



Science Communication using the Media

3rd UNICA PR and Communication Workshop, Nicosia/Larnaca, 18-19 April 2013

To know the instructors



◎ **Menelaos Sotiriou**

- ◎ Science writer and communicator,
- ◎ Secretary General of Science View,
- ◎ Board Member of the European Union of Science Journalists' associations

◎ **Dr. Spiros Kitsinelis**

- ◎ Science Communicator
- ◎ Research associate at Paul Sabatier University - Toulouse France, Ehime University – Matsuyama Japan

To know the trainees



**Take 20'' to say your name, institution,
expertise and expectations from the
seminar**

What we are going to point out

- ③ Ways to communicate with researchers
- ③ Ways to communicate with the media
- ③ Strategies on how to communicate the **messages** of a research initiative
- ③ Do's and don'ts in media relations

In which fields you are going to practice

- 🎯 Developing Press Releases
- 🎯 Take an interview from a researcher (Live interview with a researcher)

Scientists usually . . .



By Sidney Harris

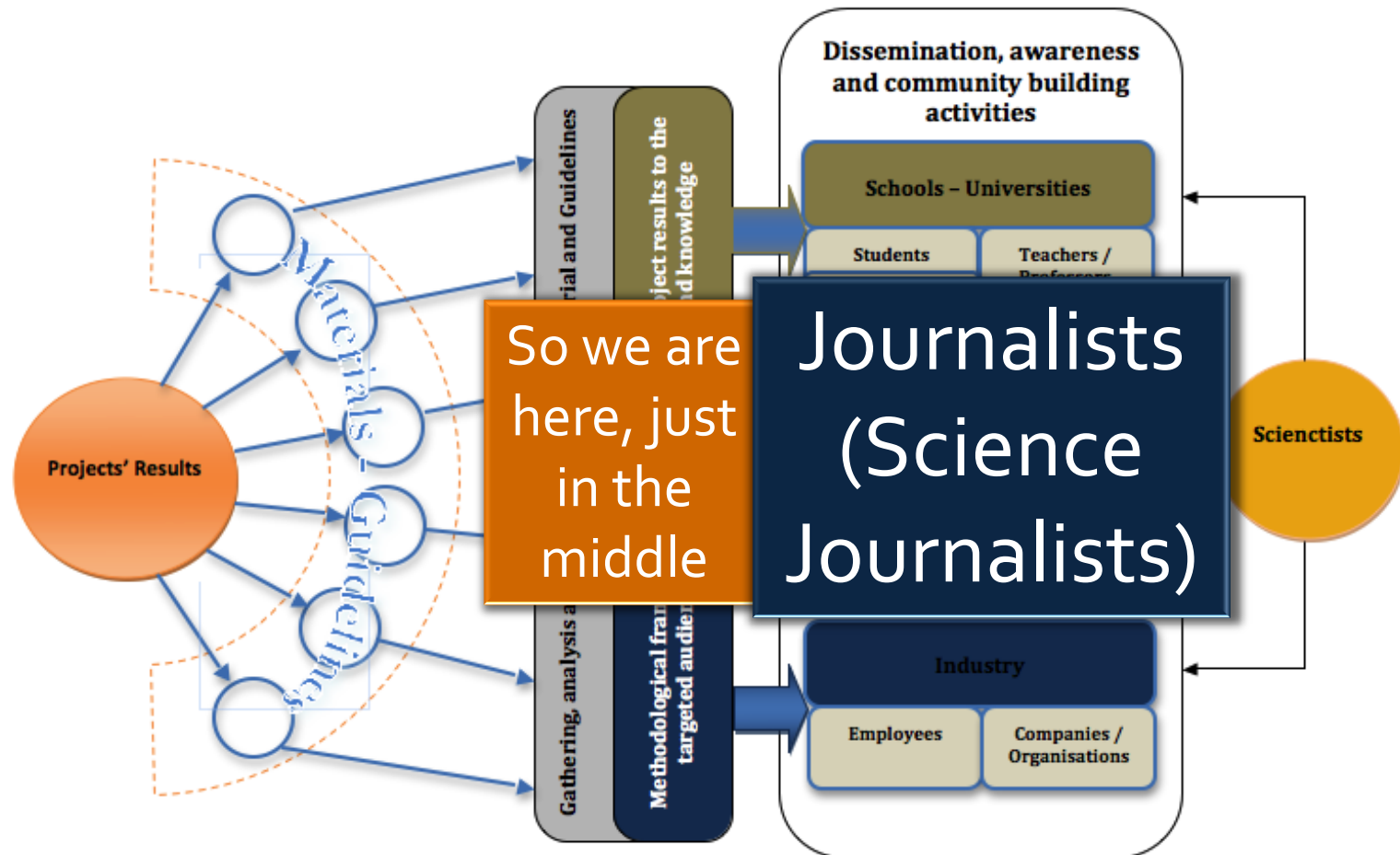
PR Officer / Science Communicator

- ⊙ Writing and distributing news releases
- ⊙ Creating photos and multimedia packages
- ⊙ Providing clippings
- ⊙ Developing media and communication strategies
- ⊙ Briefing and scouting journalists
- ⊙ Giving the scientist media credibility
- ⊙ Managing crisis communication
- ⊙

PR Officer / Science Communicator



Approach



So ...

... talking to a journalist think about the following techniques:

- 🎯 Bridging
- 🎯 Flagging
- 🎯 Repetition

Inspired from a method by Frank Kauffman, but adjust it a bit

Bridging

Example:

Imagine that you are joining a group of your friends watching a movie. You have **missed** the 1st part (almost half the movie) but still you would like to see and understand the rest. You expect in **a** few words someone to explain the 1st part to you in order to be ready to understand the rest of the movie

Flagging (“sound bites”)

Journalists are looking for terse, telling quotes that sum things up in a way that an ordinary person will understand.
In other words, they need **sound bites**

Note: either you have “sound bites” or not, journalists will develop some based on your information. Why don’t YOU give them some?

Repetition

Repeat your message!

Once is not enough!!



Press Releases

A step by step guide

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Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 1 - Preparation

First, consider when it is appropriate to issue a news release.

In most cases a communication officer of a university or a research organization does not decide whether or not to send a PR.

But it must be considered:

- Outline your goals. What results do we hope to produce from our news release?
- What audience will my news release speak to?

A PR speaks to journalists and not to scientists.

Begin by asking what you will do with your news release once you've written it.

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 1 - Preparation

- Is there anything unusual or noteworthy about the release to be issued?
- What is the most important fact you wish to get across? One technique is to imagine what headline you would like to see if the media picks up your story.
- What special features are attached to your product, award, service, or event? Is it free? Half-price? Are there any restrictions, activities, or hours?
- Are there any other newsworthy aspects of your event, announcement, activity, product, or service?
- **What is the: - Who? - What? - Where? - When? - How? - Why? of your story?**

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 2 - Rules for writing a release

- Begin the press release by mentioning your institute name as the entity submitting the press release.

- Communicate the "5 Ws" (and the H) clearly.

Who is this about?

What is the actual news?

When will or did happen?

Where does this take or took place?

Why this is news?

How is this happening?

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 2 - Rules for writing a release

- Ensure that your writing is clear, concise, and without difficult jargon.
- Organize information from most important at the beginning through progressively less important information.
- The first paragraph (two to three sentences) should sum up the press release, and the additional content must elaborate it.
- Avoid using very long sentences and paragraphs.
- Write it like you're telling a story. Use short sentences with active words.
- Write the press release in third person. Instead of using we, us and ours, you should use they, them and theirs.
- News releases are meant to be informational, not flowery or written like advertisements. **Stick to the facts.**

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 2 - Rules for writing a release

- The headline should capture the reader's attention and is therefore very important. Try to simplify things and get to the point. You cannot provide all the data of your release on the headline. Focus on what's catchy and easily comprehended.
- When you write your release approach your subject as though you are a news reporter, emphasizing the news aspect and the facts.
- When you send your release to a television or radio outlet keep in mind that there are two factors to be considered: sight and sound. You should therefore consider writing a different slant into each news release to appeal to the different kinds of media.

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 2 - Rules for writing a release

- Include quotes from people involved!
- Complete the paragraph on one page rather than carrying it over onto the next.
- Use only one side of each sheet of paper (for faxes).
- Make it short. Two pages is maximum, and one page is better.
- Forget big blocks of long, wordy sentences. Use bullet lists, headings and block quotes.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms when you first refer to someone or something. Instead, spell out the full name.
- Strip out superlatives. Once you've written your text, strip out the superlatives: adjectives like 'wonderful' and 'brilliant' are your (biased) opinions and will irritate fact-driven journalists.

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 2 - Rules for writing a release

- Stay away from hype-bloated phrases like “breakthrough”, “unique”, “state-of-the-art”, etc.
- When you use someone's name say: "Miss Joanne Armstrong" the first time and then "Miss Armstrong" in further references.
- Use the names of both the city and the province the first time you refer to a location.
- When you mention a day use the date and year.
- Type 'more' at the bottom of the page when there is more than one.
- Include sharable content (logos, pictures, video)
- Keep the release neat and attractive ('easy on the eyes').

Press Releases

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Step 2 - Rules for writing a release

- Always include **contact details** at the foot.
- Always include details of who the press should contact for further information at the foot of the main press release including home & mobile numbers as well as work contact details.
- Make it Search Engine Friendly (but don't go crazy). The title should be short and contain your keywords if you can.
- Include anchor text for keywords and hyperlinks back to your website so you can pull in some traffic.
- Include a link to an online copy of the same release.
- You may signal the end of the press release with three # (hash) symbols, centered directly underneath the last line of the release.
- Proofread the release not once, but twice.

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Step 3 - Distributing

- Build a Media List. The best way is to carefully watch track media publications and shows, and to identify reporters and producers who would be interested in your releases. Call the media outlets to get the phone and fax number, and mailing address of the journalists you would like to send your release to.
- The Wires. Newswires distribute your press release directly to editors, other media outlets like Routers and they also publish the press releases on their website.
- Mail, Fax, or Email. You can send the news release directly to the media yourself, using the mail, fax, or email. When in doubt about the best option, ask the journalists you will be sending your release to. Of course, 99% of them will prefer email!

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Be careful! Do not submit a PR which:

- Is shorter than 150 words;
- Doesn't contain any form of contact information;
- Makes unqualified claims (e.g. "best," "biggest," "longest," "fastest" – without evidence);
- Does not contain any sort of news;
- Uses a free email address (such as Gmail, Yahoo Mail, or Hotmail).

Always use your company email address;

- Is addressed to consumers or end-users, rather than to the press;
- Contains inaccurate, or incomplete media contact information.

Press Releases

A step by step guide

Standard Formatting

A PR always begins the way a newspaper article begins. That is, first a headline, then location, followed by the date, like this:

New Gadget from XYZ Corp Perfect for Beginners
NEWYORK, NY (September 9, 2010) –

At the end, include contact information in standard PR formatting.
The standard format looks like this:

PRESS CONTACT:

Joe Schmo

XYZ Corp

Tel: (123) 555-1234

Email: joeschmo@xyzcorp.com

Web: xyz.com



Conducting Interviews

A step by step guide

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Conducting Interviews

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Step 1

- Research, research, research.

Then research some more. The only way to come up with good questions is to know everything there is to know about your subject.

- Who is to be interviewed.

You need to be well informed about your subject and topic.

Do preliminary research by using numerous sources such as the internet, other people and by reading articles relating to your subject that other journalists have written.

Study -and refer to- other interviews that your subject has given.

Conducting Interviews

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Step 2

- Contact the person you wish to interview.

Ask when a good time would be to do the interview. Be polite! No one is obliged to be interviewed.

- Set a clear time and place to meet.

Agree on a specific time and location for the interview - make sure you are on time or early!

- It is helpful to conduct the interview in a private setting, free from too many distractions.

- Respect the interviewee's time constraints.

Ask for a specific amount of time for the interview (30-60 minutes).

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A step by step guide

Step 3

- Read over your research and brainstorm a list of 15 questions.
The more specific your questions are, the better!
Never ask questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no.
Make your interviewee talk!
- Become very familiar with your questions before you go into the interview.
Become familiar with the interview script (you'll be more relaxed).
Read it over several times so that you can use it more as a reference than a script during the interview.

Conducting Interviews

A step by step guide

Step 4

Come prepared with:

- The interview guide (a list of good questions)
- A pencil
- A notebook
- A recording device (always ask permission before recording an interview)
- Extra batteries!
- Your business cards

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A step by step guide

Step 5

- Be on time!

Arrive at your interview with plenty of time to spare.

- Be aware of the room. Try to make the room free from distractions, close the door if needed.
- If you are recording, make sure that the recorder is unobtrusive, but in a place that can pick up the conversation.
- Small-talk. Never begin an interview cold. Try to put your interviewee at ease and establish rapport.
- Very briefly, explain the purpose of the interview and what sort of information you'd like your participant to share.

Conducting Interviews

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Step 6 - During the interview

- Always take time to ask for an explanation about things you don't understand.
- Don't be afraid of uncomfortable silences and pauses.
- Let the interview take its natural course.
- Look the person in the eye when asking questions.
- Always listen carefully to the answers. Each answer could lead to more questions or include an answer to a question you haven't asked yet.

Conducting Interviews

A step by step guide

Step 6 – During the interview

- Don't ask a question that has already been answered. Your subject will know you weren't listening and be insulted.
- Conduct your interview like a conversation. Don't read through your questions one right after another like you can't wait to be finished.
- Even if you are recording an interview, take notes. Don't try to write every word said.
- Keep your goals in mind. Remember that what you want is to obtain information. Keep the conversation focused on your questions.

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A step by step guide

Step 6 – Helpful phrases

"That is really interesting, can you tell me more about that?"

"What a good story, I would like to hear more of the details about ..."

"Is there anything else you can tell me regarding...?"

"That sounds like another good story, I would like to go back to that in a minute."

"You mentioned ____ earlier, let's spend some time talking about that for a moment."

"I am really curious about a topic you mentioned, can you tell me more about ____?"

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Step 7 - After the interview

- Allow a few minutes for polite conversation. Sometimes the interviewee will disclose considerable information after the interview is complete and as you are actually leaving.
- While the details are still fresh in your mind, write everything down you can remember about the person you interviewed.
- At home, expand your notes by following up on things you learned in your interview with more research!
- Review your research and your interview notes. Circle or highlight quotations that you think will be good for your article.

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A step by step guide

Tips on interviews via email

- Get the subject's approval.
- Explaining who you are, what the story you are writing is about.
- Do not proceed until you have permission from the interview subject.
- Write questions that are clear, concise and to the point.
- Refrain from asking too many questions during the email interview.
- Follow up with additional questions if you need to clarify any answers.
- Send a note or email thanking the interviewee.
- Let the interview subject know when to expect to see the article on news stands.
- Edit the interview answers for grammar or spelling, if necessary, when writing your story.

Conducting Interviews

A step by step guide

Interviewing a scientist

When interviewing a scientist, the crucial question is one!
“What is it about?”

If this question is answered clearly and in a way that can be understood by everyone, you win!

First of all YOU must understand what the scientist’s project is about, what is new about it, how will it change our lives (if so), why is it worth communicating it for.

Conducting Interviews

A step by step guide

Interviewing a scientist

You have to deliver a certain **message** when communicating science, either while interviewing a scientist, or while preparing a news release.

The best messages are easy to understand and easy to remember.

So they must be:

SHORT

Scientists live for details, and they are going to give you as many as you let them. Organize your message in 3 keypoints (it's easier to remember things in 3s). 3 areas, 3 questions, 3 results.

You are not trying to describe all the details of the scientific work, just those aspects that are important to the general public.

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Interviewing a scientist

MEMORABLE

If it's easy for you to remember, it will be easy for your audience/readers to remember!

The ques that the make the message memorable is the way they sound, or the pictures the couture up in your minds.

Use Metaphors! Analogies! Understandable measures! Comparisons! They result in great images in the audience's minds

Scientists often every single detail of their projects.

This probably include scientific data difficult to comprehend. Try to make it clear first of all to YOU. Don't hesitate to ask the scientists to go back and say it in more simple words.

Conducting Interviews

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Interviewing a scientist

But!

Don't be TOO simple.

Scientific data that support your story must be there.

Do not exclude them, even if they can be comprehended only by other scientists.

Your story (interview, release, article) won't be read just by the general public or journalists. It'll be also read by other scientists.