

Public Affairs

THE ACADEMY CONDUCTS an extensive public affairs program, including media relations, public relations, and conference support. The public affairs staff offers support to other departments by developing and managing media and image campaigns, media training, speechwriting, and conference program logistics.

Media Relations

Media relations is the craft of matching information to the right media outlets, in the right package, at the right time, so that the media outlet will consider it newsworthy. A media relations program is generally divided into three parts:

- 1 Proactive campaigns
- 2 Reactive programs
- 3 Relationship programs

PROACTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS

Proactive media relations involves the creation of specific campaigns to generate coverage. The three cardinal principles of proactive campaigns are:

- ▶ **Principle 1: Establish newsworthiness.** The job of a media outlet is to deliver to its readers the information it promised to deliver to them. The media are audience-driven, audience-centered and audience-sensitive. Therefore, a story is newsworthy as defined by the news outlet (not the news source). Campaigns must be designed so that the information can be presented per the needs of the media outlets' markets.
- ▶ **Principle 2: Packaging.** Targeting journalists with a sharp, attention-getting message focused on the outlet's audience is the key to getting the media's attention. The information must be easily accessible (both technically and intellectually).
- ▶ **Principle 3: Timing.** The campaign needs to be

planned and timed to match the prevailing news cycles of the issue.

REACTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS

The Academy has established itself as a reliable news source to numerous media outlets, particularly in the trade press. In order to be an effective news source, it is important that it is constantly prepared to respond to journalists' inquiries. In all cases, giving a reporter a good answer quickly is far better than giving him or her a complete, precise answer too late.

The key principles of reactive media relations are:

- 1 Respond quickly. Because most journalists are under tight deadlines, it is critical that responses to inquiries be prompt.
- 2 Be honest. If you can answer their questions, then do it quickly. If you can't, tell them right away.

MEDIA RELATIONS ASSETS

The Academy's media relations program capitalizes on the Academy's assets and available resources, which include:

- ▶ Credibility as a source of independent and objective policy analysis
- ▶ Nonpartisan reputation
- ▶ Broad expertise and superior technical knowledge and skills
- ▶ Information gathering and dissemination capabilities

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

The Academy employs numerous tools to provide media outlets with information of value to their audiences. Some of the tools used to reach out to the media include:

- ▶ Media advisories
- ▶ News releases
- ▶ News conferences
- ▶ Briefings

- ▶ Op eds, letters to the editor
- ▶ Articles
- ▶ Interviews

ACADEMY MEDIA RELATIONS PROCEDURES

The Academy is regularly called on by the media to be an expert resource on actuarial issues. In order to be responsive to the media and to ensure that the inquiries are handled in a professional manner, the Academy has instituted a standard procedure to manage media inquiries.

This process does not follow the same steps as found in the “Public Statement” procedures (found in the Academy Yearbook) because of the short turnaround times required by reporters’ deadlines. The procedure also serves as a “gatekeeper” function to protect the Academy and its spokespersons.

RESPONDING TO MEDIA INQUIRIES

- 1** Inquiries for comment by an Academy representative should be directed to a member of the Academy’s media relations staff. Each inquiry is logged for tracking purposes.
- 2** Media relations staff will follow up with the reporter for further information, such as:
 - A.** Story deadline
 - B.** Interview topic and slant.
 - C.** Background on the media outlet.
 - D.** If the inquiry is not appropriate or relevant, the reporter is redirected to a better source.
- 3** Staff will then work with the appropriate volunteer(s) to identify a spokesperson and arrange an interview, and provide the spokesperson with the necessary background on the media outlet and the issue.
- 4** Staff may contact the spokesperson after the interview for a debriefing and determine if follow up is needed.
- 5** All media inquiries are tracked and included in a monthly report that is distributed to Academy leadership. Significant media placements are reported on in the Academy’s newsletter Actuarial Update.
- 6** If a spokesperson is misquoted or Academy material is used inappropriately, staff will help develop a response, including a letter to the editor or to a reporter to set the record straight.

MEDIA RELATIONS “SENSITIVITIES”

When being interviewed as an Academy spokesperson there are a number of important sensitivities to always keep in mind.

- 1** **MAINTAIN AN ACTUARIAL FOCUS.** Many of the issues the Academy comments on are multi-dimensional, which opens the door to questions beyond the actuarial domain. For example, changes in a social insurance program may have a significant impact on government budgets, the economy, the stock market, etc. Academy spokespersons should stick to actuarial issues and not be lured into responding to questions on non-actuarial subjects.
- 2** **THE ACADEMY IS NOT A TRADE OR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION.** Spokespersons should be careful not to present the position of a specific industry, segment of an industry, or a company. The spokesperson should base his or her answers on Academy public statements and work products only. It is important to identify the Academy as a “non-partisan professional association.”
- 3** **NON-PARTISAN.** Be careful not to appear to be endorsing a particular political party or candidate, especially during the campaign season. Stay away from referring to proposals as “Democratic” or “Republican,” using the names of the proposals instead.
- 4** **LITIGATION.** As a general rule the Academy will not comment on situations involving litigation because of the danger of affecting the litigation inappropriately. In those rare cases where a spokesperson may be asked to talk to a reporter about a case, it will be only to explain an actuarial term, process, concept, or business practice. Any questions specific to the case should not be addressed by the spokesperson in any way.

OFFICIAL ACADEMY SPOKESPERSON PROGRAM

In order to improve the Academy’s reactive media relations capabilities, each practice council designates two to six members who can serve as official Academy spokespersons to respond to calls from the media.

Spokespersons are given appropriate media training to learn interview techniques and message point development for print, radio, and television. The Academy’s

communications staff also works closely with each spokesperson in fielding calls, scheduling interviews, and writing background and follow-up materials.

For further information, contact Andrew Simonelli, assistant director for media relations, at 202-223-8196.