
Secrets of Successful PR

Why would I even want to talk to the media?

- To protect the future of wildlife conservation and management, we must all become trained spokespersons for our hunting heritage. Public knowledge and support is vital to our success.
- The media, with its ability to turn perception into reality, is the most powerful force in the country.
- The battle to protect our hunting and conservation heritage is constantly being fought in the glare of the media.
- **If we're smart, we'll use the media to** tell the public that wildlife management and hunting are relevant. Hunters brought back our wildlife. Hunters are good people ... leaders in their community, caring family members, ethical sportsmen and women and dedicated conservationists who spend time in the outdoors with family and friends.

Do I have stories the media wants?

- **News is ... New.** It's the exception. It's unusual. It has happened recently.
- Not all news is about crime, corruption and catastrophe.
- Newspapers, magazines and television also give us good news and heartwarming stories to keep us coming back.
- **Good news falls into a couple different categories:**
 - **Information people need** to help them enjoy life, maintain their health, manage their money, improve their family time, etc.
 - **Human interest stories** about people overcoming obstacles, doing exceptional or unusual things.
- Hunting- and conservation-related news may be **reported differently**, depending on who is doing the telling: **Outdoor writers** or **mainstream reporters**.
- **Outdoor writers** are **better informed** about wildlife and hunting issues and often share a desire to protect our hunting heritage.
- **Mainstream media** may have a **bias against guns and hunting** and **know virtually nothing** about either. They may need basic information to help tell our story.

Where can I tell our story?

Each medium offers a variety of ways to spread the word. Check out the list of possibilities below:

- **Telling the story on TV**
 - News
 - Talk shows
 - Documentaries/special reports
 - Outdoor television shows
 - Public service announcements
- **Telling the story in newspapers**
 - Local news
 - State news
 - Special sections
 - Letters to the editor
 - Columns
 - Sports/outdoors section
 - Lifestyles section
 - Business/education section
- **Web sites**
 - Electronic newsletters
 - Alerts on message boards
 - Articles on Web pages
- **Radio**
 - News
 - Talk shows
 - Special reports
 - Live remotes
 - Public service announcements
 - Outdoor radio programs
- **Magazines/association newsletters**
 - State and regional publications
 - Newsletters produced by companies, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, etc.

How do I get started?

- **Develop a list of media contacts.** Watch local news and outdoor shows, listen to radio stations and spend time scanning target magazines, newsletters, Web sites, and newspapers. Identify those writers/editors/producers who show an interest in the outdoors. Build a file of all friendly communicators you find and include their names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.
- **Build personal relationships with your media contacts.** Get to know local reporters. Invite them to lunch. Find out their needs and the best time to contact them. Tell them about your article ideas. Stay in touch with them via e-mail and phone.
- **Stay current with the kinds of stories the media is reporting.** Know the media hot buttons and look for opportunities to pitch an article idea. For example, each spring, most local newspapers and TV news stations do stories about activities that area children can enjoy during summer break. If you let the media know you're hosting a JAKES event to teach young people about wildlife conservation and enjoying the outdoors, you may make the sale!
- **Look for the human-interest angle.** Keep your eyes open for that special person, maybe a JAKES, Women in the Outdoors or Wheelin' Sportsmen member. Maybe it's someone who has dedicated his or her time to improving habitat, building turkey calls to enter in the NWTF's Grand National Call Making Competition or is teaching others how to enjoy the outdoors.
- **Find stories that are important and useful.** Help the media tell how your chapter is improving habitat for all wildlife. Or how readers and viewers can learn more about the NWTF's program for awarding scholarships to college-bound students. Tell your community how NWTF chapters are feeding less fortunate families through the Turkey Hunters' Care program.
- **Practice pitching your article idea before you contact the media.** Develop a short, concise "sound bite" to describe your article idea (what, where, when, how and why). Don't forget to tell them about the NWTF—we are a nonprofit conservation organization with a mission to conserve wild turkeys and preserve our hunting heritage. We're an organization that involves men, women, children and people with disabilities in the outdoors. Have a friend or spouse listen and evaluate your "sound bites."
- **Make it easy for the media to tell our story.** Share with them the NWTF's easy-to-use media tools. Learn what those tools are and how you can best use them. We have everything from fill-in-the-blank event announcements to photographs, video footage and even 30-second radio and television spots.
- **Handle media requests with a sense of urgency.** If the media requests information, photos, etc., give them immediate turn around, and you've made a media friend for life. They are often on deadline, and they'll appreciate the special attention you give them.
- **Invite the media to your NWTF events.** Ask a reporter to attend and cover your chapter's turkey releases; tree plantings; scholarship and education box presentations; banquets; Women in the Outdoors, JAKES and Wheelin' Sportsmen events; calling contests; turkey shoots and more. If your event has a cover charge, give the media a complimentary ticket.
- **The benefit of having the media at your event** is you have their full attention for a longer period of time. Involving the media in your event helps them file a more in-depth story.

How can I make my media event a success?

- **Leave nothing to chance when planning your event.**
- **Pick a good location.** Select an event site that is no more than a 30-minute drive from where local newspapers and television and radio stations are located. The closer your event is to their offices, the more likely they are to come.
- **Make sure the timing is right.** Plan your event so it doesn't compete with other important community activities such as high school football games, festivals, etc.
- **Give the media plenty of advance notice.** Send them an event announcement at least three weeks before the event that tells them basic facts (when, where, why, how and what.) Include a map and directions on how to get to the event.
- **Follow up with the media ...** three or four days before the event with a phone call. Let them know there will be great photo/video and interview opportunities.
- **Don't give up** if a reporter or assignment editor tells you they can't send somebody to cover your event. Instead ask them if they would be interested in receiving event photos and information. Follow up by

providing them with a press release and photos right after the event. They may fit a short article in the paper or provide a mention during a broadcast.

- **Keep extending the invitation.** If the media doesn't accept your first invitation, put it on your "to do" list to invite them to your next event. The more events you invite the media to, the better chance you have for them to show up. Make sure they know how important the event is to the community
- **Assign a person to help the media.** At the event, make sure you have a trusted person to meet and help your media guests. To help reporters get their story, make sure someone is with them to help and answer questions AT ALL TIMES.
- **Provide the media with a fact sheet at the event** outlining important information about the event and the NWTF. Identify key people involved in the event and make sure you provide the correct spelling of their names and proper titles.
- **Arrange to have someone photograph your event** so you can respond to media requests for photos as well as submit them to *The Caller* and other publications and Web sites.
- **Encourage the media to participate in your event**, especially if you have a television news anchor present. Invite them to release a bird, plant a tree or shoot a clay target.
- **Make sure all event planners know the media will be present.** Make sure all your volunteers are prepared to help the media and/or answer basic questions about the event.
- **Give reporters a token of your appreciation.** A logo hat or pin is a nice way to remind media guests about your event. Some may turn it down due to company policy, while others will be delighted. Either way, give the media the Red Carpet Treatment!
- **After the event, thank the media for coming.** And if they have written an article or ran a news story, make sure you send them an extra special thank you. Make them feel appreciated!

What should I do if the media calls me?

- If they left a message, **return their call immediately.**
- If they want information, photographs, etc. ... **follow up on their request with a sense of urgency** and you'll win a friend for life.
- **If you send, email or fax something, call to make sure it was received.** You can't rely on technology. Plus, a follow up phone call gives the reporter another opportunity to ask for more information.
- **If the reporter wants to do an interview**, ask him or her a few questions before you get started to help you prepare. Do a pre-interview to find out:
 - What you'll be interviewed about/slant of story.
 - Length of interview.
 - Where and when the interview will be used.
 - Who else has been interviewed?
 - What is the deadline?
 - What does the reporter know about the topic (level of expertise)?
- **If you need time to gather information**, ask the reporter if you can call him or her back. Agree on a time to return the phone call and then be sure you follow up.
- **Never lie to or mislead a reporter.** If they catch you in a lie, they'll never trust you again. The reporter will also tell colleagues, and your reputation as an untrustworthy source will spread quickly.
- **Never say "no comment"** to a reporter because they are likely to assume you are hiding something.
- **If you don't know the answer to a question**, it's OK to let reporters know that. Then reassure them you'll get the information they need or put them in touch with someone who can BEFORE their deadline.
- **Interpret complicated information for reporters who aren't experts** in words that even a novice can understand. Show you're the person who can help the reporter with complex information.
- **Don't give reporters too much information**, facts and/or figures. Don't make someone without a lot of knowledge sort through tons of information. They may not get the story right.
- **Don't feed the media a slogan either.** *Hunters pay for conservation* doesn't mean anything to the average person. Be able to make your point in one or two sentences. It would be better to say: *Hunters volunteered to fund the comeback of our wildlife. They did it through their license fees, excise taxes on hunting gear, firearms and ammunition, and their volunteer support of conservation organizations like the National Wild Turkey Federation.*
- **Develop a central theme for your interview** and practice delivering it in a 10- to 12-second sound bite. During the interview, repeat this "central theme" at every opportunity. For example, to explain why hunting is important, you might say: *Hunting is a time-honored tradition from the men and women who pioneered this country to today when families and friends are united by their love of hunting and spending time with each other in the outdoors.*