

The Power of Storytelling – How to Pitch

*PR Coordinator Call
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*Wenona Sutton, Marketing Communications Manager
Kristin Craven, Special Events & Marketing Manager*

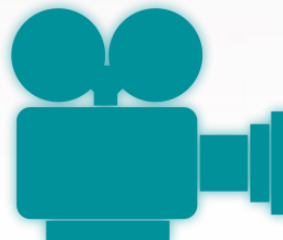
Special Olympics
Pennsylvania





OVERVIEW

- Our Story
- Why is storytelling important?
- Preparing a compelling story
- Discussing how to identify the right story to tell
- How to pitch you story?





OUR STORY

the Special Olympics Mission



What we do

Provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports

Who* we do it for

for children and adults with intellectual disabilities,

Why we do it

giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

* Families and the wider community also benefit from what we do.

Once upon a time...
a long long time ago ...



Storytelling

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Storytelling – Why so important?



- Illuminates emotional aspect
- Connects people emotionally with importance of Special Olympics' mission
- People relate better to emotion



Power of Storytelling



- Raises awareness and increases understanding
- Illustrates common experiences
- Humanizes and gives value to the athlete experience



OnTheRoad

CBS

with Steve Hartman

Finding the Right Story



- How do you choose?
- What makes you sit up and take notice?
- Who or what are people talking about at competitions?

Important Elements to a Strong Story



All Special Olympics Athletes have stories, but not all stories are created equal.

- **Find the ‘hook’**
- **Humor**
- **Incredible athletic achievement**
- **Overcoming extreme adversity**
- **Cultural and political significance**
- **Defying physical disabilities**



Finding the Right Person to Tell the Story



Incorporate athlete speeches/testimonials into events:

Qualities:

- Have good stories to tell
- Inspirational
- Convey passion

Good spokespeople:

- Global Messengers
- Coaches and volunteers

Messaging



Empowerment (not pity)

Dignity

Respect

Ability

Inclusion

...We are Real Sport

Storytelling Vehicles



- **Vignettes**
- **Features**
- **Competition highlights**
- **Live Event Coverage**
- **News & Information**

Reflection



- **All stories come from you**
- **As PR Coordinator leads, you are the gatekeepers of the stories**
- **We need your help**
- **No story is too big or too small**
- **We are only as good as the information we get before and during the event**

How to Pitch a Story

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How to Pitch a Story

Whether you have breaking news or want to publicize an event, pitching a story to local media is a great way to promote your cause and can help you in the area a fundraising by increasing awareness. Newspapers, magazines and radio and television stations count on receiving pitches. But, they are often flooded with pitches, so take the time to make yours really unique.

Step 1

Research the media outlets in your area. Make a complete list of the publications and broadcast stations that might be interested in covering your story. Target the growing number of Internet and mainstream print and broadcast media outlets that reach your intended audience. Use media directories to create a customized media list.

Step 2

Visit local media websites to obtain a good idea of which reporters cover the topic you are pitching.

- Daily Newspaper - it is most likely a reporter covering a specific beat such as business or health care or an editor who would assign the story to a reporter.
- Weekly Newspaper or a monthly magazine - contact the editor.
- TV Station - contact a specific beat reporter and/or the assignment desk.
- Radio Station - you should contact either the News Director or the producer of a specific talk show.

How to Pitch a Story



Step 3

Ask yourself questions about your pitch, so that you'll be prepared to answer similar questions from the reporters you contact. For example, why is your topic or event newsworthy and how is it different from topics or events that the media outlet has covered in the past? Consider news criteria. Having one or more of these news criteria will help sell the story idea:

- *Timeliness* - did it happen recently? Is it connected with a current trend?
- *Proximity* - is it in the geographical area targeted by the media organization?
- *Impact* - will it affect a lot of people? Does it have consequences for the audience?
- *Prominence* – is someone famous involved? Is it important to the audience?
- *Conflict* – does it involve conflict, which captivates the attention of the audience?
- *Novelty* - is it unusual?

To develop your “news angle or hook,” determine specific PR goals to produce the best results. For example, are your PR goals to:

- Introduce your target audience to new services?
- Increase your visibility to increase volunteers, and/or charitable contributions?
- Enhance the reputation of Special Olympics to get more volunteers, athletes, etc.?
- Counteract misconceptions about your organization?

How to Pitch a Story



Step 4

Send a press release. By mailing, faxing or emailing the press release before you call with your pitch, you're giving the reporter a chance to read up on the issue or event. This is both courteous and effective. If applicable, put your media materials and/or media kit, news releases, etc. in a special, but easy-to-find section on your site and keep it updated.

Step 5

Call members of the media a week before your event, if possible. Media outlets, particularly magazines and newspapers, schedule their coverage days or even weeks in advance. If you have breaking news, direct it toward a daily newspaper, a radio station or a television station.

Step 6

Sell the reporter on your idea. He/she receives pitches all of the time, so make sure yours stands out. Be thoroughly informed about the topic before you pick up the phone, and offer to put the reporter in touch with leaders and experts from your organization.

Step 7

Give the reporter your contact information and assure him that he can contact you any time. When you establish a good relationship with a reporter, he is likely to get in touch with you about future issues and events.

How to Pitch a Story



Elements Essential to the Media:

TV - Offer easy access to elements needed in a TV news story. Every story requires information, interviews and video. Provide the information. Be sure the interviews are available. Provide video opportunities. The lack of any of these elements will kill your story.

Radio - Invite a radio journalist to do a live remote or on-site interview if you are publicizing an event or newsworthy piece where quotes and opinions could be an important part of the report.

Newspapers - Write a brief proposal for the story. This does not have to be a formal piece, but it should entice the editor, and convince him/her that the story would be a good fit for the newspaper. Include your contact information and name. Email the proposal with a subject line that makes it clear this story is local. Editors get hundreds of junk emails every day, so it's important to grab their attention. Follow-up with a phone call and make a list of contacts for the story, photos, etc.

http://www.ehow.com/how_2087814_pitch-story-local-media.html

<http://www.site-reference.com/articles/Internet-Marketing/Top-10-Tips-for-Developing-A-Newsworthy-PR-Pitch.html>

http://www.ehow.com/how_4457421_pitch-tv-news-story.html

http://www.ehow.com/how_2064679_pitch-feature-article-radio.html

http://www.ehow.com/how_4509720_pitch-newspaper-story-idea.html

You and the Media



Remember that you can't control the media, but you can manage your message and help to shape media coverage and public perception of your business or organization.

Be aware of what media reporters do:

Ask open-ended questions

Ask the most challenging question last

Ask uneducated questions

Focus on conflict, not cooperation

Don't prepare

Lapse into silence

Play devil's advocate

Write the story, then ask for a quote

Be aware of what you need to do:

- Drive the interview

- Your agenda, not the reporter's

- Deliver the Message

- Be business-like but passionate about your subject

- Be alert to tone of interview

- Ensure if an athlete is being interviewed – they know how to properly represent SOPA

What is the Message?



Prepared information that informs and persuades your target audience:

- Specific WWWW message
- Broader branding message

Key information you include in every interview or blog post

- Consistency is key – internal and external
 - Past interviews become Google research material

Interview Messaging Tips:

Use sound-bites

Use clichés and analogies

Use anecdotes, stories about athletes

Use sensory language – the roar of the crowd, tears on the faces of athletes, colors in the stadium

20 words, not 50

The Interview



Every interview is an opportunity

- ▶ For coverage
 - ▶ For branding
 - ▶ For sponsor awareness
 - ▶ For consumer awareness
- **Rephrasing** – always turn a negative into a positive
 - Don't repeat negatives in your answer
 - **Bridging** – the key to effective interviews
 - Use it or lose it

Flagging –

- The most important thing about this event is...
- If there's one thing I'd like your audience to know, it's...



Questions?

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Thank You!

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