



Department of Commerce

# Winning with the News Media

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# We strengthen communities

The Department of Commerce touches every aspect of community and economic development. We work with local governments, businesses and civic leaders to strengthen communities so all residents can thrive and prosper.



Planning



Infrastructure



Community  
Facilities



Housing



Safety /  
Crime Victims



Business  
Assistance



# What we will cover – 5 W's and more

- Who are the news media
- What is news
- When should I ask for help
- Where is the benefit
- Why does this matter
- How do I do this
- 7 Deadly Sins
- Social media



# Who *are* these people?

- Curious by nature
- Often quite cynical
- Professional, yet clever
- Held accountable by their superiors
- Want to be accurate, balanced in coverage
- Sometimes have pre-conceived notions



# What makes it newsworthy?

*Catastrophe*: if it bleeds, it leads

*Crisis*: visual, auditory,  
action-oriented

*Conflict*: good vs. evil

*Change*: for better or worse

*Crime*: victims, perpetrators

*Corruption*: white hats vs. black hats

*Color*: human interest



# Why do they ask so many *questions*?

- They need to understand what's happening
- They need to get differing opinions
- 'Did I understand you correctly?'
- 'Gotcha' vs. straight news coverage
- Verify or clarify earlier information



# Do I *have* to talk to them?

- If not you, someone must respond
- Get: reporter's name, phone or email address, affiliation, topic of story and deadline



# What should I say?

- Be courteous, but firm
- Explain your role briefly
- Tell reporter who will be able to help with specific questions



# What if they still ask questions?

- Don't be swayed by cajoling, kindness, threats
- Remember, they're doing their jobs just as you're doing yours
- Do not be tempted to ignore the call. No one likes to see "did not return calls."



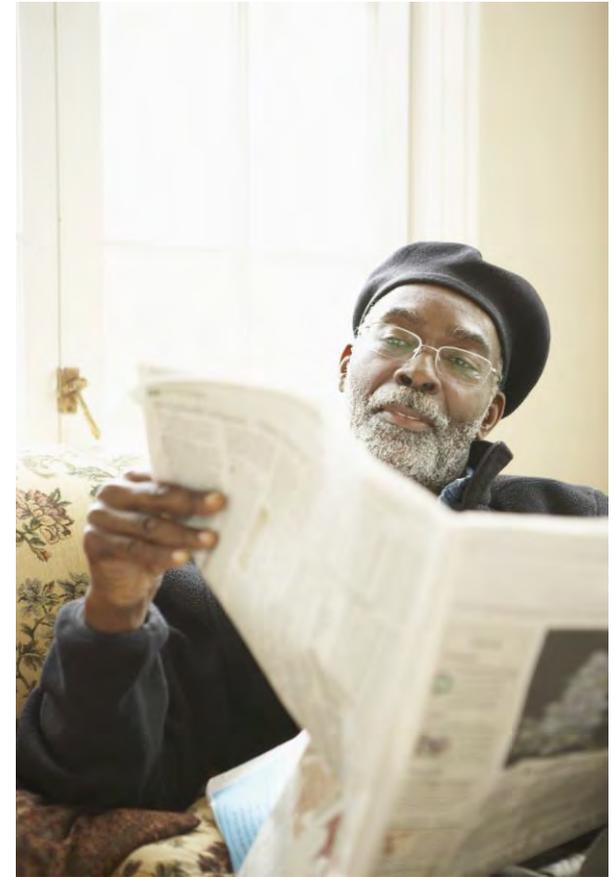
# Can I say “no comment”?

- Implies guilt
- “No comment” party will appear guilty or will seem to be hiding something—regardless of truth
- Prolongs the story because press now have something to pursue



# Develop your key messages

- What would your ideal headline be?
- Keep to your message:
  - 3 key points
  - Regardless of the question, repeat the key message
- Soundbites are best for TV and radio



# When should I ask for help?



- If you are uncomfortable working with reporters or news producers, seek help
- Professional media relations staff. Use them!
- In crisis situations, use professionals with experience.



# How can I *not* answer a question?

- Reporters may ask same question 3 different ways; remain firm, confident
- Keep on message, regardless of question
- Prepare before reporter calls



# Prepare for questions

- Focus on main points, likely questions
- Talk with objective listener
- Helps to hear yourself saying words, phrases
- Unless prompted for detail, stick to big picture



# The media morality scale



## Good guys

- Caring, sensitive to human values, quality of life
- David vs. Goliath—underdogs willing to challenge authority, power
- Risk-takers, particularly if the risk is their job, financial security or social status
- Rugged individualists; eccentrics
- Idealists who have strong convictions and will stick to those beliefs
- Candid, open, willing to take responsibility for mistakes
- Fierce competitors who expect to win against all odds



# The media morality scale



## Bad guys

- Lust after money and power—insensitive to human needs
- Bullies who enjoy hurting little people
- Job cowards who will not do anything that threatens job, financial security or social status
- Conformists who worship red tape and rules—and are therefore intellectually limited
- No conscience; will follow boss's orders without question
- Secretive, evasive, blame others when things go wrong
- Wimps who give up easily



# Ten commandments of media relations

1. Be open and cooperative. Never lie.
2. Personalize the organization.
3. Develop media contacts.
4. Take good stories to them.
5. Respect their deadlines; respond quickly.
6. Never say, “No comment.”
7. It’s OK to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.”
8. If you screw up, confess and repent.
9. Use the big dump.
10. Prepare.



# Seven Deadly Sins\*

- Hypocrisy
- Deception
- Insensitivity
- Abuse of power
- Waste
- Incompetence
- Cowardice



\*From “Winning With the Media” by Clarence Jones



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Remember each time you speak in public, you could be speaking to a reporter.
- Each time you respond to a reporter's questions, you become a newsmaker.
- Respond immediately and honestly (NEVER lie).



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Don't be caught off-guard. Think about potential questions before they arise.
- Never say “no comment.”
- Perhaps investigation or confidentiality, but explain why.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Stop and think how you'd respond before you say anything.
- Understand your agenda, and stick to it. You're the expert on your issue—the reporter is learning.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

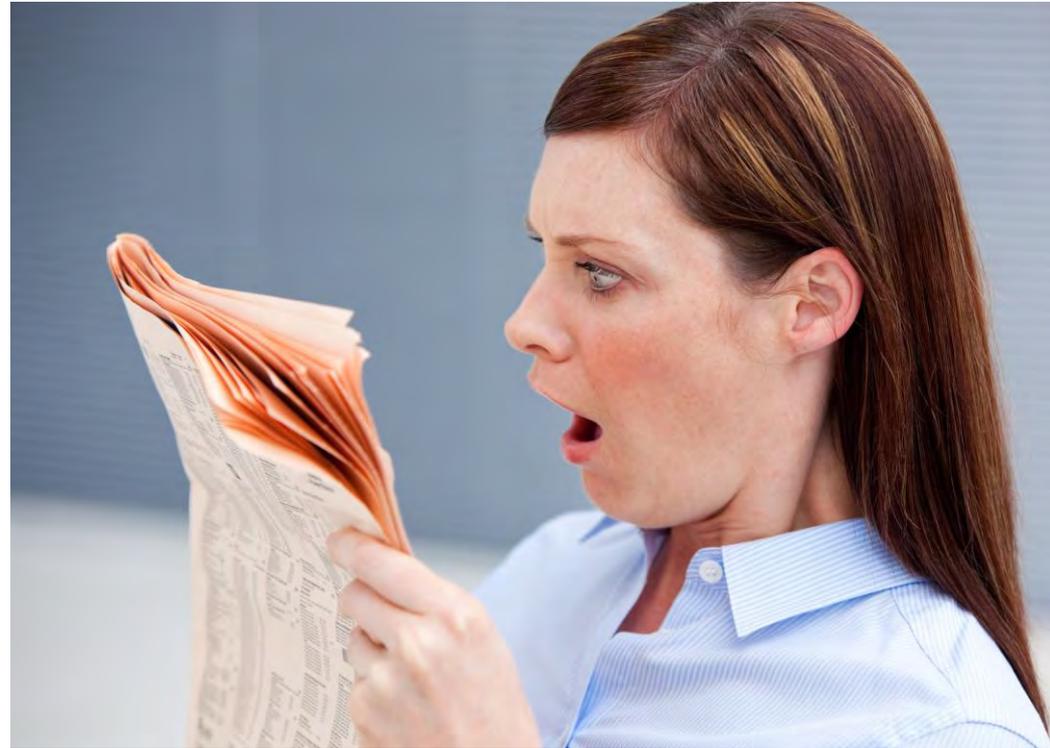


- You're always on. Phones, cameras getting smaller and less obvious.
- Sensitive issues? Generalize when needed.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Remember that each phrase you utter could become the headline or the sound bite to promote the evening broadcast.
- Know what you can say ... and stick to it.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins



- NEVER go off the record. Reporters admit they don't always remember what was on the record and what was off. Why risk it?

- No one expects you to know everything. It's OK if you can't answer a question. But explain why you can't answer it. If you don't know the answer, say so. But get the answer to the reporter ASAP.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins



Don't talk just for the sake of talking. Just answer the question. If the reporter keeps a mike in your face, just stand there with your mouth closed.

Reporters won't use dead air.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Don't walk away from a reporter with a video camera. Unspoken body language often tells the rest of the story.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- If you're being interviewed outdoors for television, don't wear sunglasses. Dark glasses make you look unsavory and suspicious.
- NEVER give personal opinions. Remember that when you speak to a reporter, you're representing your organization, its policies and its reputation.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Beware the soft-sell.
- Always remember that when you talk to a reporter, you're really talking to every reader, listener or viewer, including those with personal attachments to the issue.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Visualize what you're saying as being in large type in a headline on the front of the *Seattle Times* or *USA Today*. It could end up as the only item a broadcast reporter will use.
- NEVER be flippant with a reporter. These remarks will surely be used because they stand out.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- For television, dress appropriately for the situation. Remember, for most viewers, it's not what you say that they remember—it's how you look that sticks with them.
- For TV, check your teeth!



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins

- Remember that reporters are simply doing their jobs. They have bosses who make assignments. They have deadlines every day. Like you, they're trying to do a very difficult job.
- Don't let a personal relationship with a reporter influence your behavior--you're both professionals who may frequently be on opposite sides of an issue.



# How to avoid the seven deadly sins



- When you're a part of a phone interview, the reporter may just stop asking questions, hoping you'll fill the void.
- Don't fall for the "pregnant pause." The reporter is hoping you'll begin to say things you probably shouldn't. So instead of babbling, you should ask, "Is there anything else you need?"



# What about social media?

The ever-growing digital native news world now boasts about 5,000 digital news sector jobs, 3,000 of which are at 30 big digital-only news outlets.



# What about social media?



Many of these digital organizations emphasize the importance of social media in storytelling and engaging their audiences.

# Social networking use shot up in past decade

## 79% of online adults (68% of all Americans) use Facebook

*% of online adults who use Facebook*

All online adults	79%
Men	75
Women	83
18-29	88
30-49	84
50-64	72
65+	62
High school degree or less	77
Some college	82
College+	79
Less than \$30K/year	84
\$30K-\$49,999	80
\$50K-\$74,999	75
\$75,000+	77
Urban	81
Suburban	77
Rural	81

Note: Race/ethnicity breaks not shown due to sample size.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 4, 2016.

"Social Media Update 2016"

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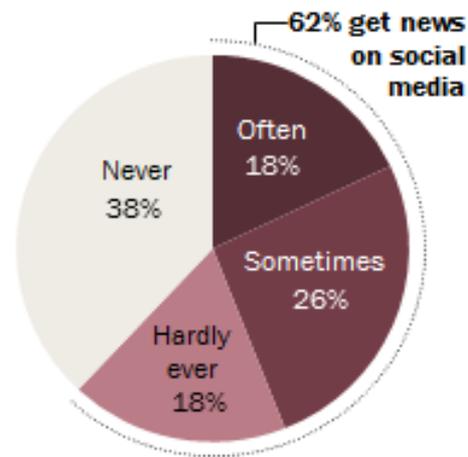


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# Social networking use shot up in past decade

## About 6-in-10 Americans get news from social media

*% of U.S. adults who get news on a social networking site ...*



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
"News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016"

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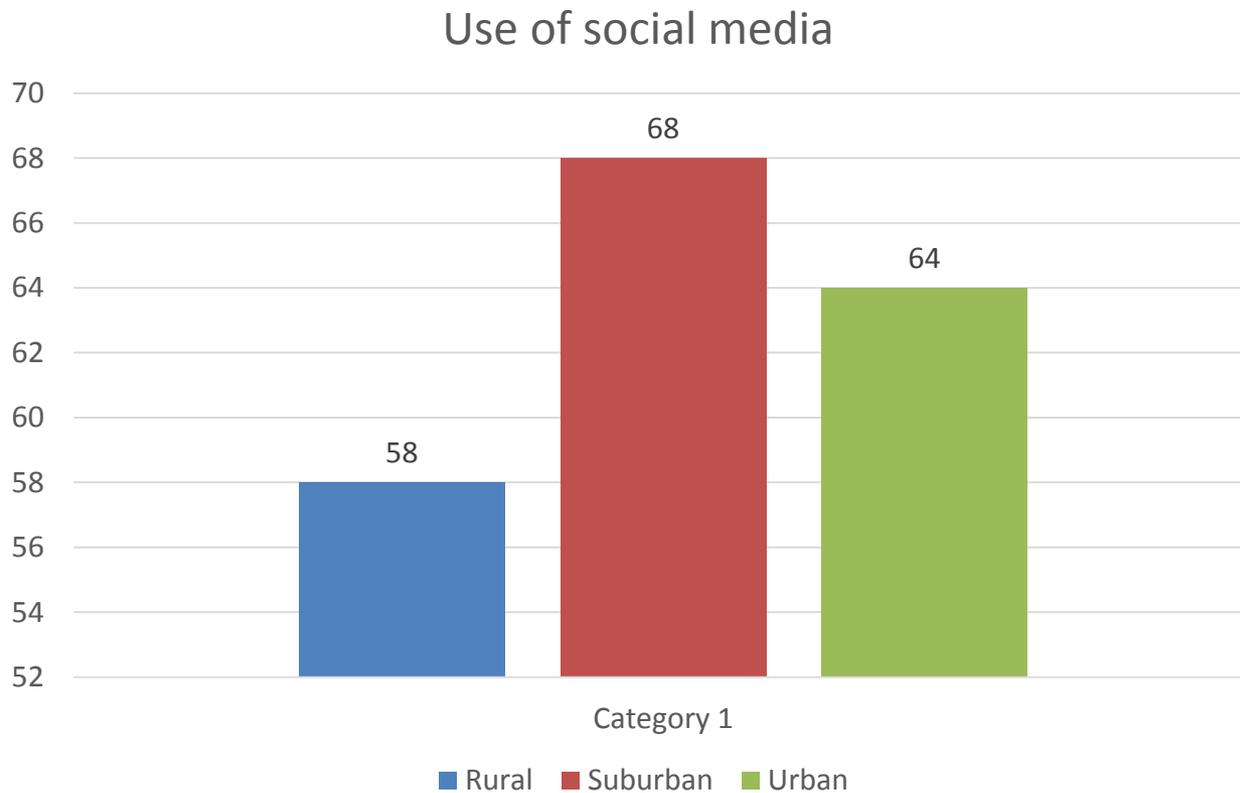
# Social media use growing across all sectors



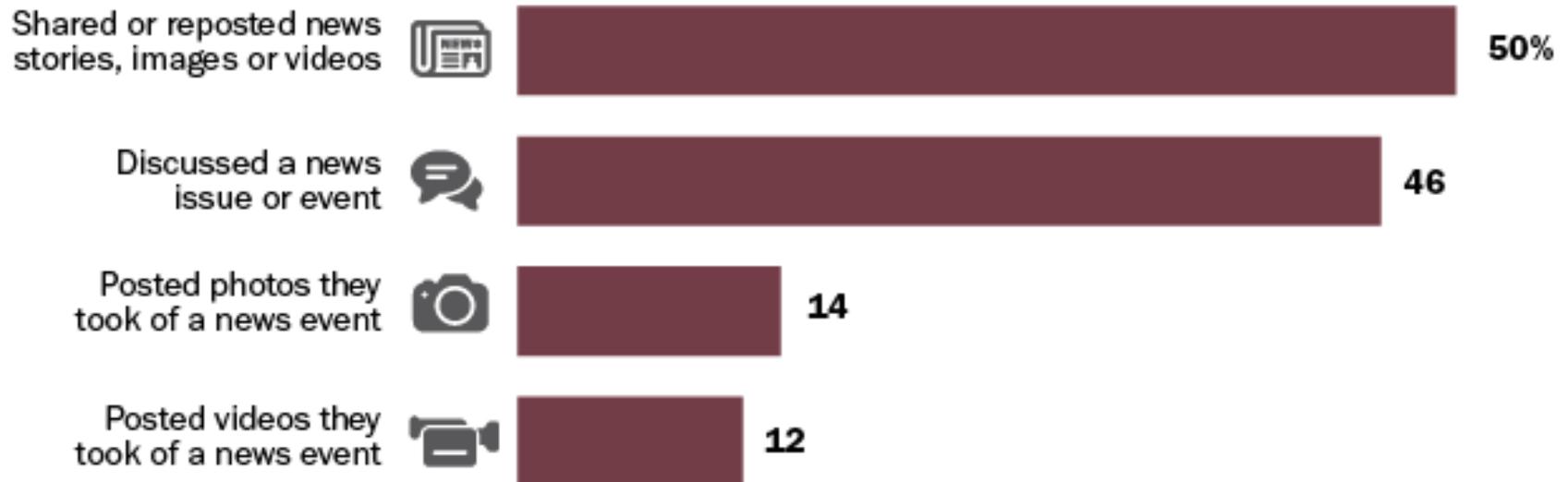
- 90% young adults 18-29
- 35% seniors
- 68% women
- 62% men



# Most communities use social media channels



# Social networking site users have ...



Source: Pew Research Center, phone survey Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2014.

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# Same basic principles apply

- Learn what you can about social media
- Use Hootsuite or other platform for managing social media like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, and many more



# Same basic principles apply

- Follow media guidelines
- Remember information travels incredibly fast on social media
- Be prepared to correct/redirect misinformation



# What did we cover?

- Who are the news media
- What is news
- When should I ask for help
- Where is the benefit
- Why does this matter
- How do I do this
- 7 Deadly Sins
- Social media



# Questions?





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