your program or organization in a bad light. Media relations won’t eliminate negatives; however, it can help accentuate positives or clarify facts and positions.

Developing a Media Relations Strategy

First and foremost, develop a strategy to build an effective relationship with the media. The relationship doesn't happen just by itself. You need to be proactive: go to the media, instead of having the media come to you first. Here are suggestions as you map out your plan:

Set goals. It's probably unrealistic to expect that every news release you send out will result in a front-page story. But what do you expect? Set realistic goals. Maybe one story a month? Maybe being placed on the local community or tribal events calendar?

Decide on your approach to get your goals accomplished. How will your goals be accomplished? Through news releases? Personal visits to reporters? On-air interviews?

Decide who is responsible for fielding media calls. This may be one person or several. In either case, you must decide how media contacts will be routed. And all persons in your office must know this routing system.

Become a reputable and dependable expert source. Get to be recognized in your community as the expert in your field. If reporters trust you and know that you are an expert, you will be called on time after time for comments.

Develop a source book of subject-matter experts within your organization, as well as your geographic region. Keep track of other experts and sources in the area to whom you could direct reporters if the need arose. You also may wish to supply reporters with this source book.

Develop a news media source book for your office. Maintain a directory and database of reporters in your area. Find out what their "rules" are for submitting materials to the local news media and enter that information in your news media source book. Update this information at least once a year.

On a regular basis, provide informational materials to reporters. Examples include news releases, public service announcements (PSAs), photographs, and letters to the editor.

Get to know the reporters in your region and know the "beat" assignments of reporters. Who covers your "beat"? Depending on the story topic, it might be covered by an education reporter, a business reporter, or a science reporter.

Contact the reporters personally, and follow-up with phone calls, faxes, letters, and personal visits.

The Role of the Media

Various media outlets deliver information to target audiences. They act as filters. They decide what's important, as well as what's reported. Also, keep in mind that most media outlets are in business for profit. They stay in business by selling advertisement based on time and space, and these sales are generated by providing information of interest and value to their audiences. And where do they get this "good and valuable content"? Much of it comes from people like you who have developed an effective media relations strategy.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEWS MEDIA

One of the components to an effective media relations strategy is to become a reputable, expert source. This also means that you should contribute news items to the media to let them know what's going on with your organization – the positive impacts you're having on your community and people's lives. However, what you may consider to be news may not be what news directors, editors, reporters, or bloggers consider news. Following are the criteria many news decision makers use to determine newsworthiness:

- Is the information significant?
- How many readers/viewers could benefit from it?
- Is the story timely and is the information accurate?
- Is it local or does it have local impact?
- Is the information new or different?

With these criteria in mind, you may wonder what story ideas you might have that would be of interest to a news outlet. If you want a reporter to cover a meeting you are conducting, you first should ask, "Why would a reporter cover this meeting?" If it is a regular meeting and nothing new or exciting is happening, the chances are slim that the reporter would be interested in covering the meeting. If, however, you have invited a special speaker or are doing something out of the ordinary, it is very likely a reporter would come. But notice that the slant of the story would be to cover the "newness" of the event in the meeting, not the meeting itself. News – not olds – gets attention.

Different media approach stories a little differently. Newspaper reporters want lots of quotations, hard-core facts (numbers), and photo opportunities. You should schedule stories with newspaper reporters no later than early afternoon, because the deadline for newspaper reporters to complete their stories is early evening to be included in the next morning's paper. Radio reporters want short quotations (also called soundbites) of 10 to 20 seconds in length and natural (or background) sound. Interviews with radio reporters can be scheduled at any time, because radio news programs air many times during the day. Television reporters also want short soundbites (10-20 seconds) and moving visuals. TV stories can not be as detailed as newspaper stories; TV stories are shorter, usually 90 seconds or less. Schedule TV interviews for early to mid-morning for the noon or 5 p.m. newscasts or early afternoon for the 5, 6, and 11 p.m. newscasts.

What to Know About the News Gathering Process?

As you can see, one way to establish successful media relations is to think like a reporter. Following are some ideas you must keep in mind when working with reporters:

- Scheduling: Other events are happening; make YOURS count! If you know one of the most popular and longest-running events in the county is going to happen next weekend, don't schedule your activity at the same time as this "sure-fire" news coverage event.
- Know the reporters' deadlines: Remember that reporters have deadlines to get stories in by. Arrange your news events so they can be covered well in advance of a reporter's deadline.
- Reporters are typically generalists, not specialists. Reporters may not know much about your area of expertise. Therefore, reporters need a lot of help when developing a story. They need facts presented clearly and concisely, without unfamiliar acronyms, jargon, or technical talk.
- Avoid calling news conferences. News conferences should be held only when new and important information needs to get to many media outlets at the same time.

- Determine that the event you want covered by a reporter really is “news.” Keep in mind the criteria for newsworthiness detailed in the previous section.
- Reporters are good observers. Anything reporters see or hear is fair game for the story. In other words, do not go “off the record.”
- Media like to personalize a story. Submit story ideas that emphasize people.
- Make sure the facts you provide the reporter are correct. If you don’t know if something is right or not, don’t guess. Check it out before you give it to a reporter.
- Follow trends. Keep up with the events in your own field, and pitch story ideas that are “trendy” or timely.

Lastly, here are a few suggestions on how you can help reporters do their jobs better.

Remember, if you want to develop good media relations practices, try to accommodate the news media as much as possible. Written materials, such as tip sheets, news releases, brochures, and organizational reports can help reporters tremendously when they write the story.

SETTING:

Provide tips on where interviews should be conducted. What visuals and audio would improve a TV story? Most reporters appreciate any tips to enhance a story.

DIRECTIONS/TRAVEL:

Provide explicit directions to an event, assistance with camera gear, and help with getting from place to place.

UNDERSTANDABLE TERMS:

No jargon or unfamiliar words.

SEVERAL SOURCES/RESOURCES:

Reporters like to have more than one person to interview. If you know someone who would add to a reporter’s story, suggest the person’s name. And make sure you are the best person to be interviewed. If you’re not, try to help the reporter find the best person.

Free Publicity

You may be on a tight budget but would like to stretch your “publicity dollars” as much as you can. In addition to providing media outlets with news releases and tip sheets, here are a few ways to get some free publicity:

- Explain your need to local media personally, especially if you need a good deal of exposure in a short time. However, remember that you’re asking for free time. Anytime that is given to you is better than no time at all.
- Send information about your event to the public relations person, public affairs director, or promotions director (after you’ve made personal contact with that person, of course). Many TV and radio stations have a calendar of events, which is aired once a day. Newspapers tend to list community events once a week.
- Be ready to go on the air early. Many TV and radio stations invite guests to discuss their upcoming events. However, these interviews usually are early in the day. Be ready and willing to appear during early morning hours if you’re asked.
- Develop public service announcements (PSAs).

A FINAL WORD ON PUBLICITY

This section presented some steps for you to take in order to develop effective relations with media. To summarize, get to know reporters in your community, and know their “beat” assignments. Write tip sheets, news releases, and PSAs on a regular basis. And most importantly, become a dependable and reputable source. If you accomplish this, you’ll find that media relations is not difficult at all. You may even get to like this group of people everyone loves to hate.

General Interview Guidelines

The following recommendations are general hints that will give you the tools you need to succeed in most interviews. Going through these steps in a mock news interview setting will help you prepare for the “real thing.” (A mock news interview is when someone acts as a reporter and asks you questions that a “real” reporter would ask. You may wish to videotape the mock interview so you can review and critique your performance.) The interview skills described in this section pertain to all forms of media unless otherwise noted at the end of the sentence.

PREPARATION

Prepare two to three ideas you want to convey. These are your communication points, the three most important issues or points you hope to address and get across to the reporter during the interview.

Make a list of the questions you anticipate being asked. Anticipate issues and questions that may arise during the interview. Be prepared to use those issues to launch your communication points.

- Know your subject matter well.
- Have your best answers ready to share.
- Make short, simple, and specific statements.
- Explain your most important point first.



- Don't stray from the topic.
- Summarize and then elaborate. Example: "We have the best organization in the area because our volunteers really care. Let me explain what I mean...."

Answering questions:

- Pause after complete statements. The interviewer will appreciate these breaks during the editing process. (Radio and TV)
- When you think you've answered a question adequately, don't feel compelled to keep talking simply because the interviewer has a microphone up to your mouth. If you're satisfied with your answer, sit in silence. Rambling leads you to say the wrong thing.
- Do not say the reporter's name in the middle of a sentence; do not use the phrase "as I explained earlier." Example: "We got all of our information in March 1999, John, and as I explained earlier, this will back up our first estimates." The reporter's name and the phrase "as I mentioned earlier" will be difficult to edit. Also, viewers may not know what you and the reporter have discussed previously, and may not understand what you are referring to. (Radio and TV)
- Think before you speak. Avoid fillers such as uh, ah, yeah, and you know. (Radio and TV)
- Respond to negative questions with positive responses.
- Always tell the truth. Your credibility is crucial.
- Avoid "off the record." If you say something to a reporter, expect that it will end up in print. If you don't want it printed, don't say it.
- Avoid "no comment" answers. It sounds as if you have something to hide.

THE GAMES INTERVIEWERS PLAY

Some interviewers can become hostile; others are just uninformed. Don't get caught in an emotional or intellectual game with the interviewer. Following are some "interviewer types" and question traps and some responses you may want to try.

INTERVIEWER TYPES

Machine Gunner - Asks so many questions that you don't know which one to answer first.

Response: "Well, Bob, you've asked several interesting questions. First, I'd like to address..."

Interrupter - Jumps in before you've had a chance to complete your response.

Response: Let him complete the interruption, then say: "Before I answer that, I'd like to complete my thought."

Paraphraser - Tries to put words in your mouth; e.g., "Do you mean to sit there and tell me there's no problem with..."

Response: "No, Sarah, that isn't what I said. What I said was..." and repeat your point.

Unprepared Interviewer - May have vague questions or require you to provide a lot of background before you can get to your key message.

Response: Take the opportunity to steer the interview in the direction you want to go. Rephrase the question to make it more specific. "By your question, I think you're referring to...let me put that in perspective."

STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING QUESTION TRAPS

Either/Or - When the answer is not "black or white," say so.

Absent Party - Don't get trapped into being a spokesperson for another individual, business, or organization or into criticizing an absent person or organization.

False Statement - Correct incorrect information immediately. Don't repeat the misinformation; this only reinforces it.

Hypothetical - You do not have to answer a question that is hypothetical or conditional. It presents a scenario that never occurred.

HOLDING THE AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION

For any recorded interview (radio or television), the impact of your spoken message depends on how you say it. The sound of your voice determines how well you hold the audience's attention.

The ability to speak well can be cultivated through practice. Common voice problems involve pitch, rate, and articulation. The habit of inflecting up at the ends of sentences and phrases is a pitch problem. Making everything you say sound like a question undermines your authority. You will sound more assertive if you lower your pitch and inflect downward.

Do you talk too fast or too slow? The speed that you talk is your speaking rate. While sprinting through your message may leave listeners behind, talking too slowly may bore them. To find out if you need to slow down or speed up, try this: Record yourself talking with someone, preferably in a "mock news interview" situation. Play it back and listen to how fast or slow you speak. Practice establishing a rate that is easy for people to understand. Once you've established a good pitch and rate, practice varying them, along with your volume, to add emphasis and expression to your message. Without variety, your voice becomes boring. You will make a better impression on your audience if you articulate, distinctly speak words.



APPEARANCE IS EVERYTHING

Television viewers will judge your trustworthiness by your message's substance and your style. However, your appearance also must match viewer expectations. Following are a few do's and don'ts for dressing for success in a TV interview.

CLOTHING (IN A STUDIO SETTING)

- Stick to a conservative, "professional appearance" style.
- Wear a tailored sports coat. (Men)
- Skirt length should be appropriate -- no mini-skirts. (Women)
- Avoid stripes or plaids. On camera, they sometimes produce a moving "zebra-stripe" effect.
- Dress in "natural" clothes. You are not expected to wear a suit if you're being interviewed in a peanut field or a citrus grove.
- Avoid hats. If you must wear one, push back the brim so people can see your eyes.

JEWELRY

- Wear only a few pieces.
- Avoid "clunky" or dangling jewelry. Big gold or high-gloss pieces can reflect studio lights.
- Short necklaces are best. Long necklaces rub against clip-on microphones.

MAKE-UP

- Aim for the "natural" look. A woman's "every day" make-up should be fine.
- Use a matte finish to reduce shine (this includes lipstick).
- Be sure your nails are manicured.
- Men: Most likely, you will not have to wear make-up, but be open to the suggestion. The lighting at some television stations may cause you to look washed out; therefore, you may need make-up to highlight your facial features.

ENTHUSIASM

- Be animated. Use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to add vitality to your words. However, be careful not to overdo it.
- Smile. A good first impression can help establish your credibility.
- Be conversational.
- Say it in 30 seconds or less.
- Deliver your message with confidence. After all, you know more about the story topic than the interviewer.

BODY LANGUAGE

- Look at the interviewer, not the camera. Glances up or to the side make you appear shifty-eyed and untrustworthy.
- Sit still in your chair. Rocking or swiveling can take you out of a camera person's shot.
- Don't look at notes during an interview, although you can refer to them if you get "stuck."
- Stay seated when the interview is over. You might still be on camera and trip over a wire or do something else awkward.

OTHER WARNINGS

- Don't chew gum or play with your pocket change or keys while on television.
- Never wear black or white for television interviews. Aim for midtone colors. Dark- or bright-colored clothes can make your face look extremely washed out or dark under television studio lighting.
- Your blouse/shirt should have a place to clip a microphone.
- Don't wear light-sensitive glasses. Studio lighting will make your glasses darker; viewers won't be able to see your eyes.

HAVING NERVES OF STEEL

You are now ready for radio and television interviews. You are prepared, you look great, and you are ready to go. You arrive at the station on time, and then “IT” happens. You realize YOU will be the one in front of the microphone or camera. Your palms sweat. Your stomach churns. What are you going to do?

Stage fright is not a fatal disease. Just remember that we never look as nervous as we feel. With a few tips, you can overcome your fears and give a successful interview.

- Be organized and concise. Read over your material in advance to keep from sounding strained and awkward.
- Concentrate on the question you’re being asked. Pause before answering a question just long enough to formulate an outline of the answer.
- Before the interview starts, take a deep breath, get a drink of water, laugh or yawn. Why yawn? Because you can’t yawn and be tense at the same time. Even a nervous laugh to yourself will help relieve tension.
- Remind yourself that you were asked to be interviewed because you’re knowledgeable on that subject; you’re the expert.
- Prior to the interview, review taped performances of yourself to identify presentation strengths and weaknesses.
- Be sure the TV station has your proper name and title. Seeing either item appear incorrectly on the TV screen can throw you off guard.
- Try to convince yourself you’re having a normal everyday conversation with someone.
- Prepare your voice before the interview. Many people are self-conscious about the way they sound. One way to lessen this fear is by relaxing your throat with a glass of lemon and hot water before leaving your house. Also, certain foods and beverages coat your throat, causing difficulty in swallowing and speaking. Before the interview, stay away from such things as cola drinks, chocolates and milk and milk products. It takes several hours to “uncoat” your throat from these products.

In addition to the suggestions above, you may wish to use this checklist to make sure you have everything covered before the interview:

- Are you familiar with the show or publication?
- How will this interview be used? Are you the only source, or one of many?
- Will this interview be live or taped? Will there be call-in questions?
- If this is a television interview, are you ready to make your appearance? What will you wear? What about use of makeup, visual aids?
- Have you developed a conversational style that will work under fire?
- Have you rehearsed all possible questions and answers with someone else?
- Can you explain your communication points in a concise manner?
- Have you prepared notes for your own reference?
- Do you have a few transitional statements?
- Are you prepared to answer questions without resorting to “no comment”?
- How many ways can you restate your key messages?
- Are you aware of your body language and facial expressions?
- Are you ready to present your message in an honest, effective way without industry jargon?
- After you have been interviewed, you should evaluate how well you did before you do another interview.

Here are some questions to evaluate your interview skills. Did you:

- Communicate your objective?
- Create soundbites (short quotations)?
- Keep control of the interview?
- Remain calm?
- Listen carefully to questions?
- Bridge from hostile or irrelevant questions?
- Use short, succinct sentences?
- Maintain credibility?
- Keep good eye contact with the interviewer?
- Control body gestures -- use hand motions appropriately, stop that shaking leg?
- Project a strong, positive image of a person people would trust?

Lastly, our team will work with each participating TCU to identify existing digital assets that may be available for creating compelling content (e.g., photos, video footage, audio recordings, brochures, graphics, etc.). We will provide the TCUs with a hyperlink to upload such assets to our team of writers and graphic designers.

FINAL INTERVIEWING HELPS - “BE ATTITUDES”

By following these final “Be Attitudes,” you should be successful in any interview setting:

Be prepared. Prepare in advance two or three key ideas you wish to get across. Anticipate key issues that will come up during the interview and be prepared to use those issues to launch your objectives. Think of questions you would ask.

Be positive. Turn negative questions or statements into positive responses. End every answer on a positive, upbeat note.

Be honest. Always tell the truth. If you don’t and try to bluff, it will show. Your credibility is crucial.

Be brief. Crystallize your ideas into a few short phrases that summarize what you’re trying to communicate.

Be yourself. Keep your voice at an even pace. Act naturally.

Be energetic. Be animated. Use gestures, facial expressions and body language to add vitality to your words. (Just don’t overdo it.)

Be focused. Direct your full attention on the interviewer. Look squarely at the person asking the questions. Don’t be concerned with distractions.

Be comfortable, confident and take charge. Relax. You know more about the story topic than the interviewer. If not, you wouldn’t be interviewed.



You may be called upon to write a news release about your program's activities, interesting news, or important events. News releases may accompany letters of correspondence, or they may be distributed to media outlets by themselves. In either case, the content of the news release should stand alone. This means that in case a cover letter is lost, the news release would contain the information that a reporter needs to follow-up on the story.

A news release provides reporters with the basics they need to develop a news story. In large cities, television stations and newspapers receive dozens of news releases a day. Here are some suggestions to get better play from your news release:

- Target smaller newspapers, TV stations, or radio stations. They are more apt to use "community" news.
- Send the release to a particular person at a media outlet. Don't just send it to the "Editor." Send it to a "somebody" (and make sure you spell the person's name correctly!). It's a good idea to send the release to the person who likely would cover the event.
- Establish a rapport with the person who covers the types of event you promote. Find out the names of your business writer, city reporter, or youth and community affairs correspondent.
- Write your news release in one of two formats: tip sheet or news story. Some people will combine the two formats and have a tip sheet at the top of a news release and a more detailed news story at the bottom.

Regardless of the format you choose, your news release must identify a contact person, in case a reporter wants more information. You must name a contact person and phone number at the top of the news release. It's also a good idea to list the writer of the release as a contact person.

Pitching Stories to the Media

The tip sheet presents the reporter's six basic questions in an easy-to-read format. The six questions are referred to by the news media as the 5 W's and H for "who, what, when, where, why and how." In this format, you would write the following:

Who: Organization's name

What: What's going on?

When: When is the event?

Where: Where is the event taking place?

Why: Why is the event taking place?

How: How is the event significant/important?

News Releases

The news story format is written in just the same way that reporters write news stories, and it provides more details than the tip sheet format. News story format releases are frequently used in newspapers and magazines in the exact form in which they were sent (especially if it's a small-circulation newspaper or magazine), with little or no editing. This format tends to be longer than the tip sheet. Examples of news story releases are provided in the accompanying Web page Example Tip Sheet, News Release, & PSA.

If you do write a news story format news release, you should emulate newswriting style. Here are some elements of news writing style to keep in mind:

Lead - The first paragraph. It is used to grab the reader's attention.

5 W's and H - The most important of the questions should be answered in the lead. Others are answered later in the story.

Short paragraphs - Paragraphs run one to two sentences in length. Rarely do you see paragraphs of more than three sentences.

Quotations - The exact words of someone talking. It's a good idea to use quotations to bring "life" to your story.

Inverted pyramid style - You want to include the most important information first, followed in descending order by less-important information.



Elements of a Good News Story

You should strive to do the following when writing news stories:

Cover most, if not all, of the 5 W's and H.

Who... will do, said or did something

What... will be done, was said or it happened

When... it will be done, it was said or it happened

Where... it will be done, it was said or it happened

Why... it will be done, it was said or it happened

How... it will affect me or how it was done

Follow the inverted pyramid style with the most important facts first.

- Keep sentences short.
- Use short, well-known words. Avoid jargon.
- Use active words to add zest to your writing. Avoid, for example, “it was said,” or “it is thought.”
- Use specific, concrete - not abstract - words and terms.
- Do not editorialize, which means injecting your own preferences or even preferences of the subject you are writing about without attributing.
- Avoid adjectives that reflect opinion. Stick to the facts.
- Keep paragraphs short.
- Avoid overusing prepositions in sentences.
- Write stories in third person (he, she, it or they, or “John said”). It is, however, becoming more common to write in the second person (you).
- Proofread the story and edit unnecessary words; eliminate grammar and spelling errors.
- For good measure, have others read the story and have them tell you what they think it said.
- If the news story is longer than one page, write “more” at the bottom of the page.
- Indicate the end of the news story by a typing “-30-” or “###” (journalese for “end”) at the center of the page below the final line of story.

Public Service Announcements

A public service announcement (PSA) is a free advertisement that radio and television stations air or newspapers and magazines run to highlight information about your educational program.

Please keep in mind that you do not have control over when or if PSAs run. A television station makes its advertisement programming decision this way: Paid product advertisements have priority, followed by promotions (“ads” for programs on that station) and then PSAs. Therefore, PSAs may run during late night or early morning hours when few paid advertisements or promos run.

However, any free airtime is better than nothing. Radio stations are much better about airing PSAs because they do not take much time to produce. Radio also has more time to fill. They may read the information “live.”

Example: “The Tiger Glee Club will sponsor a hay ride Saturday night, starting at 7. Tickets are \$3. Proceeds benefit the student scholarship fund. For more information call here at KUFG, Central Florida’s choice for news.”

Radio and TV announcers may help you write the PSA. If you have “live” copy for announcers to read on-air, make sure it is complete. It should have the phone number of someone in your organization to contact. And try to make it brief and as easily readable as possible. Go for a conversational style.



Crisis Communications Tips

All crises have common characteristics. First, they are nearly always negative. They cast shadows of doubt about the credibility of an organization in the eyes of the public. Second, a crisis can create improper or distorted perceptions. A crisis may involve allegations that tell only part of the story and stimulate negative impressions by the public about the organization. Unfortunately, perception is too often reality. An organization, therefore, must be prepared to deal with erroneous comments.

Third, crisis situations are almost always disruptive to the organization. Work is placed on hold until the crisis is resolved. Last, a crisis generally takes the organization by surprise. The organization is placed in a “react” mode, where it reacts to the situation, rumors, comments, and potentially hostile interviews.

PREPARING FOR THE CRISIS

A crisis will take you by surprise, so what can you do to prepare for a crisis that you don't know about? You must develop a crisis plan prior to the onset of a crisis. The plan should address these key issues:

Organize a “what if” brainstorming session with others in your office.
Come up with “what if” scenarios about potential crisis situations.
Determine steps on how you would respond to the “what if” crises.

Gather and classify information into categories, such as facts and rumors. Facts should be routinely updated; rumors should be verified or exposed as myths.

Select crisis management and crisis communication teams. Who is responsible for communicating with the media during a crisis? Who fields telephone calls? Who makes decisions about what to say to the media? Everyone in your office should know who are on the crisis communication and crisis management teams.

COMMUNICATING DURING THE CRISIS

Following are some pointers on how to communicate to the news media during a crisis situation:

Get the facts. Miscommunication heightens during a crisis and can be exaggerated by half-truths, distortions, or negative perceptions. Get to the heart of the real story and tell it. Take the offensive when a serious matter occurs. Be active, not reactive. Tell it all; tell it fast.

Deal with rumors swiftly. Tell only the truth about what you know to be fact. Do not repeat others' opinions, hearsay, or possibilities.

Centralize information. Designate one spokesperson. A central spokesperson provides a singular "face" for the reporters. Viewers begin to become familiar with a central spokesperson, so this is one way to begin building credibility with the organization. Centralized information also will minimize miscommunication.

Don't get mad. Don't get mad. Don't get mad. Keep your cool in an interview or news conference with reporters. Some of their questions may be hostile, and some questions and comments may seem to be a personal attack to you but remember that they are trying to get information on a crisis-oriented story that may have widespread impact to their audiences. So don't get mad when you are asked the "hard" questions.

Stay "on the record" in all interviews. Do not go "off the record." Any comment worth saying should be said "on the record." If you go "off the record," be ready to read it in print the next day. Is this unethical for reporters to report "off the record" comments? Sure, but anything can, may, and will be done to advance a story. You should not be lured into going "off the record" under any circumstance.

No “no comments.” Try to have an answer for reporters’ questions. But if you don’t have an answer, don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.” Saying “no comment” instead, appears to television news viewers and newspaper readers that you have something to hide.

In any crisis situation, follow every order, direction or suggestion from emergency officials. Write everything down. Maintain a crisis communication inventory of what was said by whom and at what time. This way, you will have a record of the event and how it was communicated. You can evaluate your responses so you will be better prepared if another crisis happens in the future.

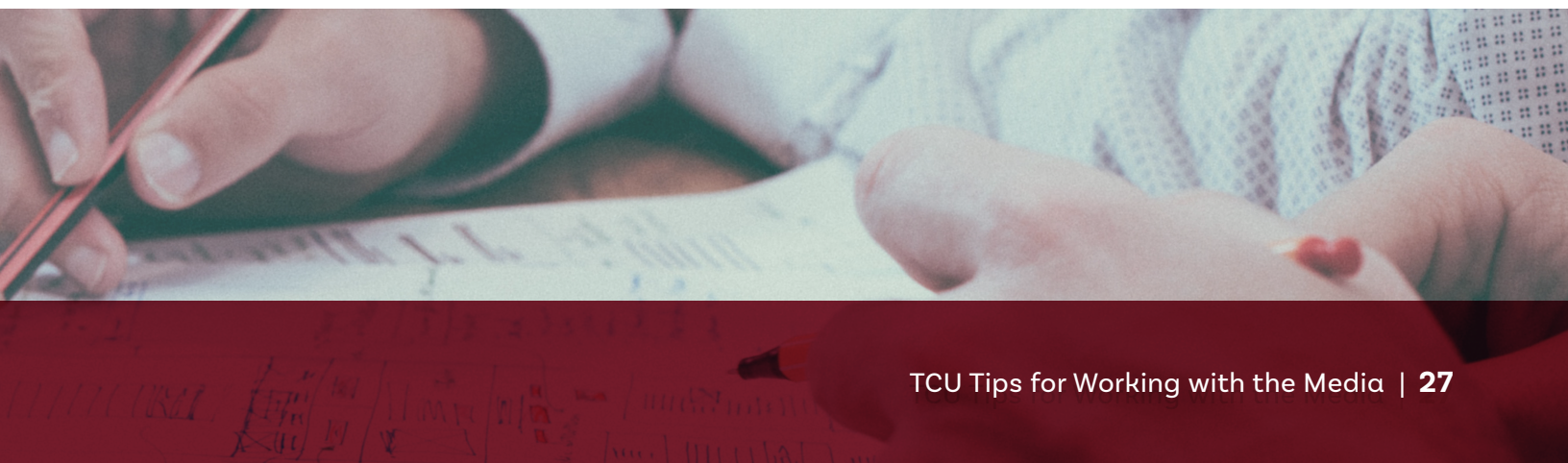
AFTER THE CRISIS....

After the crisis is over and all communication with the news media has ended, don’t just sit back and do nothing; you won’t be ready for the next crisis! It is time to evaluate how you handled the crisis. Your review should include the following:

A review of why the crisis occurred. Could you have done anything to prevent the crisis? An evaluation of how the crisis was handled. You may want to use the crisis communication inventory you maintained to evaluate how communication was handled. Was information disseminated through one spokesperson? Did miscommunication occur?

An examination of similar scenarios. What would you do in a similar situation in the future? What did others do in similar situations?

A crisis will happen in the life of most organizations. Taking time now to prepare for a crisis – even if you think it will never occur – and how to communicate to the news media during a crisis is your best defense.



Scriptwriting and Storyboarding

Part of your media relations plan may involve developing a video to show activities that your tribal college is doing in your community. This section will not cover all that you need to know about video production; however, this section should provide you with information to get started.

Writing a script and storyboard will help you meet your educational objectives. You can use the ideas for video scriptwriting and storyboarding for other media: slide programs, interactive computer programs, and oral presentations. A storyboard is a rough sketch of an anticipated video shot. Under each video shot is a brief commentary of the narration that goes with that shot. Using a storyboard helps you visualize what your shots will look like in the finished video.

A script is the narration, audio (music and background or natural sound), and visual directions (shot selection, on-screen text) that will be used in your video production. A well-written script is a must for a video production to be successful. To help you get started in the scriptwriting process, here are some tips:

Start by dividing your page into two columns. Video commands, explanations of what shots you need, and other special effects should be listed on the left side; anything related to the audio should be included on the right side. This will help you and your producer visualize what you need to say and will remind you to explain what you need to show. Scripts also may be written using just the narration, with no video directions.

Decide what type of approach your video will need. Will the program consist of narration only, covered by video? Will it be hosted on-screen by someone on your staff or by a professional? Will you include interviews?

Consider your audience. This is imperative throughout the entire production process. At the scriptwriting stage, such questions as the following arise: What will the audience members' interests be? How long will you be able to retain their attention? An adult audience's attention span will last about 8 to 10 minutes. For children, plan for three to five minutes.

Write the way you speak. The key to writing a good script is to write the way you speak. Write for the ear. Remember that your audience cannot go back and refer to something in a previous paragraph. Most people will not stop a tape and rewind to refresh their memories, so write in simple, easy-to-understand sentences.

Use on-screen text to support what you need to state. For instance, if your video is about an academic program with six components which you are about to describe one by one, show them on the screen as you tell the audience about them. This approach also will assist your visual learners with retention of your information.

Use music and special effects to indicate to your audience that you are changing topics.

Keep it simple. Remember that your video tells a story without your needing to state everything. While the shots you choose should support your narration, they do not necessarily need to duplicate the narration.

CHECKLIST

When you've finished writing a polished draft of your script, use the following as a checklist to evaluate if you need to make any changes:

- Will my audience be interested throughout my entire program?
- Have I explained the topic in simple language?
(When I read the script aloud, does it sound
- as if I'm talking to an audience or just reading to an audience?) Have I avoided technical language/jargon?
- Have I used music and natural sound (background sound) to help tell my story and break up constant narration or interviews?
- Do I have any lists or main ideas that could be reinforced on the television screen as they are being discussed?
- Have I included proper titles, name identification and location information in the video column of the script for the video editor to type onto the screen? Have I described the type of video shots I need in the video column?



MEDIA RELATIONS FOR TRIBAL COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA