

# Engaging and Using the Media to Promote Public Awareness of Biosafety

Adopted from Paul Mundy and Bob Huggan

# Mass media

- Radio, TV, newspapers, magazines
  - Used by organisations to communicate with their publics
- Reach much wider audience than your organisation could alone
- Little cost to your org
  - Cost of broadcasting programmes or producing and distributing newspapers and magazines borne by advertisers, readers, or perhaps governments

# Media relations

- Important to maintain good relationships with media
- Understand their needs
- Be able to provide:
  - Info they need
  - When they need it
  - In the form they need

# Media contacts

- Media approach your organisation for story
  - If something happens where your organisation has expertise (e.g, disease outbreak, food poisoning scare)
  - If crisis within organisation (media coverage not welcome!)
  - Responsibility of organisation president or public awareness officer to deal with media
- Your organisation approaches media with story
  - To strengthen public image
  - To announce release of new crop variety
  - To advise public of new technology or new policy

# Allies or adversaries?

- Often media are **allies**
  - Help get valuable information to the public, etc.
- But sometimes can be seen as **adversaries**
- Some news is “**bad**” news for the organization
- Journalists want success
  - Front-page stories, lead items on broadcasts
- So journalists often look out for scandals, conflict, controversies and failures...

# Afraid of negative coverage...

- Adverse media exposure can be very damaging
- So avoid contact with media?
  - “No news is good news”
  - But if you have a good story to tell, you have to start from scratch
- Media have enormous potential to carry your messages and garner public support
- Benefits of working with media outweigh risks
- Know how to deal with media in bad times as well as good

# Different media have different needs

- **News desks** in newspapers, radio and TV need fresh news each day
- **Magazines and documentary producers** need feature stories that go into a topic in depth
- **Local radio stations and newspapers** want stories that affect and interest their own listeners and readers
- **International media** seek stories that have a wider interest
- **Press services** (AFP, Reuters, AP) want high-interest stories
- **Freelance reporters** also want high-interest stories

# Ways to reach the media

- Many different ways
  - Provide info directly to media
  - Create newsworthy activities to attract coverage



# Journalists' background

- Most journalists are generalists
- Various backgrounds
  - English, political science, languages
- Some with degree in journalism
- Few with degrees in science

# What journalists need

- Need detailed explanations, a lot of help
- Ask “elementary” questions
- Basic story needs
  - ❑ Of interest to key readers or audiences
  - ❑ Exciting, provocative or new angle
  - ❑ Totally accurate, so it withstands editors’ scrutiny
  - ❑ Meet deadlines

# “New” information

- Not necessarily just completed
- Must be new to journalists (and editors when they go back to their newspapers, TV or radio stations)
- Desperate to get story on front page or lead item in broadcast

# Deadlines

- Journalists need information “yesterday”
- Assignment often for today’s paper or news broadcast
- When they call, don’t say “*Come back next week, when we’re not so busy*”

# What makes news?

- Elements of a successful news story
  - Timeliness
  - Relevance and interest to the readers or audience
  - Significance to the community, the country, the world
  - Unusual angle
  - Human interest
  - Interesting personality
  - Eye-catching photography or video footage
- Make sure stories have at least 2–3 of these elements

# Will my story appear?

- Journalists cannot guarantee a story will actually appear
  - Journalist writes story
  - ↓
  - Processed by editor, headline writer, layout
  - ↓
  - Change it, slant it, “kill” it

# News values

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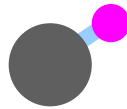
What makes things “news”?

# News values

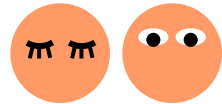
■ Timeliness



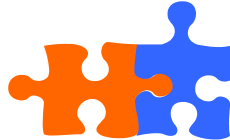
■ Proximity



■ Interest



■ Audience fit



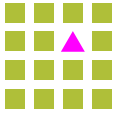
■ Impact



■ Conflict



■ Novelty



■ Prominence



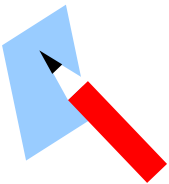
■ Human interest



■ Images



■ Editorial policy



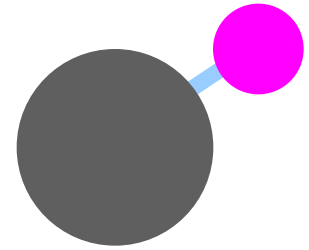


# Timeliness



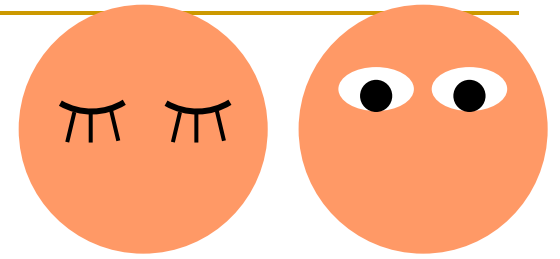
- Is the event new, or has it just happened?
- Is the information useful now, today or tomorrow?
- Can be seasonal (eg, in farming)
- Can your information be related to a current event (eg World Food Day)?

# Proximity



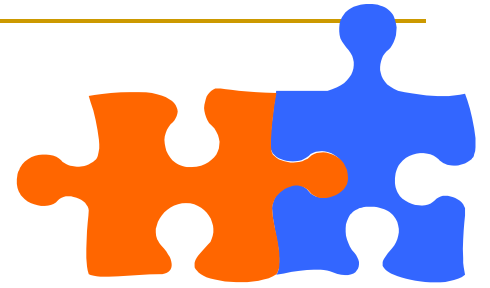
- Is the story near readers geographically or psychologically?
- Is it about local events, people, places?
- Can readers identify with local angle?

# Interest



- Is the story boring or interesting?
- Does it **say** anything?
- Does it make people **think**?
- Is it presented in an interesting way?
- Does it stop when it should, or does it go on and on and on...?
- Does it make someone **want** to read (or listen or watch) it to the end?

# Audience fit



- Different groups have different interests
- What interests **your** audience?

## Audiences

Older people

Farmers

Students

Young mothers

Adolescents

## Stories

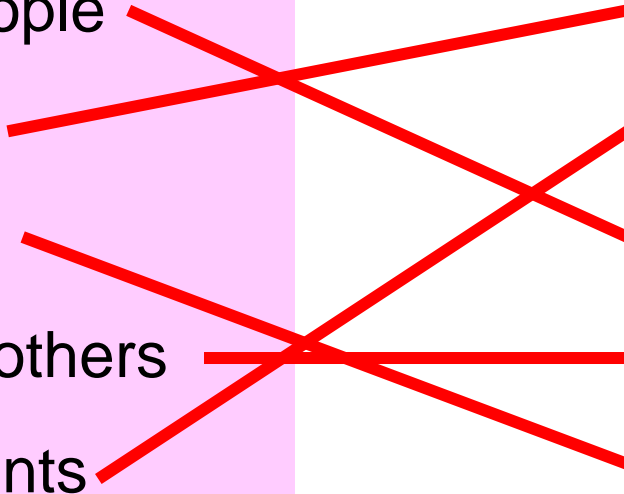
How to deal with pests

Music players

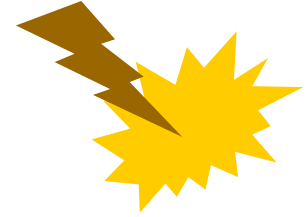
Part-time jobs

Healthy diets for children

Fast-track careers



# Impact



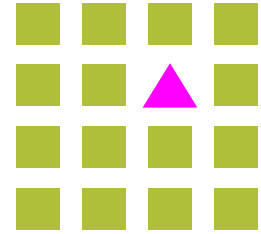
- What are the consequences of the news?
- How many people are affected? How big an area?
- How serious are the effects?
- Does the news have economic or social consequences for the audience?
- Is the impact direct and personal?

# Conflict



- Is there conflict involved?
  - People against people
  - People against nature
  - Disagreement, politics, crime, war
  - (in agriculture: farmers against weather, pests, diseases, government regulations)

# Novelty



- What is different about this story? What is out of the ordinary?
- What is unique, rare, strange, bigger or better?

# Prominence



- Who is involved in the news?
- Fame, notoriety
- High position
- Major achievement

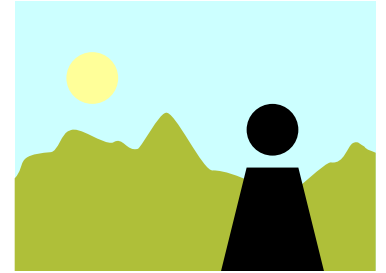


# Human interest



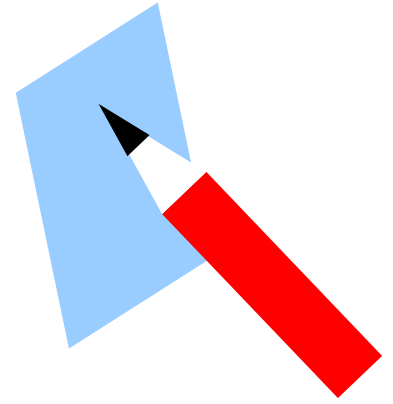
- Adventure
- Age
- Animals
- Children
- Food
- Health/illness
- Humour
- Progress
- Sex
- Suspense
- Sympathy
- Tragedy
- Etc.

# Images



- Good photography makes it more likely the editor will use the story
- People look at pictures first, then read text
- Use eye-catching photos or video footage
- Only use excellent photos or video
- Develop a library of suitable photos and video

# Editorial policy



- What does the editor want?
  - ❑ Favourite topics?
  - ❑ Specific angle (eg, environment, gender, sustainability, climate)
  - ❑ Ongoing campaign or series?
  - ❑ Type and length of story required
  - ❑ Editorial guidelines

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# Press releases

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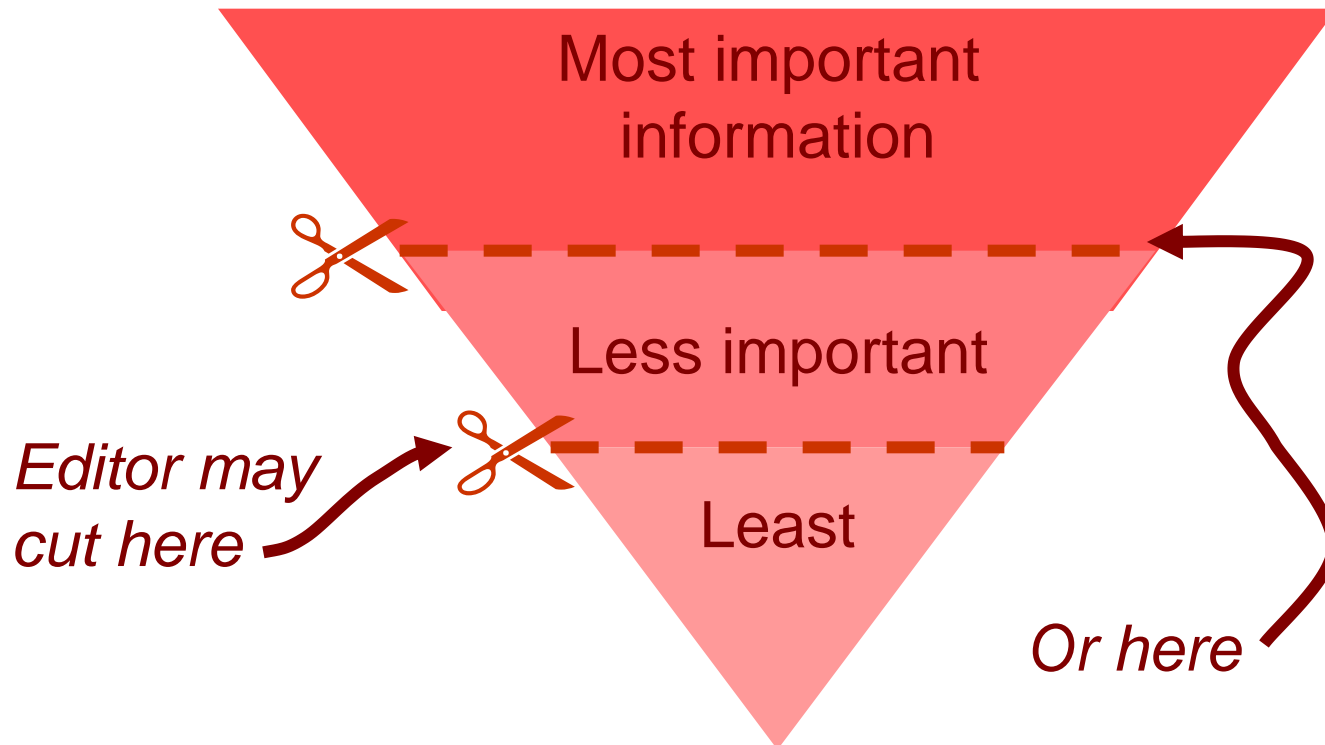
# Press releases/news releases

- Short, 1–2 pages
- Sent to media – wire services, daily newspapers, magazines, radio or TV stations
- Uses:
  - Report on recent activity
  - Announce future event
  - Announce something new in organisation that may interest people and influence them

# Press releases/news releases

- Provide basic facts –who, what, when, where, why, and how
- Brief, accurate
  - Editors and reporters don't want to dig for information
- Should read like newspaper story
  - Most important info in the paragraph 1
  - Supporting details later
- Editors cut bottom of story to make it fit space available, so important info at end may disappear
- Don't start with Director's name
  - Most editors will change this
  - Changes increase risk of errors

# Inverted pyramid



# The headline

- Title of story
- Attracts editors' and readers' attention
- Makes it easy to determine content
- Styles:
  - Informational
    - *More money to promote good nutrition*
  - Teasing
    - *Do St Kittians have the Caribbean's best diet?*
  - Cute
    - *Prime Minister goes bananas*



# The lead

- First 1-2 sentences of story
- Sums up the story
- Short, but not too short
- Tells you what story covers, what reader will find in it
- **News stories:** informational leads
  - **5 Ws & H:** who, what, where, when, why, how?
- **Feature stories:** teasing leads

# The lead

- **News stories:** informational leads
  - **5 Ws & H:** who, what, where, when, why, how?
- **Feature stories:** teasing leads

I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are **What** and **Why** and **When**  
And **How** and **Where** and **Who**.

Rudyard Kipling

# The lead

## ■ Old style

- ❑ *At a national conference on nutrition today, the Minister for Health, Christine Odoa, announced that the budget for consumer education would be increased this year by 30 percent.*

## ■ News up front

- ❑ *There will be 30 percent more money to promote healthy eating next year, said Christine Ondo, Minister of Health, at a national conference on nutrition today. The ministry will encourage people to eat local fruits and vegetables.*

# The lead

What

*There will be 30 percent more money to promote healthy eating next year, said*

Who

*Christine Ondo, Minister of Health, at a*

Where

*national conference on nutrition*

When

*today. The*

Why/how

*ministry will encourage people to eat local fruits and vegetables.*

# Press releases/news releases

- Avoid scientific or technical jargon
  - Use language understandable by 14-year-old
  - Rewrite jargon in plain language, then get it approved by scientists
- Technical terms
  - *Atherosclerosis*      *HDL, LDL, IDL, triglycerides*
  - *Bio-availability*      *Body mass index*
  - Well known to nutritionists but not to media editor or audience

# Press releases/news releases (5)

- Standard identity paragraph
  - Describes your organisation and what it does
  - Include in every press release

# Press releases: Logistics

- Double-space hard-copies
- Page 1
  - Print on your organisation's letterhead
  - Include org name, mailing address, tel. no., area code, name of contact person
  - *"For immediate release" or "For use after November 7<sup>th</sup> 2012"*
- If more than 1 page
  - - *more* - at bottom of page 1
  - Put organisation name or subject of release at the top of page 2
  - - *end* - at bottom of page 2
- If attach photos, provide captions

# Press releases: Softcopies

- Ask media contacts
  - How they want to get releases: email, hardcopy, fax...
  - What is best is email address
- Put on website
- Photos
  - Provide at high enough resolution for print use (3 megapixels)



# Three sentences

## ■ Problem

- ❑ Farmers in Zimbabwe find it difficult to sell goats, so they are not interested in raising them

## ■ Solution

- ❑ The project has introduced an auction system that gives farmers a good price for their animals

## ■ Results

- ❑ As a result, farmers in 10 villages are now investing in goat raising

# Your turn!

- In pairs, **interview** your neighbour about his/her topic
- **Write** 3 sentences that tell his/her story
- **Report** back to us