



MEDIA RELATIONS GROUND RULES

The Basics:

- Know your message and stick to it
- Shorter is better
- Be careful about giving your opinion if it's different than the company line – it could cost you your job
- Tell the truth or nothing at all
- Know your journalists, familiarize yourself with their work
- Recognize the time allotted for your interview – be on time, don't linger
- Plan to communicate key messages within the first minute of your interview
- Speak in sound bites – even with print reporters
- Be aware of verbal and non-verbal communication
- Assume the reporter has not reviewed material provided in advance of the interview
- If you don't want to see it in print or on TV, don't say it
- Assume everything you say to a reporter is on the record
- Reporters are not the enemy, they just like to pretend they are – build relationships and don't take offense

Ten Good Questions to ask a Reporter:

1. Who are you?
2. Where are you from?
3. What have you written about this subject before?
4. What's your deadline?
5. Who else have you talked to/what other sources have you contacted so far?
6. Can I email you something? Can I fax you something? Can you get on the Web while we're talking?
7. What's your angle?
8. Where did you get that fact?
9. Will you call me as you continue the story?
10. Can I call you with additional information?



MEDIA INTERVIEW TIPS

Below are some tips on what to do before you go on camera or provide a quote.

PRINT MEDIA

Interviews for print media may take place in person or by telephone. The length of the interview and deadline for the story will vary depending upon the style of the publication and the reporter. Here is a pre-interview checklist to help you prepare:

- **Know your interviewer**
Read some past articles the reporter has written to gain insight into the writer's style. A comment on past work shows the reporter you are familiar with their work and will start the interview on a positive note.
- **Know your subject**
Take time to prepare and research your subject before the interview – prepare talking points or use the fact sheet to be sure you hit your message.
- **Respond to all questions**
Answer all questions, including negative ones. Be prepared in advance for possible negative questions and be ready to bridge quickly to more positive topics. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, and offer to get the information back to the reporter. Then follow through on your promise.

TELEVISION MEDIA

Most television and radio stations have one thing in common – a limited block of time devoted to news and feature programming. So – understand in advance that the news story will be compressed to the most basic elements. Be prepared to make your key points as brief as possible. The most effective way to handle the pressures of a television interview:

- **Focus on your message**
Develop a positive message and key talking points. If confronted with a negative question – never repeat the negative – simply state your positive message. You can control the interview if you focus on delivering two or three key points.
- **State your message as concisely as possible**

Speak in short sentences. Determine the major impression you want to make and be consistent, i.e. warm, dedicated, or serious. PERSONALIZE the story with anecdotes to establish credibility and increase interest.

- **Know the program**
For live interviews, watch or listen to the program prior to your interview to get a sense of the format and personality of the host/hostess. Think in terms of the potential audience – and plan your comments to appeal to this audience.
- **Using visuals**
Visuals can help communicate your message. Be aware of your surroundings when being interviewed and what will be in the frame with you in a television interview.
- **Pre-interview**
Many reporters will conduct a “pre-interview” before the camera starts rolling. This is an opportunity for you to check out the personality and demeanor of the reporter and to mention topics you’d like to discuss during the interview.
- **Eye Contact**
Look the reporter and/or other guests in the eye when responding to questions or making a point. Don’t look at the camera, but remember it is there even when you are not speaking. In a live interview setting, stay involved and attentive even when not speaking.
- **Body Language**
Avoid obvious signs of discomfort or nervousness. Use small gestures and animated facial expressions to emphasize a point. Lean forward and modulate your voice to bring attention to your key points.
- **Attitude**
Make your expression match your words. Tell good news with a smile and confident gestures. Maintain a neutral expression when asked a question. Be pleasant. Relax.

RADIO MEDIA

Radio is the most underrated form of media – but can be a powerful means of delivering your message. One advantage is that radio programs are often repeated throughout the day. Many of the tips for television interviews also apply to radio. Here are some additional pitfalls you should be aware of:

- **The tape recorder**
Assume that the tape recorder is always rolling – so that you’ll focus on using positive message statements.
- **Be Concise**

State your key points in the briefest possible format. Radio stories are even shorter than Television. Brief, quotable statements are the most effective.

- **Language**
You don't have any pictures to help tell your story on radio. So be sure to use terms that create an image or paint a picture of your story for the audience. Use words to help establish your credibility, such as "In my 12 years as a Florida homebuilder, I have found..."
- **Tone**
Modulate your voice and try to make it as expressive as possible. Stress your key points by raising your intensity, NOT your volume.
- **Delivery**
Always try to personalize your delivery. Make your story part of the news story, and try to localize your comments.
- **Emotions**
In the case of live or taped interviews as part of a viewer call-in show – don't respond "in-kind" to the tone of the caller. The most effective way to overcome hostile questions is to make your points firmly and politely and back up assertions with facts.

- A high quality program should be mandatory not "aspirational," which is what the current law states.
- By simply changing one word in the current law, Florida's education system will improve in the area where children start the learning process.
- The foundation of Florida's future is in the pre-K classroom.

**THIS IS A COST-EFFECTIVE
WAY TO STRENGTHEN
FLORIDA'S ECONOMY, ITS
WORKFORCE AND ITS FUTURE**

- For every \$1 invested in early learning, \$7 or \$5.3 billion annually, is saved in taxpayer burden from school remediation, welfare and prison costs.
- In less than 10 years, a quality pre-K program will pay for itself.
- High quality pre-K is the most cost effective way to decrease the number of unskilled adults in Florida's workforce.
- Every dollar invested in pre-K will pay off dramatically in the future.

Florida law should be amended to make it "mandatory" for Pre-K teachers to have a college degree.

THERE IS NO "IMMEDIATE" FISCAL IMPACT

- Florida will have six years to implement the mandate.
- The infrastructure is in place to supply pre-K classrooms with degreed teachers by 2013.
- There are nearly a dozen teacher recruitment routes already in place and we simply have to use them.
- We care deeply about Florida's pre-school children and believe this is the best option to improve their future.

PRE-K TEACHERS WITH COLLEGE DEGREES IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

- Research clearly shows that pre-K teachers who hold college degrees in early childhood education create superior learning environments.
- Students who attend high quality pre-K programs have increased high school graduation rates and are more likely to attend college.
- Quality early education helps narrow the achievement gap for low-income and minority children by improving school readiness.
- We believe current pre-K teachers without a college degree should stay and assist in the classroom.

Speaker Agenda

The suggested event format is a roundtable discussion with your local Legislator(s). Choose a Pre-K provider participant to act as moderator, a teacher to speak, teacher to provide a tour of the facility and a local business leader to join discussion.

1. Moderator
 - Welcome
 - Brief introduction
 - Introduce children
2. Children
 - Present their pictures to the group
 - State what they want to be when they grow up
 - Hand Pictures to Legislator
3. Business Leader
 - Speak briefly on economic benefits of quality early education
 - Urge the visiting Legislator to sponsor or co-sponsor legislation amending the law to require degreed pre-K teachers
4. Pre-K teacher
 - Speak to the importance of his/her degree or why they plan on attaining one
5. Pre-K Teacher
 - Provide facility tour
 - Point out special projects that students are learning beyond curriculum
6. Everyone
 - Questions and Answers
7. Moderator
 - Thank everyone and conclude event



SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

Below are key messages that we strongly encourage you to incorporate into your Picture the Future event. Please keep in mind that the suggested event format is an informal, roundtable discussion.

Pre-K provider (as moderator)

- Welcome to our facility
- All across Florida this month, more than 15,000 preschoolers enrolled in pre-K programs are participating in “Picture the Future” to share their artwork with legislators and business leaders to show what they have learned about various careers.
- Research shows these preschoolers are more likely to achieve their career goals if they attend a high quality pre-K program that employs teachers with college degrees.
- A quality program should be mandatory not “aspirational,” which is what the current law states.
- By simply changing one word in the current law, Florida’s education system will improve in the area where children start the learning process.
- Several of our students are going to share their artwork with you today.
- First, we have [insert name], next we have [insert name], etc.

Pre-K children (introduced individually by the moderator)

- Each child will present their pictures to the group and state what they want to be when they grow up. The picture will be handed to the legislator.

Local Business Leader (introduced, with background, by the moderator)

- This is a cost-effective way to strengthen Florida’s economy, its workforce and its future.
- For every \$1 invested in early learning, \$7 is saved in taxpayer burden from school remediation, welfare and prison costs.
- Taxpayers could save upwards of \$5.3 billion annually.
- In less than 10 years, a quality pre-K program will pay for itself.
- High quality Pre-K is the most cost effective way to decrease the number of unskilled adults in Florida’s workforce.
- Every dollar invested in Pre-K will pay off dramatically in the future.
- Senator/Representative [insert name], I urge you to sponsor or co-sponsor legislation amending the law to require degreed pre-K teachers.

Pre-K teacher (introduced by the moderator)

- We care deeply about Florida’s pre-school children and believe that quality pre-K programs are the best option to improve their future.
- Research clearly shows that Pre-K teachers who hold college degrees in early

childhood education create superior learning environments.

- Students who attend high quality pre-K programs have increased high school graduation rates and are more likely to attend college.
- Quality early education helps narrow the achievement gap for low-income and minority children by improving school readiness.
- [Insert personal testimony as to why their degree is so important to them OR why they plan to attain one in the near future.]

The teacher will then provide a tour of the facility, pointing out any special projects the children are working on above and beyond the standard curriculum.

Questions and Answers

- Moderator opens the floor to questions and answers. Questions should be fielded by the appropriate speaker.

Pre-k provider (as moderator)

- Thank you joining us today.

Legislator is given a packet to take home including the legislative change sheet, fact sheets, etc.