



# Gibbs & Soell Business Communications

## Media Training Workshop

December 16, 2014

# Who am I?

Southern Indiana grain farm  
Purdue University, Ag Communications  
Married into livestock farm; in NC since 1996



20 years at G&S, Business Communications  
Syngenta, Novartis, US Grains, Southern  
States and Advanced Manufacturing



Passionate about helping companies,  
producers tell their story when it comes to  
agricultural policy and production

# Meeting expectations

# Reason We're Here Today

- Prepare ... you likely will be called on to talk with the media.
- Learn to...
  - Establish yourself as an expert
    - Accessible. Credible. Reliable.
  - Use the media as an information conduit between you and key stakeholders
    - Positively position
      - Your business
      - Your family
      - Your industry

# Thought for Today

*It is not the facts that are of chief importance, but the light thrown upon them, the meaning in which they are dressed, the conclusions which are drawn from them, and the judgments delivered upon them.*

-Mark Twain





# Marketing Your Message: Three Keys to Success

# Key #1

- Know the audience
- *Exercise: You have two minutes, explain to someone from the 1700s what an airplane is and how it works*



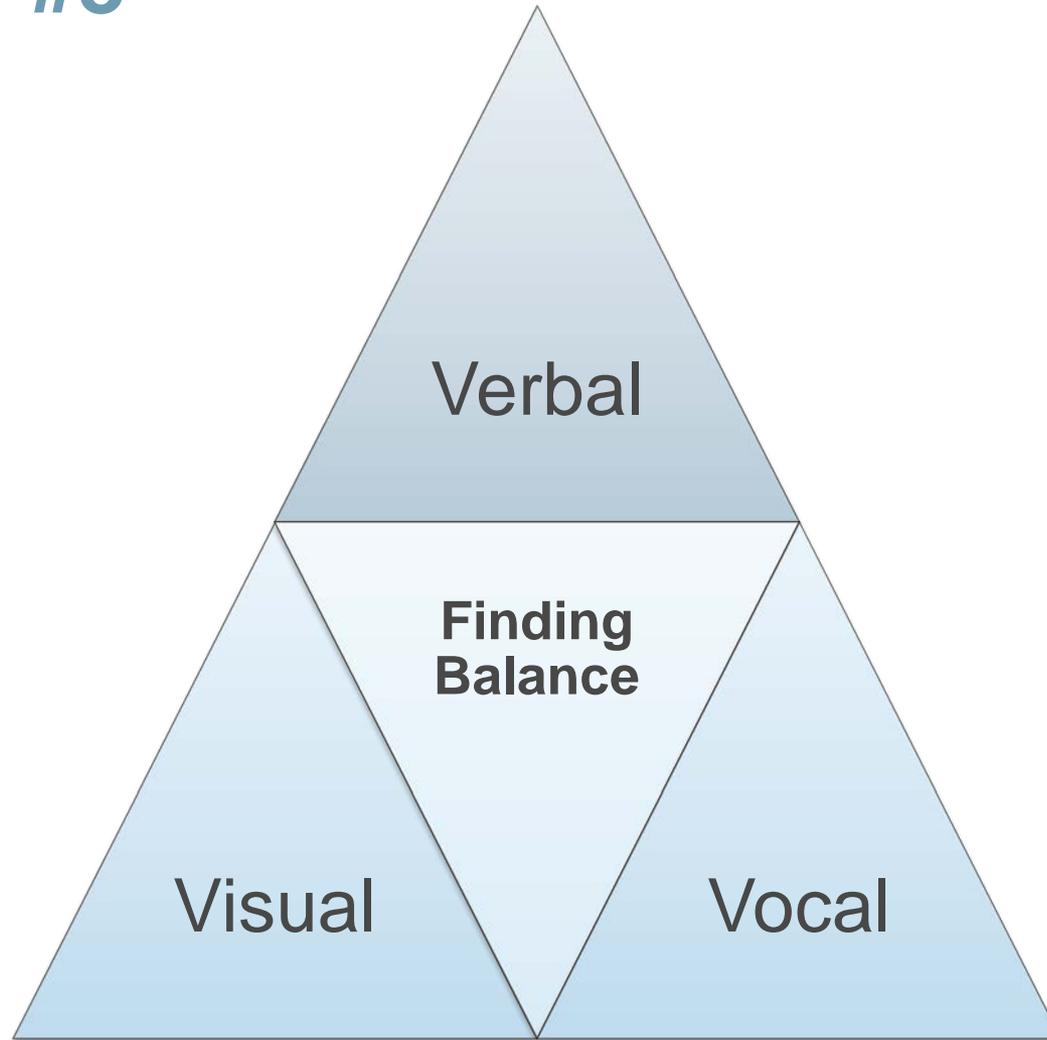
## Key #2

- Know the content ... and put it in context



*“Tell me what’s most important about what’s happening with agriculture...”*

# Key #3



# Understanding the media

# Business Press



FORTUNE

The New York Times

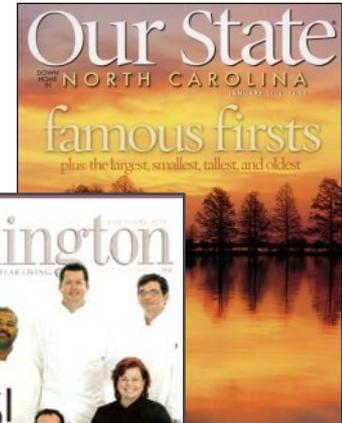


THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

- Knowledgeable of industry
  - Usually well versed in the subject matter at hand
  - Hard hitting questions
- Investor and management oriented
- Numbers, trends and impact
- Fact checking does not exist

# Local Press

- Vested interest in the community
- Write from a local angle
- Community and employee influencers
- Often pull stories and ideas from wire services
- Regularly don't know what to ask



# Broadcast

- It's all about the sound bite
- Need it now, need it fast
- Live and edited interviews
- Sensation sells
  - But needs a human angle
- Hosts/Reporters are the star, not you
- Visual medium
  - Appeals to the eye
  - Need to “look the part”



# Digital Media

- Blogs, podcasts, guest commentary on websites, web videos and social networks
- Generally more conversational and less formal
- Less distinction between ‘types’ of reporters
- Need to adapt style and content



# Trade Media

- In-depth industry knowledge
- Conversational – not Confrontational
- Targeted audience
- Tendency to support industry
  - Industry influencers; affiliated with trade organizations
- Easier to educate

**Top Producer** **BROWNFIELD**  
AG NEWS FOR AMERICA

**dtn** *The* **PROGRESSIVE FARMER.**

**AgriTalk**  
*The Voice of Rural America*

Successful  
**Farming**

**FARM PRESS**

# How the media works



Journalists' hell

# Common Types of Contact

- Telephone Interviews
- In-person interviews
  - Farm visits
  - Trade shows
  - Association Meetings
  - Town Hall Meetings
- Electronic Communications

# The Media Desires

- Time, attention and response
- Facts and forecasting, not speculation
- Issues relevant to their audience
- Credible resources and background information
- You to help them help you

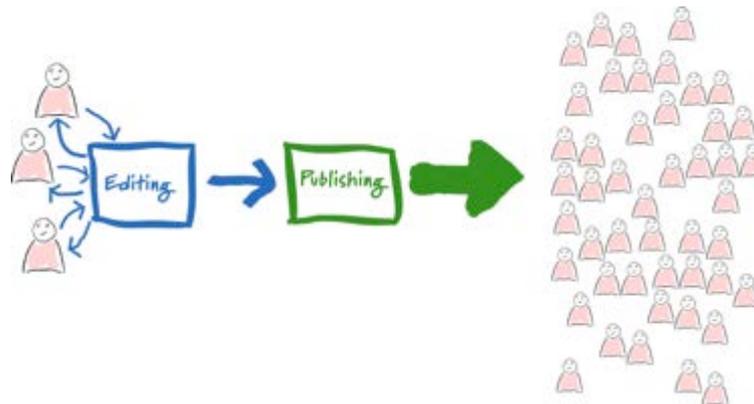
# How the Media Works

- They can...
  - Ask you anything
  - Not to tell you who else they are speaking with
  - Be wrong (your job is to correct them)
  - Surprise you
  - Edit your statements
  - Use comments out of context



# How the Media Works

- Most reporters have high ethical standards
- Interviews get edited
  - What you say isn't necessarily used as you meant it
- Fact checking is at editorial discretion
  - May correct misspellings, factual errors



# How the Media Works

## What You Can Do

- Request questions prior to interview
- Review technical details – at editors discretion
- Provide images

## What You Can't Do

- Determine editorial focus
- Expect or demand opportunity to review or edit
- Rewrite, unless factually erroneous
- Route through any legal counsel

# Interview management: Tips for effective delivery



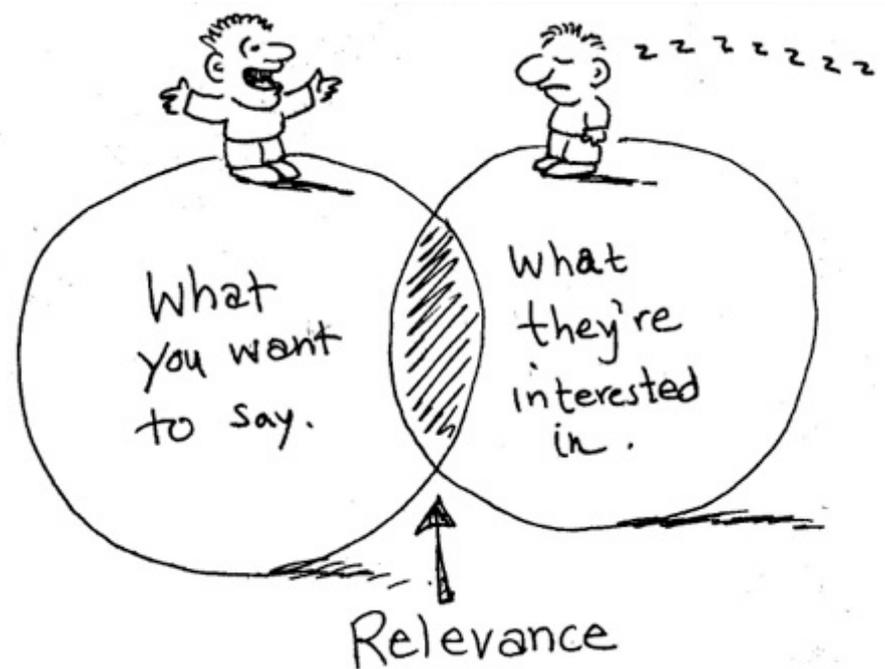
# Interview Management



- Don't answer questions, deliver messages
- Focus on positive communication, even with negative subject matter
- See a journalist, see a stakeholder

# Interview Management

- Relevance = Impact
  - Interviews are for stakeholder consumption
  - Internal messages are not relevant to your audience
  - Knowing the audience helps shape key messages



# Think like a journalist

- Anticipate tough questions
  - Put yourself in the reporter's shoes
  - What questions will you likely be asked – even if its not a question from a journalist
  - What questions do you hope are NOT asked? Are you prepared to answer them?



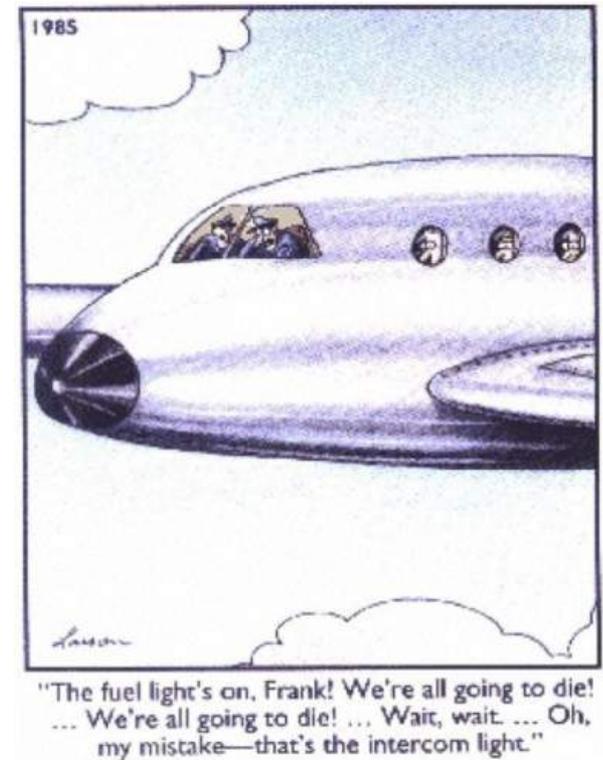
# Delivering impact

- Statements that...
  - Inspire a stakeholder to take some action
  - Convey concise, thoughtful impact
    - Know your sound bites
  - Are simple to communicate and understand



# Value of a strong opening

- Puts you in control of the interview from the onset
  - Sets the tone for the interview
  - Establishes the scope of the interview
  - Creates a 'safe haven' for addressing 'tricky' questions



# Effective Delivery

- Repetition is key
- A few simple steps:
  - Relax
  - Lead with the main point
  - Control the interview
  - Come back to your opening statement



# Nonverbal Communication



- Conducting the Interview
  - Lean forward and be attentive
  - Look the reporter in the eye
  - Be aware of your posture, body and facial language and habits
    - And how it changes when you are under stress

# Preparing for the Interview

**Are you permitted to talk?**

**Corporate?  
Contract grower?**

# Considerations for Interview

## Images

- Do you allow pictures?
- Where?
- If no, other sources.

## Dress

- Appropriate for situation
- Clean and groomed
- Minimal pattern
- No hats

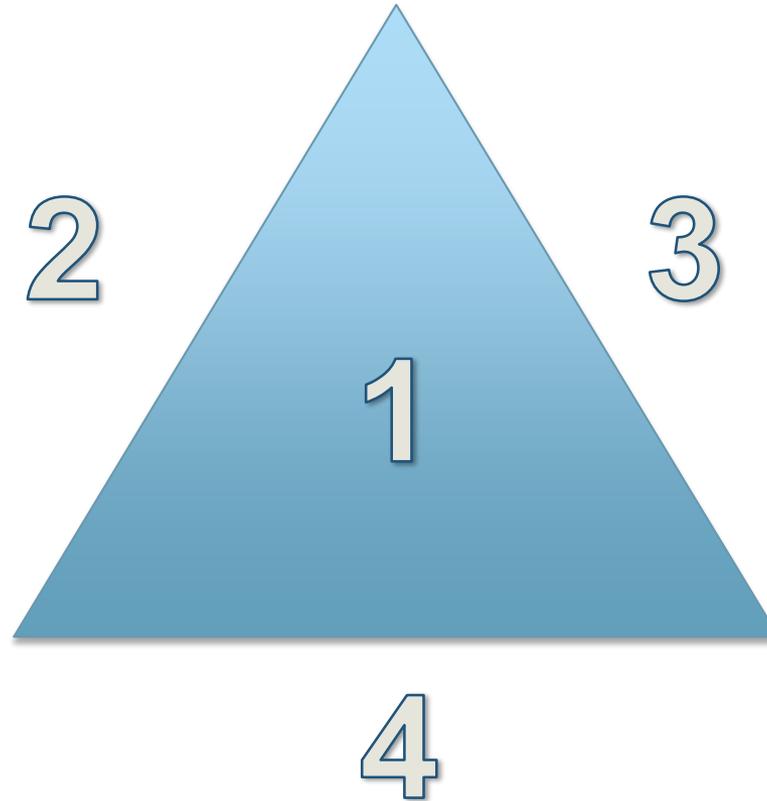
## Resources

- Extension
- Association
- Commodity Groups
- Dept. of Ag
- NCFB
- CALS

# “Map” it out

- Have and know your major points in advance
  - Define your objective: If I can get only two or three points across to this reporter, what should they be?
  - Are your points meaningful, honest, short and to the point?
  - Again, think sound bites

# The G&S Two-Minute Message Tool



# Techniques for Handling Tough Questions

# Avoiding Common Traps

- Rapid-fire questions
- Speculation
- Losing focus
- Assuming comprehension
- Speaking off the record
- Filling the void



# Bridging



- Objective: Transition from the question asked to the answer you want to give
- Example: *“Yes, there are many considerations on the table, however, the most important thing right now is to ensure the safety of all involved. Let me explain what we’re doing...”*

# Clarifying

- Objective: Clear up or reinforce a point with the journalist before answering the next question.
- Example: *“Let’s clear up a point of confusion before I get to the answer to that...”*

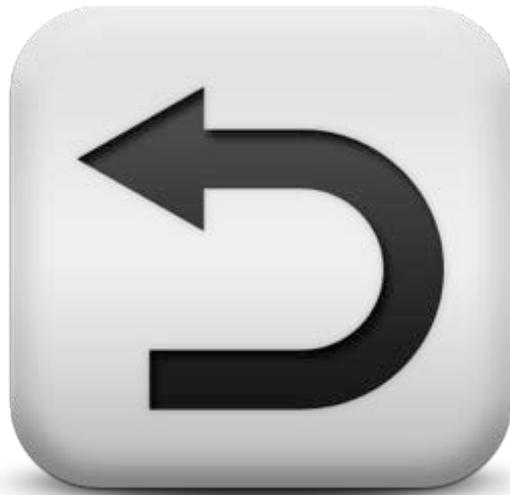


# Flagging

- Objective: Use verbal clues to make your key points stand out
- Example:
  - *“That’s a great question, Mike, let me answer that...”*
  - *Let me answer that by telling you about three key points...*
  - *The most important thing right now is to find how this accident occurred...*
  - *What our customers are most anxious to learn more about is...”*



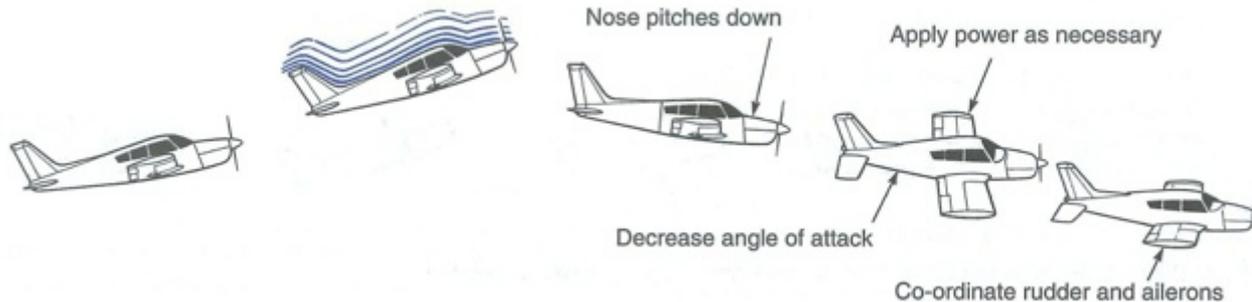
# Redirecting



- Objective: Bypass a negative or confrontational question without answering; discourage follow-up questions
- Example:
  - *“You know, the real issue related to that point is...”*
  - *The real focus of the issue is...*
  - *Our design alleviates many of the historic issues...”*

# Stalling

- Objective: “Buy” time while you think of an appropriate answer
- Example:
  - *“Could you repeat the question, please?”*
  - *“Could you clarify that questions, please?”*
  - *“Interesting question. Let me think about that for a moment.”*



# Silence

- Is golden
- Can be uncomfortable
- Can be strategic
- But, don't fill the void with random thoughts



# Final Thoughts

- Use your resources
  - Time
  - Visuals
  - Outside support
- Think through your messages
  - PREPARE
  - PRACTICE
- Evaluate
  - How do you feel after interview?
  - Is the story accurate and fair?

# Thank you for your participation.



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