



MEDIA RELATIONS

For Mission-Driven Organizations

Presented by:

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INTRODUCTION

Laura Herrera

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Laura Herrera is a cultural leader, strategist, and entrepreneur with two decades of experience advancing mission-driven organizations. As Chief Marketing and Revenue Officer at the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, she leads integrated strategies to grow audiences, revenue, and brand impact while positioning the museum for its 2033 centennial vision.



MEDIA RELATIONS FOR MISSION DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS



Many cultural leaders believe media relations is about chasing coverage. In this 45-minute virtual session, we'll flip that script—exploring how to become the trusted source journalists actually want to work with. Through real case studies of Chicago cultural institutions, we'll walk through a practical framework (the Four Questions) that transforms routine announcements into stories people care about.

You'll leave with actionable tactics for building media readiness, a pitch template you can use immediately, and a clear understanding of how to position your organization as essential to the conversations happening in your community right now. Whether you're just starting to build media relationships or looking to strengthen existing ones, this session is designed for organizations ready to move from reactive to strategic.

THE BIGGEST MYTH

The Myth

- "Media relations is about getting coverage."

The Truth

- "Media relations is about becoming a trusted source."



HOW JOURNALISTS THINK

"Why should my audience care?"

Three Key Conditions for Coverage:

1. Connects to stories people already follow
2. Offers something unexpected or revealing
3. Has a human angle (not just an announcement)



4 QUESTION FRAMEWORK

- Why now?
- How can we make this easy for the reporter?
- Why should anyone care?
- What is the human story?



WHY NOW? TIMELINESS & RELEVANCE

EXAMPLES:

- Anniversary of a historic event
- News cycle or current event creates an opening
- New research or data just released
- Cultural moment aligned with your mission



CASE STUDY | CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM



INSTITUTION:

Chicago History Museum

TRANSFORMATION:

- From: Sharing exhibitions
- To: Becoming the city's trusted voice on Chicago history.



CHM | THREE TACTICS THAT WORKED



1. Proactive pitching on anniversaries
2. Quick turnaround on breaking news
3. Integration into cultural conversations



WHAT CHM BUILT:

- A designated media expert (*or team*)
- Close partnerships with curators & historians
- A database of newsworthy archival assets
- A 24–48 hour response protocol



HOW CAN WE MAKE THIS EASY FOR THE REPORTER?

The Reporter's Constraint:

- Time & Resources

Your Job:

- Remove friction at every step



MEDIA READINESS CHECKLIST

Before You Hit Send to a Reporter:

- Pitch is under 150 words (*one screen*)
- Expert is available within 24 hours
- High-res images included (*or link ready*)
- Key facts are bulleted, not buried
- Your email doesn't need a follow-up to understand it



INTERNAL ALIGNMENT: WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED

STAKEHOLDERS:

- Curators, educators, & program staff (content experts)
- Collections management (access to materials)
- Development (context on major gifts or partnerships)
- Executive leadership (sign-off on positioning)



REALITY CHECK – CONTROLLING TIMING



WHAT YOU CONTROL:

- ✓ Quality of your pitch
- ✓ Your responsiveness

WHAT YOU DON'T CONTROL:

- ✗ When the story runs
- ✗ What angle they take

STORYTELLING

- Why should anyone care?
 - The core of all storytelling
- What is the human story?
 - People connect with people, not statistics



CASE STUDY – GRIFFIN MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY



CASE STUDY

GRIFFIN MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY



WE PLANNED FOR THE STORY

Built anticipation

Social media created momentum in the days leading up to the milestone.

Made it visual

A golden ticket, bubbles and a surprise celebration created a moment worth capturing.

Made it meaningful

A lifetime membership turned a one-day milestone into an ongoing relationship.



THE ELEMENTS OF A STRONG HUMAN STORY

- ✓ Real people, not statistics
- ✓ Clear visuals (*a family, a place*)
- ✓ Emotional resonance (connection across time)
- ✓ Multigenerational appeal (*parents, kids, grandparents*)



PITCH TEMPLATE

COMPONENTS (*use the graphic for visual*):

Headline: [*Why should anyone care?*]

Angle: [*Why now?*]

Story: [*Who is the human story?*]

Access: [*What can we provide?*]

BOTTOM NOTE: Keep the whole thing to 150 words.



BEFORE AN INTERVIEW, DEFINE:

- ELEMENTS (*use the graphic for visual*):
- The One Message: What should people remember?
- Supporting Points: 2–3 facts that back it up
 - Stories/Examples: Real moments that illustrate it



COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES

- ✗ Talking too much (*give room for follow-ups*)
- ✗ Using jargon (*translate your language*)
- ✗ Dodging difficult questions (*answer honestly, but prepare*)
- ✗ Forgetting about the audience (*make it relatable*)



BUILDING YOUR MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE



1. Create a media contact database (reporters in your beat)
2. Maintain an editorial calendar (6-12 months out)
3. Build a media kit (bios, headshots, high-res images)
4. Train spokespeople (messaging, interview skills)
5. Establish response protocols (24-48 hour turnaround)

WHAT REPORTERS REMEMBER

- ✓ You're knowledgeable about your field
- ✓ You respond, even on short notice
- ✓ You're easy to work with



THANK YOU !



Q&A

