City of Austin Law Department and

Communications and Public Information Office

&

International Municipal Lawyers Association

BEST PRACTICES IN WORKING WITH MEDIA

OCT. 24, 2012

Overview

- RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
- HOW NEWS MEDIA WORKS
- ROLE OF A PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE OR HOW TO ACT AS YOUR OWN PIO
- PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS
- GENERAL MEDIA TIPS
- DETAILS ON EACH TYPE OF NEWS OUTLET

Rules of Professional Conduct

- Confidentiality of information
- Conflict of interest
- Organization as a client
- Trail publicity
- Truthfulness in statements to others
- Government attorney standard

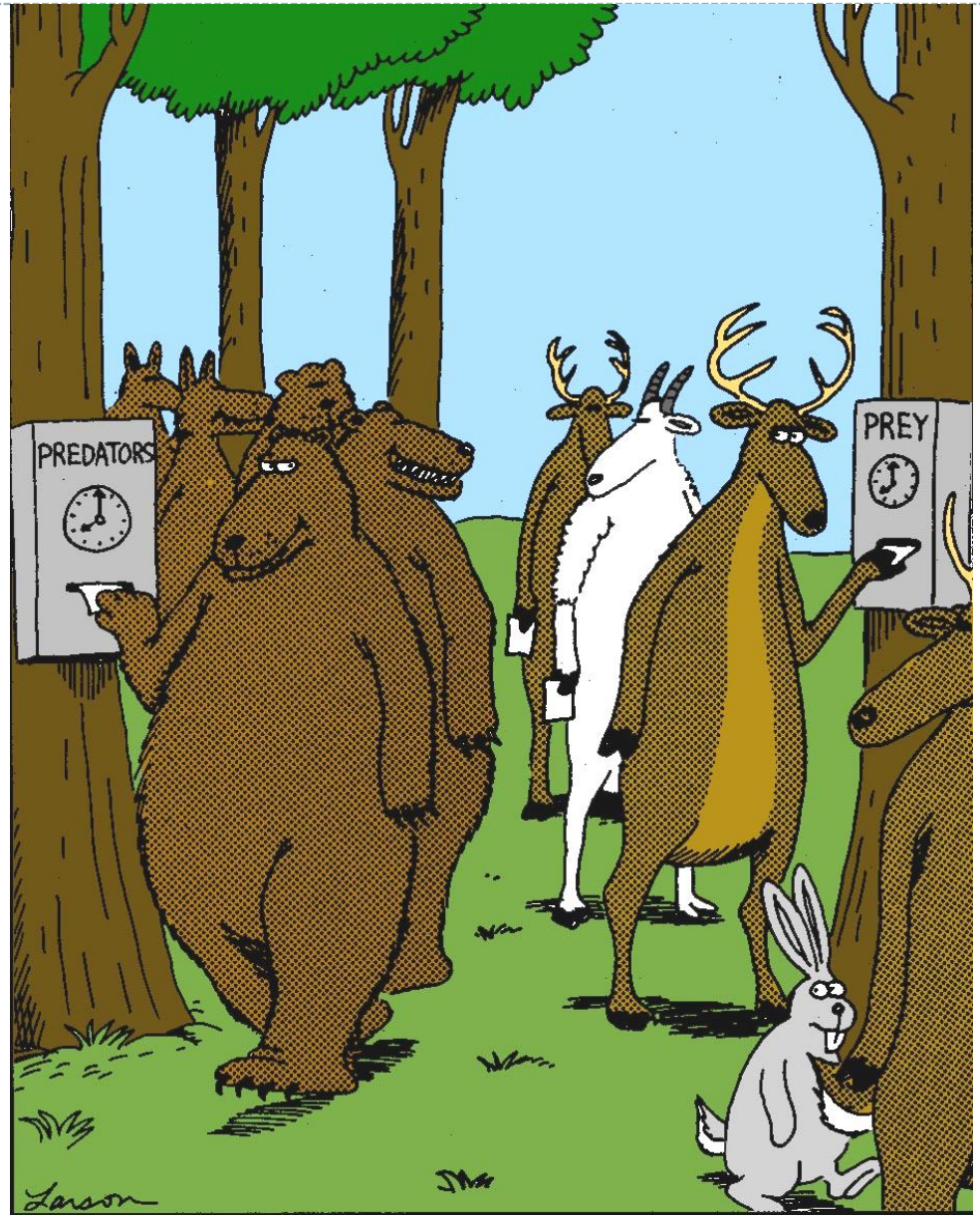
Understanding News

News is:

- Conflict
- Emotional
- Unusual
- Timely
- Deadline driven

Reporters want:

- THE STORY
- Accurate Information
- Expert quote



Relationships Are Important

- **Radio Broadcast:** 14, 420, 000 stations nationwide (census)
  - **KUT** Radio, listenership of more than 100,000 each week (Austin, TX)
  - **MPR** 800,000 listeners (St. Paul, MN)
- **Television Broadcast:** 1, 782, 000 stations nationwide (census)
  - **KWHB TV** 47 90,000 weekly viewers (Tulsa, OK)
  - **WAND TV** 389,000 households (Decatur, IL)
  - **KTBC FOX** 7 800,000 weekly viewers (Austin, TX)

Relationships Are Important

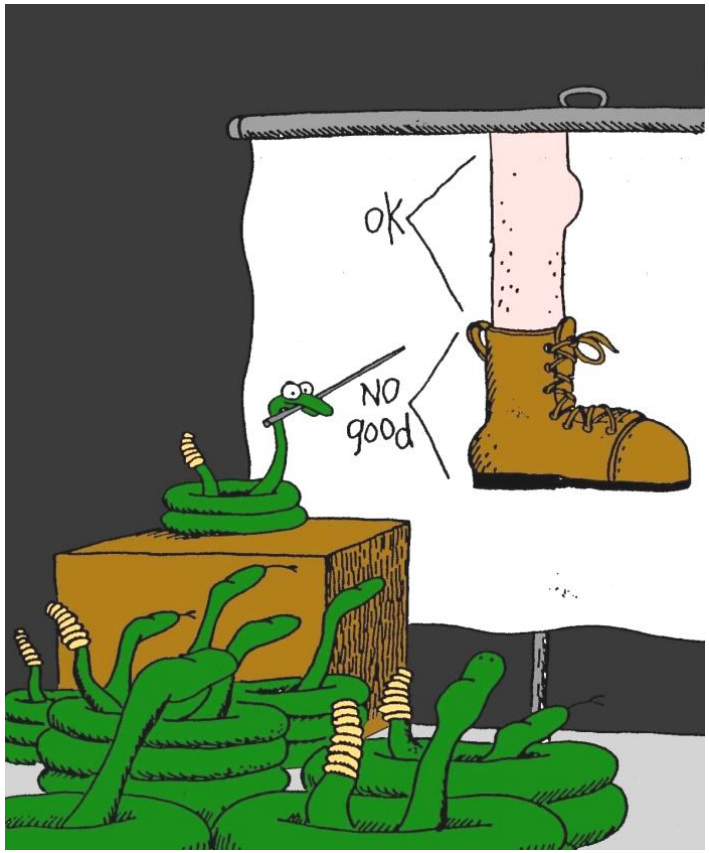
- **Newspapers:**
  - **1, 397** daily newspapers nationwide (census)
  - **46, 300,000** circulation nationwide (census)
  - **Austin American Statesman** 180,000 circulation
- **Mobile:**
  - in 2008 Americans used 75 million minutes – compared to 30 million in 2000 (census)
  - sent 187.7 billion text messages (census)

Role of a Public Information Specialist

- Serve as a single point of contact for media.
- They're on **your side** and want your agency to look and sound good.
- They can often see things from a journalist's perspective.
- Holistic perspective and coordination.



PLAN NOW….
for when you may be approached by a reporter



- Know your organization's procedure
  - Acknowledge the reporter and the need for a response.
  - If there is one, explain the procedure for media inquiries.
  - Ask who else the reporter has called in your organization for an interview.
  - Alert your organization's leadership that media requested an interview. Conduct appropriately.

Preparing for the interview….

- Determine key messages – what are the main points you want to get across?
- Anticipate likely questions.
- Prioritize and practice “soundbite” responses.
- Ask reporter in advance what questions will be asked.


CAUTION
THIS SIGN HAS
SHARP EDGES
DO NOT TOUCH THE EDGES OF THIS SIGN
ALSO, THE BRIDGE IS OUT AHEAD

Preparing for the interview….

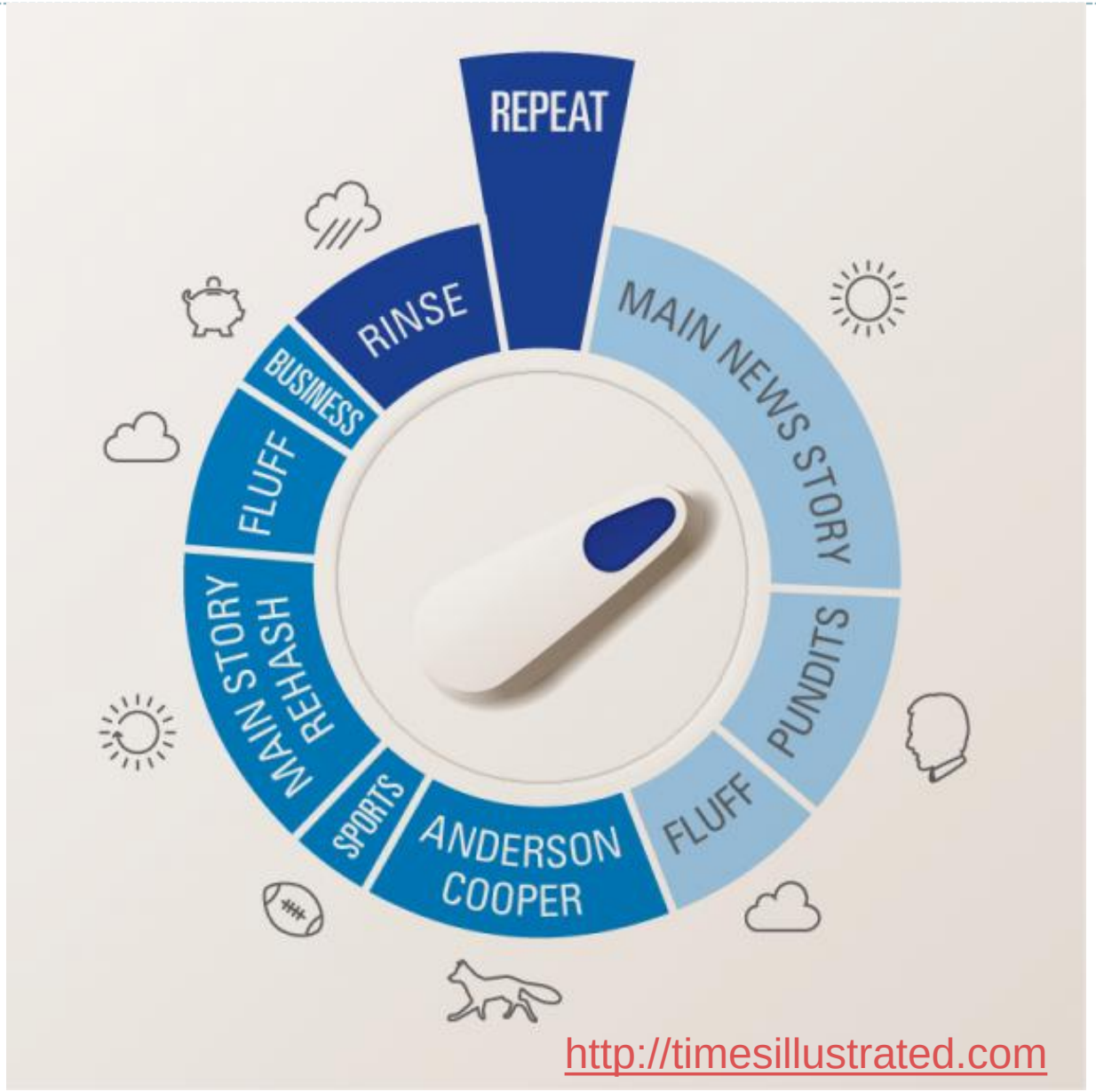


- What is your key point? Repeat it.
- Consider your attire.
- Don’t be intimidated by silence.
- Answer questions, don’t respond to statements.
- Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know, but I will find out.”
- Stay positive.
- Answer with knowledge and facts – not emotions.
- If invited for a last word, use it.

24-Hour News Cycle

Tools:

- Fact sheets
- talking points
- Graphics/visuals
- News release



http://timesillustrated.com

General Media Tips

- Work as quickly as possible to provide a response.
- Be accurate.
- Be thorough, yet succinct.





Types of Media Outlets

graphic via empowerpr.net

NEWSPAPER



- Target your story to the right editor.
- Provide quality photos/photo opps.
- Print is more thorough than broadcast.
- Can promote events in advance.



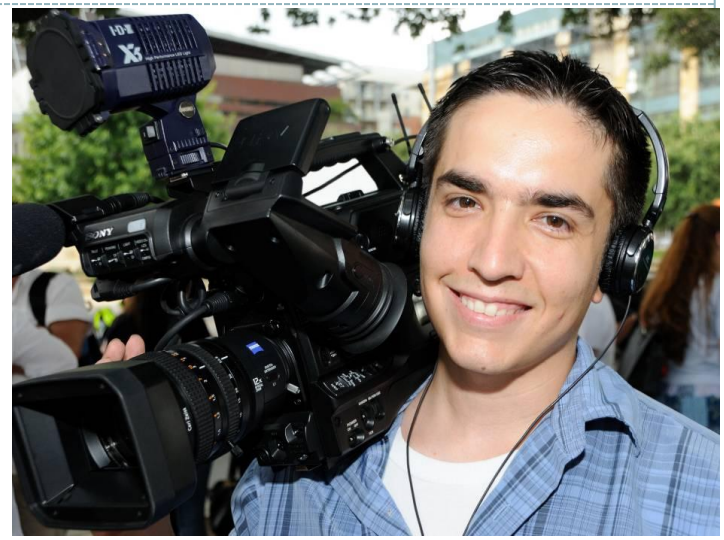
Radio News

- Most immediate broadcast news medium.
- Call-in/talk programs (possibly a regular guest spot.)
- Be open to phone interviews the week of or morning/day of an event.



TV News

- Tight schedule, can react quickly.
- Offer visual action or “b-roll”.
- Advisories for visual events can have great results.





Consider Background



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Questions?



Anne Morgan
Deputy City Attorney

Reyne Telles
Manager, Media Relations

Samantha Park
Public Information Specialist