

TOP MEDIA TIPS FROM LOCAL PROFESSIONALS

BY JENNIFER GERRETT



Jennifer Gerrett is the Media and Account Coordinator for Vreeland Marketing & Design. She can be reached at jenny@vreeland.com

Armed with tips on media relations, industry reminders, and tricks of the trade, three panelists refreshed attendees of January's Professional Development Seminar with what they look for in a news story and the best ways to make the media aware of the stories you want to share. The panel of media experts consisted of **Judy Meyer**, managing editor at the Lewiston Sun Journal, **Anna Wolfe**, the editor-in-chief of Gourmet News and **Gregg Lagerquist**, award-winning journalist and anchor/reporter for WGME News 13.

IN THIS WORLD OF DEADLINES, FAST-PACED NEWS AND THE PURSUIT OF THE BEST STORY ANGLE, ALL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA PROFESSIONALS NEED REMINDERS AND REFRESHERS NOW AND THEN.

IT'S A WHIRLWIND OUT THERE AND THANKS TO THE PANELISTS, HERE ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM MEDIA 101:

- **Create and maintain a good relationship with your representative or reporter that is based on a combination of honesty, trust, and, of course, good stories.** At functions or industry gatherings, introduce yourself and start a conversation.
- **Honesty is the best policy.** Goodwill is nice, but don't expect to get something out of it. Gifts don't work! Readers/viewers appreciate meaningful and unique news and reporters want to deliver stories that are newsworthy.
- **Credibility is the number one rule in journalism.** There is no such thing as a 'friends' rule or playing favorites. At times, there can be friction due to businesses thinking they are owed something

from the editors/ reps for advertising dollars spent with them. Don't expect to receive coverage just because you spend a certain amount in advertising dollars.

- **Pitch a story, not an ad.** Think: retailer selling a product vs. the meaning or connection to readers because of the product. Take yourself out of PR mode and remember to think like a viewer/reader. Consider what the audience wants to hear about and pitch a human-interest story that will engage them.

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APR REVIEW COURSE SCHEDULED FOR 2008

The Maine Public Relations Council will offer a series of classes to help candidates who are preparing for Accreditation in Public Relations (APR). This year, MPRC is adding a class in Augusta to accommodate students' schedules.

The review course, which consists of four classes (depending on candidates' needs/schedules), is designed to ensure that Maine candidates are ready for the two stages of the APR exam:

- A Readiness Review:
 - A written submission (based on previous experiences and portfolio samples)
 - A personal interview (in which you present your portfolio and answer questions posed by a panel of three current APRs)
- A Computer-based Examination, consisting of multiple choice questions, which is administered at a professional testing center

Wednesday, April 30
9-11 a.m.
Maine Hospital Association, Augusta
Directions: www.themha.org
Registration deadline: April 18

Thursday, May 8
4-6 p.m.
Maine Medical Center, Portland
Directions: www.mmc.org
Registration deadline: April 30

Cost of the review session, which includes all handouts and materials, is \$75. For more information on the review course or the exam, please contact Abby Greenfield, APR, (207) 662-2196 or green@mmc.org. To register, please send a check for \$75 to MPRC, Art Marcoux, P.O. Box 1657, Portland, ME 04104.



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GREETINGS,

THE SNOW IS DISAPPEARING STEADILY AND I NOTICED THREE CROCUSES IN MY GARDEN YESTERDAY, BUT IT IS APRIL IN MAINE -- IT'S POSSIBLE WE'LL SEE MORE SNOWFLAKES! THAT DOESN'T MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT WE CAN'T LOOK FOR SPRING IN THE BRIGHT GREEN BEGINNING TO BUD ON TREES OR POKING OUT OF THE STILL FROZEN GROUND.



Martha Davoli, APR, is President of the Maine Public Relations Council and director of creative services at Maine Medical Center. She can be reached at davolm@mmc.org

Likewise, Spring can mean a fresh start or new growth for us as public relations practitioners. A colleague recently left our team to pursue new opportunities; his leaving led to reflection over my own growth from intern to department director over the course of nearly two decades.

We all began our careers eager to learn and benefit from the experience or mentorship of more seasoned colleagues. Remember your early days in the profession, and the respect and appreciation you felt for those who took time to teach, encourage, and mentor you in your new career. Their efforts back then helped form the foundation of what you have built over your years in this work.

Maybe you started gaining experience as an intern before even leaving school. If so, you were exposed to opportunities and situations not available in the academic setting. You contributed to the overall goals of the organization, learning by doing. This is an effective way to develop new skills and confidence, while being closely supervised by experts.

Susan Tompkins, our Board Scholarship Chair, is developing a mentoring program for Maine students in Communications programs. This is your chance to have an impact on a student who will enter the work-

force in the next few years. We're beginning with a group of 11 MPRC volunteers who will meet with students from the New England School of Communications and the University of Maine at Orono on April 25.

I hope you'll think about what you can do to help someone grow in our field. Don't overlook the opportunity to support the career development activities of a colleague who asks for your advice, or to spend a few minutes with someone who contacts you for an informational interview. You can explore mentoring a student by contacting Susan at 712-1733 or susan@tompkinspr.com. And you can consider engaging students who contact you about a possible internship with your organization.

Choose from an opportunity that takes a few minutes or one that lasts a semester. Just talking with eager students or folks new to the profession is a great way to remind yourself of why you embarked on this career path!

Happy Spring!

Martha



Linked in: How a Blog Helped One Maine Business Connect

BY: DIANA MCELWAIN



Diana McElwain is the Communications and Marketing Specialist for the Maine Credit Union League. She can be reached at dmcelwain@mainecul.org

FOR SAMANTHA DEPOY-WARREN, A BLOG IS MORE THAN AN ENTERTAINING READ OR A WAY TO GET INFORMATION ONLINE. FOR HER BUSINESS, IT IS A POWERFUL PR TOOL. DEPOY-WARREN, A RESIDENT OF FARMINGTON AND A GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE IN ORONO, IS THE OWNER OF I DO CLICK WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY. SHE BEGAN A BLOG FOR HER BUSINESS, WHICH RECENTLY TOOK THIRD PLACE IN THE WPJA/BRIDES MAGAZINE, IN AUGUST OF 2006.

"As a new small business owner who doesn't have a lot of money to spend on advertising, the blog initially seemed like just another way to get my business exposure. Blogs attract viewership and build loyalty in a way that Web sites can't, and I wanted to harness that to extend my business out into cyberspace and into the hearts and minds of potential brides and grooms," she explained.

She said that she began the blog after becoming frustrated by the limitations and lack of flexibility of her business website. Beyond promoting her brand, she said the nature of the blog allows her to better relate to her clients.

"Because I am able to really show my personality on the blog, I end up booking couples who are like minded, and who I usually develop friendships with that continue far beyond the wedding. The blog is just another way for me to establish my brand and build relationships. When I show up to shoot a wedding, my couples and even their family and friends feel like they already know me because they've followed the blog."

Depoy-Warren said that her experience as a journalist—as a staff writer for the Lewiston Sun Journal, an editor for the Livermore Falls Advertiser, and more recently as a freelancer for newspapers such as Mainebiz—has helped her to apply this professional writing style to her blog.

"I structure my blog entries much like I would a story for the newspaper—with a strong lead that pulls people into the post and, of course, powerful photographs."

Like other online material, one of the aspects of a successful blog is content

that is constantly updated. Depoy-Warren said that one of the things her clients have come to expect is for images from their wedding to be posted 24 hours or less from the event.

"Couples love this, because it reassures them that their wedding day was really as beautiful as they imagined it to be, and it gets them excited to see the complete gallery of their hundreds of final images. And, because their wedding party usually logs on as well, it's not unusual that I'll get a few bridesmaids who are engaged e-mailing me about shooting their wedding that same day the post goes online."

Depoy-Warren said that the blog is also away to build a sense of community with the brides and grooms. "It gives them ideas and inspiration, and confidence that they've picked the right professional to shoot their wedding."

Not only does it connect those planning weddings, it also serves as a way to interact with other photographers. "Working as a self-employed photographer can sometimes be isolating. I have a network of photographers who



SAMANTHA DEPOY-WARREN

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- **Don't forget the importance of visual impact.** Peak the interest of your audience by sending along an eye-catching image or have the most compelling video clip prepared. For print media, look to the AP wire for more coverage and to gain interest.
- **Take the time to coordinate interviews when needed.** It helps sell the story if you have someone ready to go 'on the record'. Do the legwork and provide detailed information so your rep/reporter doesn't have to work so hard.
- **Curb the angle of the story depending on whether or not the publication is local or national, or prints daily or weekly.** Be aware of what is relevant to your reporter and the audience.
- **Geographic locations do tend to be a challenge at times, but if the story is good and needs to be shared, it will make the news.**
- **Submitting stories by email and fax is fine but only if directed to someone specifically.** Be sure to know the name

and correct spelling of the person you are sending to. The downside of email is that it's easy to delete, prepare your subject line with care.

- **Know who you are sending the story to.** It's important to know if you are sending a story to a reporter or an editor. Always remember that if you can get a reporter interested in the story and pitch it to the editor, you have an advocate on the inside.
- **Doing a follow-up builds the relationship with the reporter/editor, so consider phoning to confirm receipt of e-mail or fax.**
- **Respect deadlines and be aware of them.** Timeframes differ from one media outlet to another. Newspaper and TV are immediate and very timely when compared to a magazine where there could be a two-month lead-time.
- **Dealing with damage control and knowing how to respond to negative press is crucial.** In any case, it must be dealt with head-on, as it always seems to

bounce into the next day and can only worsen if not treated properly. Your response needs to be thorough, informed and handled as soon as possible. Recognize the importance of the matter and that giving an answer really can defuse the mess.

- **Alternative media is a great way to get involved and find information.** Steer your audience to a website or participate in a web poll to see if there are stories to be found. You might find a reference to make a point in your story.

Overall, be sure to let honesty be your best policy with your media contact, and remember that finding the human interest angle will gain the attention of the reader/viewer and help them connect. The more you know about working with the media, the better coverage you'll receive and the more appreciation you'll get from your client.

BLOGGING TIPS SAMANTHA DEPOY-WARREN

1. **Keep it regular:** In the blogosphere, consistency is key. There are so many blogs to choose from, that if people come back to yours and see it hasn't been updated recently, they are likely to move on and forget about it. Even if you just post a brief message, a link to an interesting article you recently read or a quick picture with a caption, update your blog regularly, say every Tuesday. Use a tracking service like Google Analytics to see what days of the week you are getting the most hits, and make sure to schedule your posting accordingly.
2. **Don't be afraid to get personal:** The beauty of the blog is the freedom it allows for you to be yourself. Everything from the color of the blog to the profile in the sidebar speaks to who you are. By sharing personal details about your life and adventures with your readers, you will make them more loyal to your blog, and thus your product. Posts about my dogs always get more comments than the most stunning wedding images I put up.
3. **Talk amongst yourselves:** The Web is an interactive medium. Encourage your readers to leave comments on your blog and engage them with polls and contests. For example, as a wedding photographer, I recently ran a contest where readers could send the best relationship advice they'd received. The winners were revealed on Valentine's Day, and ranged from a recent groom to the maid of honor at a wedding I'd shot two years before. It's a great way to see who's reading and to show your gratitude for their loyalty!
4. **Linking up:** Though the objective of the blog is to promote your business or product, make sure to mention other businesses you network with, even if they are your competitors. Whenever I post after a wedding, I also name, rave about and provide links to the Web sites of the other vendors there, from the venue to the florist. That's why when you type "Saddleback Ski Area Weddings," my blog comes up highest in the rankings (above the mountain's own Web site!)
5. **Spread the love:** You want people to comment on your blog, so make sure to comment on the blogs of others. This encourages readers to see what others are doing with their blogs, and as an added bonus, you're likely to get hits from people clicking on your name to see who wrote that insightful comment.



Photos posted on I Do Click's blog

Media Profile BY TAMI KENNEDY



Tami Kennedy is the director of communications for Shipyard Brewing Company. She can be reached at tami@maine.rr.com.



Founded in 1953, WCSH 6 is the longest running television station in southern Maine. The NBC affiliate is based in Portland, and also operates full-time news bureaus in Rockland and Lewiston. WCSH 6 works in partnership with

WLBZ 2, its sister station in Bangor and together, the stations' signals reach a majority of households in Maine.

WCSH 6 is the news ratings leader in the Portland market, and also leads the market in hours of news programming, with more than 40 hours a week, including the top-rated morning newscast in Maine, The Morning Report, and top-rated evening newscast, NEWS CENTER at 6pm.

The station's website, WCSH6.com, is one of the leading online news sources for Mainers, no matter where they live. Transplanted Mainers often email to thank WCSH 6 for offering a way to keep in touch with their home state.

NEWS CENTER

NEWS CENTER covers all kinds of news, from state government to human interest. The newsroom is always looking for story ideas. To make your story idea stand out from the hundreds that are submitted every week, Managing Editor Maureen O'Brien suggests you keep a few things in mind:

**How many people will be affected by this story?
The more, the better!**

Is it visual?

**Will there be "real people" to interview
(versus officials and dignitaries)?**

O'Brien notes, "We look for stories that can be told on television, that involve and impact 'real people,' and have some sort of emotional component."

Email is the best method for pitching stories and you should avoid attachments.

"If you're sending a press release, just send it in the body of the email," says O'Brien. "We have very stringent firewalls. With thousands of press releases to weed through, there's a good chance your release will get overlooked if it's difficult to access."

207

The station's nightly magazine program 207 receives hundreds of story pitches each week.

Producers look for topics that will appeal to a broad audience, that will be entertaining and/or informative, that are timely, and that will add to a balanced show.

Priority is given to stories that have not been covered before. Please note that 207 does not feature self-published books or CDs. If the show features a book or album, it has to be widely available to viewers.

Community Relations

WCSH 6 provides non-profit organizations online listings of community activities. Online listings should be submitted via email 4 weeks in advance.

WCSH 6's popular Many Hands grant provides the production of a high-quality public service announcement and broadcast time for this PSA to air for three months on WCSH 6 and WLBZ 2. In addition, both stations award recipients a cash grant of \$1,000.

In reviewing grant applications, the station looks at the history of the organization, program objectives, constituency to be served, collaborations, and community and volunteer involvement. In addition, qualifications of the organization to carry out the projects and how outcomes will be measured play a role in the selection process.

WCSH 6 also airs a few carefully chosen nationally produced PSAs each year.

"Maine organizations who submit PSAs are given full consideration and have a leg up over national organizations," notes Community Relations Director Charlene Belanger.

PSAs have to be well-produced and provide a message or service relevant to the community.

Annual community events include the WCSH 6 Sidewalk Art Festival, which dates back 42 years and is a summer tradition for artists and the City of Portland. In addition, Teens Who Care and 6 Who Care support and celebrate volunteerism, a cause the station has championed for many years. Nomination information for these two events is available online, www.wcsh6.com

ADVERTISING:

Dave Abel
General Sales Manager
(207) 828-6666
dave.abel@wcsh6.com

NEWS RELEASES:

NEWS CENTER:
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COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Charlene Belanger
Community Relations Director
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MPRC Scholarship Committee and You: Seeking Volunteers for the Mentor Program



Susan Tompkins is the Principal of RisingTide PR. She can be reached at risingtide@maine.rr.com

BY SUSAN TOMPKINS



MPRC Scholarship Program

Education and professional development are cornerstones of MPRC program offerings. To support the next generation of MPRC members, the MPRC Scholarship committee is seeking applications from Maine colleges and universities to award a maximum of two, \$1,000.00 scholarships to students who demonstrate academic excellence and a strong commitment to this field.

In March the application was e-mailed to financial aid directors and MPRC members at Maine's post-secondary education institutions. A press release announcing the scholarship was distributed to newspapers and the application is posted on MPRC's home page.

MPRC members **Bob Caswell** from USM, **Nancy Roberts** at the New England School of Communications,

Danielle Vayenas and **Kathleen Taggersell** with the University of New England, and **Bill Gates** at St. Joseph's College have volunteered to promote the scholarship within their respective institutions.

Jennifer Dimond and **Jon Paradise** will join **Susan Tompkins** to judge the applications on April 29th and students will be notified of the status of their application by May 1st.

Annual Conference Recognition and Professional Development Programs

Scholarship recipients will be invited to attend the MPRC Annual Conference as our guests and will be recognized at the luncheon business meeting. The recipients' family members and appropriate school contacts will be invited to recognize the students' accomplishments.

New this year, MPRC is opening up a limited number of complimentary seats to students at monthly professional development events. Three USM students attended the January Media Relations 101 seminar. **Peter DeWitt**, who chairs the Professional Development Committee, will hold an event in Bangor April 25th that will be open to university students. **Nancy Roberts** at the New England School of Communications has volunteered to organize this seminar.

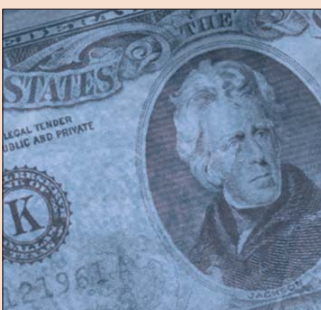
MPRC Mentor Workshop –

MPRC is offering a one-hour Mentor Workshop to eight students attending post-secondary schools in the greater Bangor area. The workshop will be held Friday, April 25th from 10:00 – 11:00AM at the New England School of Communications following the Professional Development seminar.

MPRC members have offered to provide constructive feedback regarding students' resumes, discuss career goals and advise students on ways to break into the business. Each member volunteer will be matched with a student to create an informational interview setting.

Four seats will be offered to New England School of Communications students and four to University of Maine at Orono students. Students will be screened by university faculty and will come prepared to ask questions and seek advice. We will reinforce that MPRC members are giving professional guidance, not offering employment.

Based on our pilot program, we will conduct a similar workshop for southern Maine area students. Stay tuned for the results!



The Language of Business: Classic Test Can Aid in Communication

BY GAIL WILKERSON



MPRC member Gail Wilkerson is the Chief Planning & Development Officer for Spring Harbor Hospital. She can be reached at gwilkerson@accentbusinessconsulting.com

One of my favorite cartoons about communication shows two people chatting and nodding in perfect agreement. Despite the seeming meeting of the minds, the balloons drawn above each of the two heads reveal the speakers are actually talking about two completely different things.

Given how prone all communication is to misinterpretation, each of us has to do more than listen and nod when others are trying to connect with us. This is true not only in our personal lives, but also in the work setting.

Whether you own a business or work for one, there are people you need to please, be they customers, investors, volunteers, managers, or colleagues. One way to ensure satisfying them is to understand both their needs and their way of relating to the world. With that knowledge, you can customize your message and the medium for delivering it.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator <<http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>> (MBTI) is a tool on which many businesses rely to help staff understand their own and others' preferences in tasks such as working in teams and making decisions. It is also widely used to help employees better identify — and accommodate — the communication styles of their co-workers and clients.

The MBTI identifies individuals as having one of 16 different personality "types," based upon a survey of their personal preferences. Each personality type has a preferred manner of communicating. There are no "right"

or "wrong" types; all 16 can be equally successful — albeit very different — communicators.

For instance, some MBTI types are more gregarious than others. Classic extroverts, these individuals draw their energy primarily from others. In the work setting, you might expect these types to be most comfortable communicating (and working) with others in groups.

On the other end of the MBTI preference spectrum are those who draw their energy and ideas largely from within. These folks tend to value sharing information in small groups, one on one, or even by more impersonal means, such as email.

Knowing the MBTI communication types of the people in your workplace can give you valuable insight into how best to relate to them — and they to you.

Besides using a formal tool, you can certainly ask people about their communication preferences, or you can use answers to the following questions as your guide:

Have others made their preferences known?

Do clients ask you to stay in touch by phone or email? Does your boss like to meet with you in person?

Do colleagues request written updates on projects? (Take your direction from these cues, but keep your eyes and ears open. A client of mine for many years said she preferred to communicate via email. Only recently did I discover she was a hunt-and-peck typist who, not surprisingly, embraced my suggestion for in-person meetings instead.)

How do others typically communicate with you?

Does your manager come to your work area to discuss projects, or does he send you assignments remotely? Do customers call you when they need help, or do they send email? Take note of these nuances and try responding accordingly.

Have your own preferences overshadowed those of others?

Do your company's investors receive email because they prefer it, or because it's the most efficient or convenient way for your business to share news? To be certain, conduct a regular survey of your audience. The results may surprise you.

Listen, observe, accommodate others' preferences, and try your best to push through potential differences and misunderstandings. It's sound advice, both on the job and off.

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I refer to, and I keep current on those photographers and their work through their blogs, so I can be confident in my referrals.”

Other PR efforts include a quarterly newsletter, holiday cards and delivering every client package in an LL Bean tote bag with the couple’s new monogram on it, and a handwritten thank-you note.

Recently, Depoy-Warren has also begun to explore other forms of social media to promote her business. “I’ve recently begun using Facebook as a publicity tool. I have my Facebook page, which is a personal page, but I keep it professional because I know potential clients can see it, and I’ve created a Facebook group for I Do Click’s couples and fans. I update it

with slideshows, news, links to blog entries and images, where I tag other Facebook users who are in the images.”

She has seen that since beginning her blog in 2006, the traffic has grown with her success. “In the five months of that year that the blog was online, I posted 33 times. The next year (2007), I made over 150 posts and already in the first two months of 2008, I’ve made about 40 plus posts,” she said. “The blog really has become the face of my business online. The blog becomes my best advertisement. It’s what catches people’s interest and then they can go to my Web site for more of the fine print, like my packages, official bio, testimonials and online booking.”

Samantha Depoy-Warren’s I Do Click blog can be found at <http://idoclick-weddingphotography.blogspot.com/> or it can be directly linked off I Do Click’s Web site at www.idoclick.com.



MISSION & PURPOSE

The Maine Public Relations Council is a professional association of Maine public relations practitioners. MPRC is dedicated to the professional development of its members and to a greater awareness of the role of public relations in the world today. MPRC’s membership includes individuals who have some current professional PR responsibility (or are retired PR professionals) and reside in or have business affairs in Maine; students pursuing careers related to PR or professionals interested in PR but working in another field may also apply for membership.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MEMBERSHIP

Please visit www.meprcouncil.org
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