

The Sources *HotLink*

Tips and Practical Ideas to Get Positive News Coverage

Number Fourteen, Winter 2000

Go back quickly and say it clearly

What Does a Reporter Want?

Good public relations is predicated on the understanding that a reporter is a human being, with needs, desires, and above all, a job to do. By understanding the limits that journalists' schedules and formats impose upon them, we can significantly increase the chances that coverage of our issues will be balanced and complete, and of developing rewarding relationships with the journalists we come in contact with.

In order to gain a better understanding of the forces that shape a reporter's reaction to us, and how best to communicate with them, *HotLink* took a few moments to interview Elisa Kukla, a Toronto area freelancer whose beat covers both local and national news, as well as cultural events.

The Sources HotLink: What constitutes an interview that will gain good coverage?

Elisa Kukla: Someone who speaks clearly and to the point and has a large knowledge base, but is able to communicate it in lay terms. Someone who has a *unique angle on their story*, rather than "just the facts." Human interest is always important.

HL: What do interviewees and sources do that inhibit your ability to cover their issue?

EK: Using a lot of jargon, making it difficult to reach them, being unwilling to provide follow-up information, taking the "party-line" on an issue, can all cause a story to be cut. An interviewee who answers a reporter's questions with "yes", "no" and "maybe" is unlikely to find themselves on the front page.

HL: People dealing with the media often have the perception that the journalist is trying to "trip them up". How would you respond to this?

EK: All I'm looking for is the most interesting and informative angle. That

means that if I'm dealing with a politician who doesn't want to be as honest and open as possible, I am definitely trying to get the truth. But overall, I'm looking for an interesting angle, not a scandalous one. I find people often trip themselves up by saying things without thinking through the full implications of their statements, especially taken out of context. Not answering questions directly also makes a source look bad, without any effort on the journalist's part. However any reputable journalist should be willing to read your quotes back to you on demand. If they are unwilling to do so, speak to their editor. That way you can avoid misquotations.

HL: What is the most important thing about the reporter's job that you would like to communicate to the people and organizations you contact?

EK: A journalist is always on a deadline. If you want to communicate your issue most effectively, send fax or E-mail background. Take the fax numbers or E-mail address of the reporter interviewing you and send along any additional information you may have forgotten - within the hour. If you put off getting back to a journalist for a day... your story may very well be cut or shelved.

Paint a vivid picture

Involve Your Audience During TV Interviews

BY AL ROTHSTEIN, PRESIDENT,
AL ROTHSTEIN MEDIA SERVICES, INC.

Stretch your memories back to last January's Super Bowl. Remember the great commercials? (Most people remember them more vividly than the game.) Those high-tech super spots got your attention because they made the most of the television medium, painting vivid pictures on the screen and in your brain.

In the real world, if you ask me what I do for a living, and I respond with, "I'm a media consultant," you may have only a very general idea of what I do. That's because I've only given you a broad answer, open to a number of interpretations. But if I respond by putting a microphone in your face and saying, "I will teach you how to protect yourself when a reporter does this," I will have illustrated my point much more effectively because I have involved you in my response.

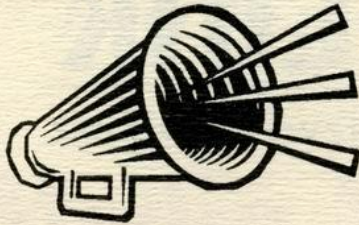
When you are interviewed for television, try these tips to involve the audience and illustrate your points:

- Use phrases like "People who are watching this..." "Your family, friends or neighbors..." "Our employees are parents too, they understand the concerns..."

Continued on Page Six

Inside This Issue:

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- ➔ Maximum impact in TV interviews! **Page One**
- ➔ Make a stand with letters to the editor. **Page Five**



Make yourself heard!

If you have experience or advice that would help the readers of *HotLink* improve their media relations, don't be shy! *HotLink* welcomes articles on a variety of topics relevant to communications, public relations and media relations. Publishing an article is a great way to tell 1,000 organizations about what you do. Call 416-964-7799 or E-mail kcowan@sources.com for information.

SOURCES *HotLink*

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Sources HotLink is free to organizations listed with *Sources*. Subscriptions are \$20/year for those not listed with *Sources*. Subscription orders must be prepaid. Visa or MasterCard accepted.

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News from Sources

Winter is definitely upon us, as much of the nation settles in under a blanket of snow. Under the cover of white however, the *Sources* office is a hive of activity. We have been "snowed under" preparing for the publication of the Winter 2000 issue, with 171 new listees joining the ranks!

We have received great feedback from our new and improved Web site, www.sources.com. By bringing our Web site operation into the *Sources* offices, we have been able to "renovate" with greater ease, adding online colour logos, subject headings, and *HotLink* Online. If you haven't visited lately,

now is the time to check out www.sources.com.

This issue of *HotLink* is chock-full of media relations wisdom, including an interview with a real live reporter, valuable insights on using electronic mediums, getting your voice heard on the letters page, and much more! As always, *HotLink* welcomes news, views and comments from its readers. Please drop me a line at (416) 964-7799 or via E-mail: kcowan@sources.com. In the meantime, stay warm!

Kirsten Cowan
Editor, *The Sources HotLink*

Sources Mailbox

Hearing from the people we serve is one of the most rewarding things about working at *Sources*. Here is a small sampling of recent feedback from journalists, and a success story from one of our long-time listees.

Good words from reporters...

Please send me a copy of the latest *Sources*.

— Lisa Rainford, *The Villager*, Toronto



Three copies of *Sources* would be great! Please add CanadaOne to your distribution list.

— Nesreen Sarras, Assistant Editor,
CanadaOne.com



Western Living Magazine is Canada's largest and most successful regional magazine, reaching approximately 220,000 homes in western Canada. We have received *Sources* in the past and would like to be added to the controlled mailing list for journalists once again. Thank you.

— Natasha Muslih,
Western Living Magazine.



Please send me the most recent copy of *Sources*.

— Claudia D'Souza, Assistant Editor, *Boating Business/Boat Guide*



I work in the News Department of CBC. Is it possible for you to send me a new *Sources*? Apparently I missed the last shipment, and I've been running around borrowing everyone else's. It would be great to have my own.

— Nichole Small, *CBC Toronto*



I am a freelance writer and am interested in obtaining a copy of the *Sources* directory for use on assignments. I am attaching samples of my work to verify that I am indeed a journalist, and therefore eligible for a free copy of the great bible of journalists everywhere (well, Canada anyway).

— Janet Fitzsimmons, Toronto



And from a listee...

Stanley Kershman wrote to let me know that Kershman & Associate was featured in an article by Susan Lightstone appearing in the CMAJ-JMC (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*). The article highlighted Stanley's expertise in the area of bankruptcy, with specific regard to the situation of physicians.

Stanley writes:

"I really enjoyed meeting with Susan and doing the interview. She was a very good person to work with. Her questions were thoughtful and insightful."

Congratulations to Kershman & Associate! Their listing can be found on page 285 of the Winter 2000 issue of *Sources*.

The Sources *HotLink* — Winter 2000 Phone: (416) 964-7799

Highlighting your areas of expertise

A New Face to Sources Online

Sources On-line has recently undergone some reconstructive surgery. You will now find that your listing has a slightly new and improved appearance, as well as an available list of all your areas of expertise. This means that when a journalist looks up your listing on-line they will see in addition to your listing, all the subject headings that you have selected. So make sure to check that your headings are complete and current (see the section Your Subject Headings for more details)!

We are now also able to offer colour logos for your on-line listing *only*, at no extra cost. If you wish to see yourself on-line and in colour, simply mail us a good camera ready piece of artwork, or your company letterhead depicting your logo. You should see your colour logo on-line within approximately one week!

Remember colour logos are also available at an extra charge for your print listing. Please call Tracey or Heather for more details (416) 964-7799.

Your Subject Headings

➤ Your subject index headings are the most powerful feature of your listing. Make sure journalists find your name under all *Sources* subject headings relevant to your organization. Your

choice of headings *tells* journalists, editors and researchers you have expertise in the subject they are looking up, and leads them directly to your company or organization.

- More than 18,000 carefully chosen headings reflecting a wide diversity of topics are available to you in the *Sources* Subject Index.
- To help you find the subject headings most appropriate to you, we have prepared lists of headings arranged by category. You can access these lists through our Internet site at: <http://www.sources.com/category.htm>
- Remember, you may only select headings which appear on our heading lists, but these lists are reviewed regularly, so feel free to suggest a new heading if you think it should be added.
- Re-check your headings with each edition. Your organization changes, the world changes, and news judgments change.
- Remember, the number of calls you'll receive from the media directly relates to the number, newsworthiness and specificity of your headings.



Cyberspace Welcome Mat

Have you recently created a Web site for your organization, or upgraded an older one and want to show it off? Then consider "hotlinking" your WWW address as it appears at SOURCES SELECT *OnLine*. When journalists visit your virtual listing at www.sources.com, one click of the mouse button will bring them right to your home page. For only \$25.00 a year, you can put out the welcome mat for journalists seeking expert information. Call us at (416) 964-7799 or E-mail sources@sources.com and we'll activate your hotlink right away!

From the listings desk...

Thank you!

Many thanks to all of our listees who responded to our recent Renewal and Update drive. Having the opportunity to add or change information in your listing ensures that journalists receive accurate information about your organization.

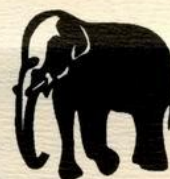
We will be sending out Renewal and Updater packages again in the spring, but in the meantime, REMEMBER – we are here to help! Whenever you have changes or questions about your listing give us a call at *Sources*. Our team will help you stay connected and any changes that you require will appear on-line within a week, making your latest information just a keystroke away!

Tracey Parn
Listings Co-ordinator

Welcome New Listees!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the more than 170 new listees who recently came on board. From 3com Canada Inc. to YTV Canada, look for them in the pages of the January 2000 print edition and online at <http://www.sources.com>.

Don't
Forget...



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make changes to your
listing at any time! Let
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We want to hear your voice!

Do you have questions or comments about this newsletter, your listing in **Sources**, or any of the services **Sources** provides? Call us at (416) 964-7799 or sources@sources.com by E-mail. Your suggestions and observations are important to us!

Facing a crisis can make you stronger

Crisis Communications Checklist

In times of crisis, it is all too easy to be "reactive" and allow the swell of events to overtake your communication plan. Some time spent before trouble hits can be worth millions. Case in point: a survey showed that public confidence in Hydro-Québec actually *rose* following the infamous ice storm of January 1998. By having a crisis communications plan that included a commitment to keeping Quebecers informed, Hydro-Québec managed to improve its public relations in spite of service disruptions and long delays. Remember — every crisis is an opportunity.

1. **Who responds in a crisis?** By having clear responsibilities within your organization, you avoid looking as though you are dodging questions. Hydro-Québec received praise last winter by having their president speak directly to the people.
2. **Don't forget internal communications.** During a crisis people inside your organization have a practical and emotional need to be kept informed, just as much as the public. During the ice storm, Hydro-Québec communi-

cations held daily briefings between the day and night shifts, keeping everyone abreast of the situation.

3. **Have your facts ready to go.** Fact sheets and "FAQ" (frequently asked questions) sheets about your organization are a handy source of background information that journalists on a deadline need. If you provide the facts, then you know they are correct.
4. **Accentuate the positive.** The most valuable benefit of a well-thought out crisis strategy is that your representatives will feel and show trust in your organization's ability to handle the problem. Nothing impresses like real confidence, and only advance planning can bestow it. Secure in the knowledge that you were ready for the crisis, and are moving to solve it, your spokesperson's attitude is the best media relations you have.

*For more about Hydro-Québec's public relations savvy during Ice Storm '98, check out **Marketing Magazine**, December 21, 1998, "Smart PR warms Quebecers to their hydro utility."*

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Don't Forget to Write

BY ULLI DIEMER

Writing letters to the editor is an effective and inexpensive way of getting publicity for your point of view and your organization.

Letters to the editor are published by almost all publications, from newspapers and magazines with a national circulation such as the *Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's*, to community newspapers, special-interest magazines, trade publications and newsletters.

A letter to the editor may not have the glamour of splashier forms of media exposure, but the letters pages are among the most widely read sections of almost all periodicals.

Guidelines for writing a letter to the editor:

- Make it brief. 100 to 150 words should be the maximum, fewer if possible.
- Confine yourself to one subject. Make one point and make it clearly. You or

your organization undoubtedly have views about many issues, but in a letter to the editor, you can make only one point effectively.

- To help you focus, begin by summarizing the point you want to make in a single phrase or sentence. Use this to guide you in writing the letter.
- You can and should bring in supporting evidence and arguments, but they should all be in support of your main point. Don't digress.
- Your main point can be specific or broad e.g. "The proposed land fill site will pollute Otter Creek" or "Because we're overfishing, the world's oceans are becoming deserts."
- Have someone else read or edit your letter before sending it. It's hard to judge one's own writing objectively.
- If you're writing on behalf of an organization, make that clear. Be aware

however, that newspapers tend to favour letters from individuals over letters from organizations.

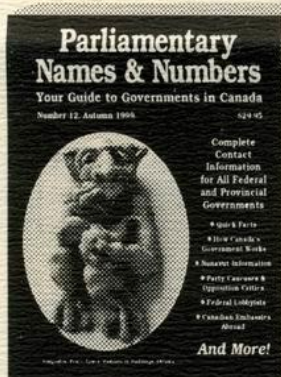
- Avoid persona attacks or disparaging the motives of someone with whom you disagree. Stick to the issue and the facts.
- Send your letter quickly, while the issue is fresh, preferably within 24 hours. Chances of your letter being printed diminish with each passing day.
- If possible, fax your letter, send it by E-mail or deliver it by hand. Sending it by mail may delay its arrival by two or three crucial days.
- Remember to include your name, address, and phone number. Many publications have a policy of contacting the letter writer to confirm that s/he is truly the author.

Ulli Diemer is General Manager of Sources.

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**IN PRINT
AND ONLINE!**

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Involve your audience...
Continued from Page 1

- ▶ Remember that you have to make your point quickly, because reporters generally are looking for quick soundbites. Keeping this in mind, rehearse brief answers to anticipated questions that tell your story vividly, like: "This isn't about money, this is about families."
- ▶ Supply the reporter with concise written data. Often he or she can use the information in on-screen graphics to help viewers understand the points you want to make.

Keep in mind, too, that people who are watching the news are usually doing something else as well, like washing clothes, eating dinner or helping the kids with homework. It's up to you to get their attention. Involving them in your answers and, when possible, painting a picture with your words are effective ways to do it!

Courtesy of Al Rothstein Media Services, Inc., specialists in spokesperson training and media relations seminars.

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Does your organization produce a publication or have a Web site worthy of praise? Let us know at (416) 964-7799, or sources@sources.com so we can tell HotLink's readers all about it.

E-mail is useful but it's not necessarily private

Caveat Surfer: Beware When Using Electronic Communication

This morning a familiar sight greeted me in my E-mail inbox. A friend had forwarded me a "too good to be true" note about how two major high-tech companies were "beta-testing" their E-mail system, and that if I just forwarded on this E-mail I might receive a fat cheque in my real mail box. Having already received this E-mail several times, various updates on its phony status, and sheepish E-apologies from those who forwarded it to me in the first place, it went straight into the trash unread. But a thought stayed with me through my day. Many of the benefits of electronic communication are also the features that demand we exercise tremendous caution with what we find.

What are the aspects of electronic communication, the Internet, E-mail, the World Wide Web, newsgroups and so on, that demand the most caution? *HotLink* took a few minutes to speak to Bert Cowan, CFE (Certified Fraud Examiner) from Competitive Insights. Competitive Insights specializes in security issues and new technologies. We talked with Bert about the perils of acquiring and sending information electronically.

HL: Has there been much fraud perpetrated with the use of electronic communication?

BC: The short answer is yes. KPMG has done a survey of the issue, and they estimate the cost to be hundreds of millions a year in North America.

HL: What are some common misconceptions about electronic security?

BC: People feel that it is secure. That is not the case unless you are using a very expensive encryption system, which will really only slow down a determined hacker. Anything that you send electronically, if you would be comfortable seeing it on the front page of the newspaper

then fine, send it. At the very least use some encryption program, such as PGP, available free on the Internet.

HL: What precautions should one take with any sensitive information?

BC: At the very least encrypt it, but the bottom line remains, if someone really wants your information and has time to crack your system, they can do it. Keep in mind that by the time they crack it, the information may have lost its value. Speed is of the essence in industry today.

HL: How can one determine the authenticity of information received electronically?

BC: It is very difficult. Never rely on a sole source. You need to be sure that what you are receiving has not gone around in a circle. Never take anything at face value. If you receive information that might affect the way that your organization functions — check it out. The RCMP have a Web page with security bulletins concerning information technology. They are also happy to answer questions. www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca.

HL: What is the most important thing to be aware of when using electronic communication tools?

BC: It is not private.

Bert Cowan's listing is on Page 255 of the Winter 2000 edition of *Sources*. Reach him and Competitive Insights at thecowans@home.com.

For more on maximizing your use of new technology, take a look at "Ten Tips for Working Faster on the Web" by Rita Vine in HotLink Numbers 12 and 13, or look for it on the Internet: www.sources.com/hotlink.

Information you can use

Getting the Most out of SOURCES SELECT Online

By now, you've probably visited SOURCES SELECT Online, our award-winning World Wide Web site, at <http://www.sources.com>. Our fully-indexed and searchable list of over 5,000 expert contacts in over 1,000 companies is the core of the *Sources* Web site, but there is much more to SOURCES SELECT Online than just the Sources Listings. Visit some other parts of SOURCES SELECT Online, all accessible from our home page, and use the full power of SOURCES SELECT Online.

Links and Resources

We've assembled a categorized list of links and online resources, usefully annotated, for the journalist or researcher. If you're looking for Web sites on Media Ethics or Investigative Journalism, or a number of other topics, check this first before you plough through thousands of results from a search on Altavista. If you're doing research on the Internet, this is a valuable resource for media and public relations personnel.

Embassy Row

Embassy Row is your best source for information on foreign embassies in Canada, and Canadian embassies abroad. When you need quotes or information about a foreign country, or Canada's relations with a country, this frequently updated section will give the names and numbers, and the Web site if available, of those to contact.

Fame and Fortune

One of the most popular sections of SOURCES SELECT Online, Fame and Fortune, is a complete listing of awards, fellowships and grants available to Canadian journalists and writers. If you're involved in the business of writing in Canada, don't forget to check Fame and Fortune regularly for comprehensive information on writing and journalism awards, complete with application dates and details.

Connexions

Connexions is a fully-indexed resource listing thousands of socially- and environmentally-minded Canadian organizations. If you're looking for different Canadian perspectives on an important issue, Connexions gives you all the contact information you need.

If you're looking for more information on the services we provide, the *Sources* Web site will help you. We have complete information on subscriptions to our publications, advertising details, and much more.

Finally, don't forget that SOURCES SELECT Online is updated weekly with all the latest changes to the *Sources* Listings and other sections. It's never out of date!

Reach our Webmaster with comments at sysop@sources.com.

Tips for Getting the most from E-mail

The E-mail I receive from journalists seeking assistance with their research and from organizations listed with *Sources* is often puzzling. Many messages are unaddressed, unsigned and written in haste. Some queries require detective work before I can send a proper response. E-mail deserves as much attention as other means of communication. Consider the following tips:

Check your E-mail daily. If your E-mail address is included in your *Sources* listing it may be used by journalists (especially night owls or those in other time zones). If someone has posted a message in the middle of the night he or she is probably hoping for a reply early the next day.

If you include your E-mail address on your business card, letterhead or in your *Sources* listing and you don't have the time to check your E-mail consider removing it or replacing it with one main business E-mail address.

Respond to inquiries from journalists and researchers immediately and consider quoting parts of the original message. Quoting the original message is like repeating the question in an interview. It will help clarify your answer.

Include your full name, name of your organization, regular mailing address, phone number and fax number, and E-mail address on all E-mail messages. A journalist who receives an E-mail message and is unable to figure out who sent it will may use a quote from another organization which has included full contact information.

Submit your E-mail messages to the same scrutiny you do your business letters. Remember that E-mail messages reflect your organization.

Finally, E-mail is on the record.

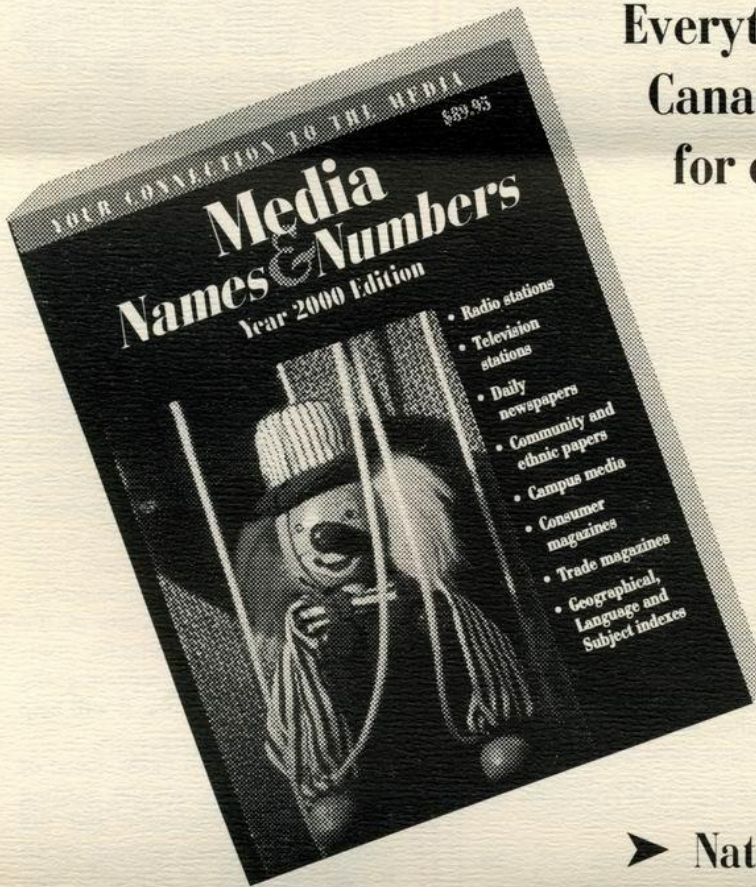
For more tips on electronic communications savvy, check out *HotLink's* interview with security expert Bert Cowan on page 6 of this issue.

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