



PUBLIC INFORMATION/COMMUNICATIONS WORDS TO LIVE BY

There are basic public information/communications tenets that always hold true, and which will weave in and out through the public information work:

THE BIG THREE

- 1. The “4 Cs” of your message:** Clear + Concise + Consistent = Credibility
- 2. The “3 Barks”:** You have to be able to explain what you are doing, why and its effects in three short bits of copy or speech.
- 3. Always answer the “So what?” question.** Why should people care about your work? What does it do for them? Put it in the kitchen – make it something that they can relate to in their everyday life. You are going to do something “which will...” and explain why it matters or the benefits it reaps.

WORDS TO LIVE BY

Simplify everything. Pretend you are speaking to someone who knows absolutely nothing about what your group is doing. (And in most cases, they won't.)

Always be positive! You don't stop something, you create a better alternative. You don't tear something down, you build something better in its place. You are part of the solution, not the problem.

Be honest. All the money in the world can't buy credibility; and like your virginity, it's tough to retrieve once you've lost it. Be fair. Be helpful. Be smart.

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Be prepared. You must identify potential bombs that might explode as work progresses. Your organization must get out in front of events and arguments, and anticipate them, good or bad.

Know the other side's arguments as well as your own. Why are you right and they wrong? Be able to explain clearly, and provide corroborating facts (e.g., report data or public survey).

Create a visual image. What will it/does it look like? "One hundred thousand pounds of concrete" doesn't mean much. "Enough concrete to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool" does. "High coliform count" means little to most people. "Raw sewage in the water at the beach your kids swim at" is clearer and more powerful.

Always be courteous. No matter how outlandish a charge is, answer it courteously, clearly and concisely. Reporters put down their pens and people tune out when the argument descends to name-calling and it does nothing to promote your issues.

Public input is always welcome and encouraged. Open door, open ears, open mind. In the long run, the public must be your strongest ally.

Don't be afraid to say thank-you to the media. Reporters rarely are thanked or commended for their stories. An email or phone call to say you appreciated the fair coverage and/or appreciated the story on your project is always graciously received.

YOU WILL NOW DO ALL THESE THINGS

SO WHAT?

Your organization will get better and more positive coverage in the media

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