

Media relationships work two ways



By [Marion Scher](#)

27 Sep 2013

I received an email this morning from a colleague who, some would think quite cheekily, asked me for my press listing for a particular industry...

I have done extensive work in this field and naturally have good contacts with the press that count here. Not being a public relations person myself, my goal is simply to connect clients with the right media and they do the work...

In this particular instance her client is one I have worked with - for a particular executive in that field, who desperately wanted media connections. Unfortunately the organisation felt otherwise and nine times out of ten when the media contacted them they either declined to comment or tried to brush the media off in some way.

The email I received detailed the fact that this same company were now battling to reach the media on a new project they wanted to talk about. Was I surprised - absolutely not! Either you have relations with the media or you don't - simple as that. You can't expect the media to jump when suddenly you decide you want them to listen to your story about your new product.

Media relationships... work in progress

Media relationships have to be worked on and then, especially when there's a crisis situation, which this particular organisation has had many recently, you must be ready to talk to the media - not say 'no comment' or 'we'll get back to you' - and do that four days later...

People often comment they hear the same people from the same organisations being interviewed over and over again. If the rand spikes or falls then you're going to hear comments from one of about three well-known economists. Are they the only economists in SA? No, they're three of around 700 registered economists - but they are the ones who the media know they can get hold of at the drop of a hat and who will give them answers.

Media on speed dial

They've become spokespeople in their particular field. This is clever - because not only do they represent the particular industry but also their own company name will appear over and over again. And should they want to comment on something within their own organisation, they'll have every media that counts on their speed dial.

In fact let me set a scene for you. This past weekend, right into Monday and Tuesday the dreadful scenes were coming

through from the Westgate Mall, Nairobi, where we were hearing, often mixed reports, of what was happening. You work in a radio newsroom and you have listeners calling in asking 'So what would happen if this were in one of our major malls?' At this point the talk show producers and newsroom editors and journalists all go out for the same thing. Good spokespeople. People who they can rely on to come on air and talk on the various aspects around this issue.

Mall management, security companies, experts of terrorism and so on. This is an extreme situation but the point is at times like this you go to your 'little black book' of contacts in various fields who you know you can rely on for good commentary.

These same names, when they approach the media about a new product or a good story, they're far more likely to find a friendly ear. The bottom line - there's no room for arrogance when it comes to dealing with the media. Like them or in many cases hate them, they hold your reputation in their hands.

ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher (www.mediamentors.co.za) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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