

Messaging isn't just for the media

Organizing your thoughts and putting yourself in your audience's shoes are the two most effective ways that you can help someone take action for water quality.

So, whether you're asked to do a media interview, knock on the door of a farmer in your watershed, or present to a local community group, here are some tips.

- 1. People want to know that you care before they care about what you know.**
 - a. Who is your audience?
 - b. What do they care most about?
 - c. What will their concerns be?
 - d. What information will resonate with them?
 - e. Who else could help?
- 2. What are your headline messages? (Rule of 3)**
 - a. 3 most important things you would like your audience to know
 - b. 3 most important things your audience would like to know
 - c. 3 most important things the audience will likely to get wrong unless clearly defined.
- 3. What stories can you tell to illustrate the points?**

Preparing for media interviews

If a media interview is your opportunity, it's important to ask questions upfront and prepare. The reporter talking to you certainly will have done so.

To decide whether or not to do an interview:

1. Will the interview get you in front of your target audience?
2. Is it likely that the angle of the story will give you an opportunity to make your key points?
 - a. Or is there a separate, stronger agenda?
3. Will you have a chance to clear up misinformation?
 - a. Are you prepared to do so?

Preparation checklist:

1. Familiarize yourself with the journalist and media outlet before an interview.
 - a. What have they covered in the past?
 - b. Is it accurate and balanced?
 - i. If not, what seems to be their main areas of disagreement
2. Know your key messages.
 - a. Don't let an audience or journalist decide your key messages
3. Practice your messages and tough questions.

Screening questions:

1. What is the deadline?
 - a. You want to be in a place where you can give the reporter your full attention & possibly even have some notes.
2. What is the interview about?
3. What is you or your organization's role in the piece?
4. Who else have they contacted?
5. What kind of interview is it?
 - a. Phone, in-person; taped; live; panel; are there call-in questions

Bridging phrases to help you stay on message:

- Well, I don't know about that, but what I do know is.....
- The important topic is.....
- That's a point of view, but here are the facts.....
- As you know.....
- It's important to emphasize....
- That's not in my field, but what's important is.....
- It's a bit too early to talk about that until all the facts are in, but what we know now is....
- Yes, and let me add to that....
- I'm aware that some have those concerns, and I'd have those questions too, but working in a watershed has led me to understand.....
- Let me put that into perspective.....