**THE CHARITABLE GIVING COALITION**

***Protecting America’s Strong Tradition of Giving***

***DELIVERING THE MESSAGE ON GIVING***

Communicating to members of Congress, the media and other target audiences about the value of philanthropy and nonprofits in our communities is a critical part of ensuring a growing and thriving sector. Whether you’re a seasoned pro or new to the role of spokesperson for your organization, the tips below can serve as a helpful refresher or provide new ways for you to stay focused. You will be prepared to deliver a compelling message that resonates and strengthens the relationships with those with whom you interact.

Below are the key ingredients for delivering effective messages:

**Clear** To break through the clutter, messages must be brief. Less is always more. Use the rule of threes to ensure your audience remembers what you say.

**Connect** Messages must have some relevance in the life of your target audience.

**Compelling** Why does it matter? Real-life examples, powerful statistics and personal experiences make messages interesting.

**Continual** Repetition is critical to connecting with target audiences and making sure they retain what is important.

**Preparing for Meetings and Interviews**

An interview, meeting or presentation should never be taken lightly. Each can go a long way toward helping - or hurting - your cause. Below are some winning tips to help you succeed during an interview with the media or a meeting with a key stakeholder:

1. **Study**. Give the discussion your undivided attention. Get the information you need to deliver your messages with authority and credibility. Know what your target audience covers or cares about.
2. **Stick to the messages and keep it short and simple**. Don’t expect a reporter or your audience to know everything you know. Respect their time. Be sure to stay on point, avoid using jargon and continually bring the conversation back to your core messages.
3. **Bridge to the message**. Reporters or others can sometimes steer the conversation in a direction to fit their angle, get a quote that makes the story more provocative or try to ask off-topic questions. To keep the conversation focused on your issue, use the following language to get back on track:
   * + “The important thing to remember is…”
     + “The point I want to stress is…”
     + “I can’t speak to that, but I do know this…”
4. **Don’t respond to material you haven’t seen**. If you haven’t reviewed it, you shouldn’t comment on it.
5. **It’s OK to say, “I don’t know.”** It is sometimes necessary to say, “I don’t know, but let me find out and get back to you.” No one is expected to have all the answers all the time. It is better to check facts first.

**After the Meeting**

1. **For the media - It’s not over until the reporter is gone**. A candid comment, a wise crack, or an unstudied afterthought uttered as the reporter puts on his or her coat can change the entire focus of a story.
2. **For media and stakeholders - Review and follow up**. Analyze what worked and what didn’t. For example, acknowledge the reporter’s work if he or she did a good job. E-mail a note of thanks and offer to be available for future discussions with stakeholders.

**The Most Important Dos and Don’ts when Communicating**

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| **Do** | **Don’t** |
| * Stay on Message | Wander off topic |
| * Be concise and compelling (KISS – Keep it Simple, Sweetie) | Use jargon |
| * Balance data with emotional appeal and the human angle (paint a picture) | Engage in lengthy programs, processes, and other abstract concepts. |
| * Prepare and take your time | Be overconfident and rush blindly through |
| * Know the ground rules | Assume it’s ‘off-the-record’ |
| * Defend your position respectfully | Be defensive or pick a fight; reporters and members get the last word |
| * Reinforce the goals and ‘bridge’ to the messages | Veer off course or try to provide an answer when you don’t know it |
| * Enjoy the silence | Fill the void with endless conversation |

**Effectively Answering the Trickiest Media Questions**

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| **The Trickiest Questions** | **The Best Way to Answer** |
| * Hypothetical or “What if….?” | Stick to the facts. “I can’t speculate about that, but what I can tell you is…” |
| * News of the day? | Expect to be asked about breaking or topical news even if not directly related. Pivot to your messages or say you would rather not comment on something you haven’t read. |
| * Third Party or unknown source? | Make sure you can verify it for yourself first. |
| * Ranking or choice? | You may be asked to characterize your answer by deciding if something is better or worse or by choosing “A” or “B” or “C.” You can say none of the above and pivot back to the message. |
| * Negative premise? | Don’t repeat the negative words or phrases that are often imbedded in the question. You’ll only reinforce someone else’s point of view. |
| * Personal opinion? | Don’t ever feel like you must give a personal opinion. |
| * Personal attack or cheap shot? | Ignore the pettiness. Calmly set the record straight and bridge to the message. |
| * False facts? | Inadvertently, you can get a question based on faulty information. Stick to the facts. |