

glaad



gay & lesbian alliance
against defamation

MEDIA ESSENTIALS

TRAINING MANUAL



GLAAD Media Essentials, Training Manual

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I. Introduction

Our world is dominated by the news media. Politicians flood the airwaves with sound bites, talking heads on cable news shows shape public opinion even when they distort the facts and bloggers shine a spotlight on stories that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. In this media-rich environment, advocacy has changed. Organizations and advocates working toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality need to be smart and strategic about working with the media in order to move public opinion. We hope that this guidebook will provide you with the tools to develop and strengthen your media work, no matter how much or how little experience you've had with the media in the past.

GLAAD AND OUR MISSION

At the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (glaad), we are in the business of changing people's hearts and minds through the media. We know that what people watch on TV or read online shapes how they view and treat the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people around them. And we have a responsibility to make sure those media representations foster awareness, understanding and respect.

Formed in 1985 to combat the defamatory coverage of the AIDS crisis in the New York Post and other media outlets, glaad has grown into a national organization. We work with news, entertainment and people of color media on national, state and local levels to inform and educate media professionals and to empower individuals and organizations to use media to move public opinion about the LGBT community. Our mission: GLAAD is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

THE PURPOSE OF MEDIA ESSENTIALS

Media Essentials is designed to provide individuals and organizations the tools necessary to meet their communications goals through effective media work.

Media Essentials will help you:

- Learn about media opportunities you or your organization can use to expand your base and get your message to your target audience
- Create a communications plan you can use to move public opinion about your issues
- Develop a media vocabulary so you can speak clearly and effectively with journalists
- Build relationships with media professionals
- Become a resource for media outlets
- Learn simple, consistent ways to develop talking points you can shape for different media outlets
- Learn how to write press releases, op-eds, letters to the editor and other kinds of communication with the media
- Get comfortable with print, television and radio interviews

II. The Media: An Overview

[media center](#) > [GLAAD media essentials](#) > the media: an overview

Whether you pick up the morning newspaper every day, watch the evening news when you get home from work or scan blogs to get a scoop on a breaking story, the news probably figures into your daily life, as it does the lives of most Americans. Research by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press indicates that 57% of Americans regularly follow local news and 55% regularly follow national news.

In this chapter, we'll take a look at different media formats and give you some general guidelines for tailoring your media strategy to each type of outlet.

THE CURRENT MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Over the past 30 years, mass media have changed dramatically. Improvements in technology, mergers between big media companies, changes in consumer needs and an explosion of new media platforms have all played a part in this evolution.

Now you can flip back and forth between several 24-hour cable news channels, download numerous news radio programs onto your mp3 player or browse 50 blogs in 15 minutes with a news aggregator. However, just because there are more news outlets doesn't mean there are more stories. The Project for Excellence in Journalism at Columbia University shows that the number of news stories has actually dropped in recent years, despite the amount of news that's out there.

One reason for this is that a few large corporations own many major news outlets and recycle the same material for different formats. As a result, fewer reporters cover fewer stories, which are then reformatted over and over again for TV, print and the web. Many of the big media corporations have distinctive voices that are consistent across the outlets each corporation operates. For example, the ideology of the New York Post and Fox News Channel—both part of Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp—is very similar. The change in the business end of media is just one of many factors that have altered the way news is reported. The rapid pace of 24-hour news often prevents reporters from including critical, in-depth analysis of a story before it is published or broadcast. On top of this, budgets have been slashed, staff sizes have been reduced and there is more pressure to grab the attention of an easily distracted audience.

News outlets have also become increasingly nervous about taking risks and often rely on coverage that steers clear of potential political controversy. When they do tackle politics, it's often just to provide a platform for pundits to argue their views, which grabs the audience's attention without requiring the news outlet to evaluate the truth and accuracy of those pundits' claims. In a significant portion of today's news reporting, the principles of objectivity and journalistic inquiry are often overshadowed and overlooked in favor of creating misguided notions of "balance"—often by pitting an LGBT civil rights advocate against a vehemently anti-gay talking head. Instead of provoking thoughtful discussion of issues, many news programs turn to talking heads whom they know will produce predictably anti-gay soundbites so that outlets won't be accused of so-called "liberal media bias."

As these changes have occurred, organizations that exist to promote anti-LGBT prejudice and discrimination have sought to exploit this dynamic. Groups like Family Research Council, Focus on the Family and Traditional Values Coalition deceptively position themselves as "experts" on LGBT issues and practice repetition of Orwellian catchphrases like "family values" and "defining marriage" to the point where this kind of misleading jargon is often parroted uncritically by reporters.

The anti-gay industry has a lot of money and support, especially from powerful right-wing think tanks and strategy groups. Even so, public opinion has shifted in favor of protecting LGBT Americans and their families.

The best way to combat the anti-gay industry in the current media environment is to share our stories. Once you understand the current media landscape, you can make the most of media opportunities that will help you mobilize support and change hearts and minds about LGBT issues.

TERMS TO KNOW

Blogosphere

The network of blogs on the Internet. Blogs often link to one another, creating a virtual community through which news and information is passed along and repeated.

Blogs

“Web logs.” Blogs are websites made up of journal-style entries, links to news and other information and multimedia content. Blogs have emerged as a powerful force in the media in recent years and their accessibility and ease of use have empowered people all over the country to participate in media conversations on a variety of issues.

Broadcast Network

National free television broadcast television network. The five broadcast networks are ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox and The CW. Networks also have local station affiliates that are usually independently owned and operated.

National Syndicate

A company that owns local publications throughout the country that feature similar content. Many alternative press publications are owned by national syndicates that both control the editorial voice of each publication and also provide support in marketing, advertising and management.

News Aggregator

A webpage or program that assembles news and information customized by the user. A news aggregator collects the most recent headlines from news websites and the most recent postings for blogs and assembles them in one place for readers to quickly scan.

News Cycle

The reporting cycle for a media outlet, which helps inform pitching strategies. News cycles are determined by the frequency that the outlet is published. Daily newspapers work on strict news cycles with tight deadlines for submission and printing, a key to the timing of pitches. Conversely, blog entries can be posted anytime.

Op-ed

Short for “opposite editorial.” Op-eds are traditionally printed on the page facing the editorial page of a newspaper. Op-eds allow journalists, community members and public figures to make a persuasive statement about an issue. They can be a tremendous resource for advocates of LGBT equality.

Podcast

An audio file that can be listened to on a computer or downloaded directly to a portable mp3 player. Podcasts can be produced by anyone with access to basic recording equipment and software and posted on a news site, radio station website or blog.

Public Relations Wire Service

A service that distributes press releases and photographs to media outlets across the country.

Pundit

A critic, analyst or source of opinion about a particular issue, usually related to politics or social sciences. Television pundits are sometimes referred to as “talking heads.”

Reporting Beat

A subject area covered by a newspaper or other print outlet. Beats include politics, business, arts and culture, and sports, to name a few. When contacting a media outlet, make sure you’re familiar with its beats and the reporters covering those beats so you’re sure you’re speaking to the right person.

RSS Feed

‘Really simple syndication’ feed. An RSS feed is a way of collecting headlines and blog posts into one place using a news aggregator. When you want to add a news outlet or blog to your aggregator, simply click on the ‘RSS feed’ button.

Station Affiliates

Local television stations that are connected to a national network. Station affiliates create their own news broadcasts that are aired throughout the day, and may carry national newscasts from the network.

Social Networking Site

Websites like MySpace, Friendster, Connexion and Facebook that allow individuals and organizations to create online profiles and build virtual communities. Social networking sites have emerged as an opportunity for mobilizing young people.

Sound Bite

Short, catchy quote between five and 15 seconds long that sums up an issue in a memorable way. Sound bites are the favored way that politicians, pundits and advocates communicate with media audiences.

Syndication Service

Syndication services distribute standardized print and broadcast material to media outlets nationwide.

Target Demographic

The target audience for advertisers. For instance, magazines create content that appeals to the target demographic of the advertisers who support their publication.

Web Magazine

An online magazine run like a traditional print outlet, with editorial staff, writers and paid advertisers. Online magazines like Slate or Salon are often connected to traditional media outlets but have unique content that is available exclusively online.

Wire Services

A wire service distributes breaking news, human interest stories and columns by well-known reporters to press outlets throughout the country. Wire services like the Associated Press and Reuters are centralized journalist collectives that produce content that is delivered to print, television, radio and online outlets.

THE MEDIA AS A BUSINESS

It’s important to remember that most media outlets are businesses. Many activists are skeptical of the media

for this very reason, since they assume purely financial interests drive these outlets.

However, people create the news, and most have a strong sense of journalistic integrity and a commitment to serving their readers by keeping them informed and engaged.

You'll have a better chance of reaching your goals if you keep the business interests of a media outlet in mind when contacting it. When crafting your message, think about what the audience wants and what "sells." Present issues and pitch story ideas that are compelling and newsworthy.

If you can work your pitch to fit a certain news angle, connect a story idea with news splashed across the front pages or tailor a feature proposal to fit the style of a specific magazine, you can meet both the messaging needs of your organization and the business needs of the media outlet. More information on making pitches can be found in Chapter IV.

The most important thing to remember is that you're also a media consumer and you, too, have a stake in how the media cover your issues.

PRINT MEDIA

Print media outlets function as an important resource for organizations and advocates across the country. Pew Research indicates that 40% of Americans pick up a newspaper on a given day. Since newspapers have a strict editorial process that broadcast and Internet outlets do not, newspapers and magazines tend to be more authoritative and reliable than other forms of media. They provide news and analysis that shapes how audiences feel, think and vote. Broadly speaking, there are four categories of print media:

National News: National newspapers have a broad national focus in their reporting.

- Cover national, international and local political and social issues
- Include unique sections on sports, health, business, arts and culture, etc.
- Feature prominent writers on their opinion pages
- Post higher circulation numbers than other print outlets
- Writing and reporting are done in-house by a staff of reporters and editors
- May use wire services for international coverage and some national stories
- Include prominent regional newspapers that have national distribution, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*

Regional News: Regional newspapers serve major metropolitan areas throughout the United States.

- Cover national and local political and social issues, with less emphasis on international news
- Feature city and state government, regional community issues and local human interest stories
- In-depth stories or sections on specialized subject areas like arts or business only appear once or twice a week
- Writing and reporting is mostly done in house by a staff of reporters and editors
- Sometimes rely on wire services for major national stories and any international coverage

Local News: Local or city newspapers tend to focus primarily on events occurring with the immediate vicinity of a paper's distribution.

- Cover news for a specific neighborhood in a larger city or a smaller suburban or rural community
- Focus on issues that affect the immediate geographical region—local elected officials, schools and community resources, planning and ordinances, community events and culture
- May be published daily, but more likely weekly or biweekly
- Writing and reporting is usually done by a small staff of full-time and freelance reporters
- More likely to draw from press releases and submitted articles than larger news outlets
- National or international news mostly drawn from wire services

Community Newspapers: Community papers are local publications that target specific populations, such as people of color, students, senior citizens or the LGBT community.

- Vary widely in terms of infrastructure, circulation and publication schedules
- Include a mix of news and listings of social, cultural and commercial opportunities
- Staff resources vary—some have full-time editorial and writing staff, while others are run by volunteers and depend on freelancers and community members for content

Alternative Press: Local publications tied to metropolitan areas that have an arts, culture or community slant.

- Provide listings for concerts, nightlife, restaurants, cultural opportunities and local points of interest
- May include feature reviews, editorials and feature articles
- Often have an irreverent approach that distinguishes them from mainstream publications
- More likely to cover issues or stories that might be left out of other news outlets
- Usually distributed free of charge
- Some are owned by national syndicates, but many are produced independently on the local level
- Examples include *The Village Voice* and *LA Weekly*

Magazines: Magazines include both general interest national news magazines and more specialized publications targeting specific audiences.

- Vary widely in area of focus, circulation and audience
- Most mainstream magazines are distributed nationally and built around news, in-depth feature articles, reviews and commentary
- Financial support comes from advertisers, leading publications to tailor their subject matter to reach the advertiser's target demographic
- Most magazines are published biweekly or monthly and tend to have a six- to eight-month lead time

- for writing articles, particularly for longer features
- Some examples include *Time*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Jet*, *Rolling Stone*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Advocate* and *The Economist*, as well as newspaper inserts such as *Parade* or *The New York Times Magazine*

WIRE SERVICES

Wire services, or news agencies, supply most of the news that appears in media outlets. Wire services differ from syndication services, which distribute op-ed articles, feature stories and entertainment content, in that wire services primarily deliver “hard” news.

Two major wire services are the Associated Press and Reuters. The Associated Press is a journalist collective that shares hard news stories and photographs with over 1,700 U.S. newspapers and 5,000 radio and TV outlets. Reuters is a paid service that supplies outlets with news and financial market data from around the world. Additionally, public relations wire services distribute press releases from PR firms, corporations, non-profits and numerous other sources, while Getty Images and WireImage distribute photographs.

Because they are a primary source of content for many newspapers, wire services are powerful in shaping the way LGBT issues are covered. Wire services place stories in many outlets, and their strict standards for reporting and terminology result in generally fair, accurate and inclusive coverage of LGBT issues.

Particularly in areas of the country where coverage of LGBT issues is inconsistent, you have a better chance of getting fair coverage by pitching your story to the Associated Press than you do by pitching to a local paper.

BROADCAST MEDIA

Television remains the most popular outlet for news. Television news—as broadcast on the 24-hour cable stations, national networks and station affiliates across the country—allows you to reach the widest audience possible. Generally speaking, television news breaks down into three categories:

National Cable News Networks: Cable news networks include: CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, CNBC and CNN Headline News.

- Feature both traditional news reporting and talk shows starring on-air personalities with unique journalistic approaches
- Breaking news is often given in-depth coverage as it happens, with stories updated regularly throughout the day
- Include international, national and regional stories on politics, business, health and culture, as well as human interest stories

National Network News Broadcasts: The morning, evening and overnight national news broadcasts on ABC, NBC and CBS.

- Provide coverage of major national and international stories on politics, business, health and

culture, as well as human interest stories

- Anchored by prominent TV news journalists
- Supplemented by news magazine programs like *Dateline* or *20/20*, which provide in-depth coverage of an issue related to recent headline news
- According to Pew, 28% of Americans regularly watch the nightly network news broadcasts

Local News Broadcasts: Local morning, afternoon and evening newscasts on local ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, The CW and independently-owned stations.

- Include a mix of local, national, international and regional news
- Stronger emphasis on human interest and story-driven pieces
- Feature segments on weather, traffic, regional events, movie reviews and consumer alerts
- Occur throughout the day, notably in the morning and before and after prime time programming
- Most are independently owned and operated, but some are owned by the national networks
- Most content is produced in-house, though some segments are syndicated through the national networks

PUBLIC ACCESS

Public Access provides a venue for community groups to be seen and heard. Public access has featured some of the very first television shows with an LGBT focus, notably *Gay USA*, a news hour with journalist Ann Northrop at Manhattan Neighborhood Network, and *Coming Out*, hosted by Harvey Milk in San Francisco.

Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) access television protects the right of free speech and values the diversity of local constituents. In exchange for the use of public airwaves, communities are given the ability to make their own media. PEG access channels are provided by cable operators, along with airtime, training, services, facilities and equipment from a local cable channel. Members of the public can produce their own shows and televise them to a mass audience. Services available at public access organizations are low cost or free of charge, with an inclusive, content neutral perspective, so that any member of a community may take advantage of public access.

Any resident of your community over 18 years old may apply. Channel time is available on a first-come, first-serve basis, so apply at least two weeks in advance of your requested date. You will need to submit an application form and a waiver acknowledging that your material is subject to review, as well as a program proposal stating what you would like to do. If the program contains potentially objectionable content (such as profanity, nudity, sexual activity or extreme violence), notice should be given to the management, as it may affect your time slot.

Get in touch with your local Public Access channel to learn specifics on scheduling and how programs are timed. For example, a 30-minute program may only be 29 minutes, and a 60-minute program may actually be 59 minutes in length. You might also be interested in producing a longer series of programs, such as a 13-week segment, so ask about contracts available in the near future.

THE INTERNET

According to Pew, nearly one in three people regularly get their news online, whether it's from the website for a newspaper or cable news network, or a new media outlet like a blog or a web magazine. Thanks to the speed of online communications, media can spread news faster than ever. In addition, online communities have formed that rapidly circulate news that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Both conservative and progressive groups have used the power of the Internet to communicate their messages, energize their base and create web campaigns for political and social causes.

Some of the most popular formats include:

Websites for Existing News Outlets: The online counterparts for print and television news outlets.

- Reformat the content featured in the print or broadcast version of a news outlet
- Usually free of charge, with some sites requiring subscription fees for access to archives or online-only content
- Pew indicates that 32% of online consumers regularly visit the websites of television outlets including CNN.com, MSNBC.com and ABC.com, while 29% of online consumers regularly visit the websites of print outlets

Online Portal News Sites: Online-only web portals that gather news and information from other sources.

- Pull together news and content drawn from other news outlets
- Include original content specific to the online-only portal
- Yahoo is one of the most used sites for online news consumers, while Google and AOL also hold a significant share of online news consumers

Websites for LGBT/Progressive Organizations: Websites for LGBT and progressive organizations, both on the national and statewide levels.

- National organizations, such as GLAAD, the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and statewide organizations, including Equal Rights Washington, MassEquality and Equality South Carolina, all have information and resources on their websites
- Provide opportunities for information sharing and coalition building for growing and established organizations
- Often include tool kits, resources and comments pages where individuals and organizations can learn about specific aspects of the movement and connect with one another
- Non-LGBT media-focused organizations such as the SPIN Project, Media Matters for America and The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press also have resources and information about media and LGBT and other progressive issues

Blogs: Weblogs, or blogs, are journal-style websites maintained by individuals or organizations on a

particular subject.

- Maintained by individuals or groups and arranged around a particular theme, whether the experiences of the blogger(s) or about a particular set of issues
- Include journal-style entries, multimedia files and reader comments
- Have become a key site of mobilization around politics and media
- 4% of the total U.S. population get their news from blogs
- A major destination for young people between the ages of 18-24

Online-Only Media Outlets: Online magazines and newspapers and blog-style webzines run like traditional media outlets.

- All content is available online only, though some are affiliated with traditional media outlets
- Readership is steadily growing, though currently only 3% of the public read online-only news sites
- Includes Slate and Salon

Social Networking Sites: Websites through which individuals can post information about themselves and their organizations and create virtual connections to other individuals and groups.

- Enable individuals or groups to create and maintain online profiles simply and efficiently
- Create opportunities for a web presence in the absence of a fully-developed organizational website
- Allow for the creation of a simple, user-friendly public face for an event or campaign
- Function as a relatively untapped resource for activists, but have been used by youth in particular to mobilize on certain issues
- Includes Connexion, Facebook, Friendster and MySpace

BLOGGING

Weblogs, or blogs for short, have become an important part of the new media landscape. The most recent Pew survey indicated that 39% of adult American Internet users regularly read blogs, even though only a small portion use blogs to read and discuss the news.

Any individual or group can create and maintain a blog. A blog is like an online journal, with entries about a particular theme, concept or subject area of interest posted on a regular basis. Some blogs work like traditional media outlets, with a publisher, paid staff and sponsoring advertisers. Some people create blogs to establish an online identity that can then be used to seek out publishing opportunities or television appearances. For many, though, blogs are a purely personal enterprise, whether a public online journal or a forum to encourage discussion about a particular issue or subject.

Blogs include text, images and links to other media. Bloggers often get stories to their audiences more quickly than traditional news outlets because they aren't required to go through style edits or fact checking to publish entries, though many blogs still do. Blogs are often more personal and subjective than other kinds of media outlets, since they don't have to follow expectations for journalistic objectivity.

The most successful blogs have highly personal voices. Even blogs maintained by a group of contributors, like the Huffington Post or Wonkette, feature the very distinct perspectives of the individual writers. As a result, personality cults have sprung up around certain bloggers, leading to book deals, television appearances and other opportunities that have expanded their audience dramatically.

Blogs often pick up stories neglected by the mainstream press and build up momentum around them. Since blogs are participatory and many bloggers pass content along to each other, certain news stories have gained more attention than they otherwise would have because of the blogosphere.

Blogs have also changed the way people think about content creators. Because blogging is so accessible, anybody with a computer and Internet connection can start one. Some of the most widely read bloggers are people who might not have garnered the same audience had they written for traditional media outlets. Statistics from Pew show that the blogging population is racially diverse and evenly split between men and women. Blogs are maintained by people from all walks of life, from religious leaders to celebrities, politicians to stay-at-home parents. As a result of their unique position in the media landscape, blogs continue to evolve in their role as outlets breaking and shaping news stories.

RADIO

Radio has become a flashpoint for discussions of LGBT issues. Though progressives have increased their presence on the airwaves, right-wing conservatives still boast huge audiences on talk radio and FM morning drive-time shows continue to broadcast anti-gay jokes by shock jocks who present themselves as equal opportunity offenders.

News Radio: Radio programs that feature news headlines, weather, traffic and coverage of related issues.

- Many are connected to other news outlets, such as national news networks or local broadcasting affiliates
- National and local news radio stations and programs have smaller audiences than they did in the 1990s, but Pew indicates that 36% of Americans listen to radio news on any given day
- National Public Radio's regular audience has increased significantly since the mid-1990s, with 17% of radio listeners tuning in regularly
- Subscription satellite radio services, such as Sirius and XM, are still building audiences, but Pew reports that 10% of regular radio listeners have subscriptions

Conservative Talk Radio: Conservatives have strengthened their voice in the media through the use of call-in talk shows.

- Conservative hosts have a much stronger presence on radio markets than progressive hosts
- Most listeners identify themselves as politically independent, while most talk show hosts identify themselves as politically conservative
- May provide challenges to LGBT and progressive guests, since hosts are often aggressive or hostile toward those who support LGBT equality
- Pew research indicates that 20% of radio listeners regularly listen to call-in programs

- Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Michael Savage and Glenn Beck are the most popular conservative talk radio hosts

Progressive Talk Radio: Largely in response to conservative talk radio, progressives have started to make inroads on the airwaves.

- Air America Radio, a progressive talk radio network, offers a slate of progressive opinion and call-in shows
- National Public Radio's (NPR) expanding popularity has strengthened the presence of progressive viewpoints on radio call-in programs
- Satellite radio programs feature progressive hosts and programs, some with an exclusively LGBT focus

Entertainment Radio: Most FM stations host morning and evening drive-time programs.

- Usually include sketches, humor pieces, entertainment coverage, news bites and discussions with callers
- Often hosted by "shock jocks" who use over-the-top or offensive humor that sometimes includes anti-LGBT jokes
- Prepared material, such as parody songs or routines, originates from morning show prep services, which syndicate comedy sketches and other humor content to radio stations all over the country

HOW TO CONTACT MEDIA OUTLETS

Whenever you reach out to a media outlet, it's important to keep certain general principles in mind when you're pitching a story, working to get coverage of an event or campaign or responding to defamatory coverage. Here are some tips to help you tailor your plans to different kinds of media platforms.

NEWS AGGREGATORS AND RSS FEEDS

You can scan 50 blogs in 15 minutes with your own personalized website, called an aggregator, which saves you time by gathering news from numerous sources and delivering it directly to you. An aggregator assembles all of the new headlines from your favorite news websites and blogs and organizes them in an easy to read format. You can either use a website like Google or Yahoo to create your own personal website, or gather news with programs like NetNewsWire, which organize content in an easy-to-read format.

To get started, just follow the instructions on the Google or Yahoo pages, which walk you through the process of creating an aggregator. In most cases, it's just a matter of clicking on the orange "RSS Feed" ("Really Simple Syndication") button on the websites that you like. If that doesn't work, you can usually search by web address and click "add" to subscribe. Subscribe to multiple feeds (CNN, *The New York Times*, blogs, podcasts, etc.), and the aggregator will display all the newest headlines on a single screen, like a personal newspaper. Not all websites currently provide RSS feeds, but aggregators are growing rapidly in popularity and most major news sources now provide RSS.

Aggregator features are built into search engines (such as Yahoo and Google), web browsers, email programs (like Mozilla's Thunderbird) and Apple iTunes (podcast aggregator). The aggregator you choose to use may depend on how many computers you use, how many feeds you read and how you'd like to read the

feeds. Often people find it convenient to read RSS feeds in a program they are already using, like Yahoo or Microsoft Outlook. Other aggregators show new items as a news ticker on their desktop. Most are free to use and are available for download or use online.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Before you contact any media outlet, make sure you know in advance with whom you need to speak. Before you make the first call, you must be familiar with their coverage, writers and, most importantly, their audience. If you're not paying attention to the media and the audience the media reach, you're missing key points of connection with potential supporters.

Thanks to the simplicity of the search engines that can be used for print, television and sometimes radio outlets, preliminary research is easy to conduct.

Print

Most print outlets have their own searchable websites, and search engines like Google and Yahoo allow users to check out past coverage of specific issues in selected outlets. You can get a sense of which editors and reporters have covered your issues in the past and use that information when making contact with individual outlets.

Television

It is more difficult to research past television coverage than it is to research archived print coverage, but if you watch a few new episodes of a program before contacting journalists you can get a feel for the style of the show and the personalities of the on-air talent. Make sure you have visual hooks to entice the producers if you're seeking TV coverage.

Online

Since online media platforms are usually archived, it's easy to get an overview of a particular website or blog before reaching out to them. When contacting blogs, remember that even though the medium is relatively new and the personalities of the bloggers may seem familiar to you, you still want to approach them with the same professionalism and respect you would with any media outlet.

Radio

Some radio programs make their programming accessible as digital audio files or podcasts on their websites. For those programs that don't have an online archive, most of your understanding of a particular program will come from listening to the shows that you're interested in contacting. Even without a strong sense of how a program has covered your issues in the past, you can get a feel for the host, the journalistic style of the program and the general format. Exercise caution when pitching right-wing talk radio hosts, as many can be hostile and can do more harm than good for your organization, no matter how prepared you are for an interview.

IDENTIFY YOUR CONTACTS

Before reaching out to any media outlet, make sure you know in advance whom you're contacting. Ideally, you should have a specific name, but a title or department name will do. Once you've identified your contact, make sure to tailor your communication to their stated needs—for example, one reporter might want to receive every press release your organization sends, while another might prefer two-line pitch emails.

Print

Assignment editors and local/section editors can refer you to the right contacts at most print outlets, though staff reporters who have covered your issues in the past may be receptive to hearing your pitch. At larger newspapers, reporting beats will be more specialized and there will likely be less communication between reporters in different departments. At smaller papers, there will likely be limited staff resources, which can either help or hinder your media work. In some cases, overworked editors will be slow to return your call, while in others they may let you write and place a piece in its entirety.

Television

Producers, segment producers, news producers and assignment editors should be your first contacts. While they have busy schedules, news producers are always eager for new stories, so even if they're not able to listen to a story idea when you first make contact, stay persistent (without being an annoyance) and you will likely hear from them when a breaking story related to your issues emerges. Remember, at larger media outlets, you may be sent to several departments before you reach the right person.

Online

Web editors, individual freelance writers, columnists and bloggers are the first contacts to get in touch with. Many web outlets are more flexible than their print or broadcast counterparts, so you can suggest stories for immediate publication or outside of normal news cycles. Keep in mind that many writers for web publications also write for print publications, which might open new opportunities to build relationships with reporters.

Radio

Producers, segment producers and operations managers handle pitches and booking requests for talk radio programs.

KNOW NEWS CYCLES

Remember to always keep news cycles in mind when contacting any media outlet. Print and television outlets tend to have the most predictable news cycles, while online and radio outlets can be more erratic. Respect reporters' deadlines. Doing so will better enable you to get the kind of coverage that you want.

Print

If you're contacting a daily paper, make sure to reach out to them in the morning and no later than 1:00 p.m. At that point, reporters will be on deadline for the next day's edition. Breaking news stories may also prevent reporters from speaking to you. Don't be surprised if you get edged out if a hot story grabs the attention of the reporters you're working with (unless you can figure out a way to tailor your story to fit the coverage of that event). Weekly newspapers and magazines tend to have more predictable news cycles. Research publication dates and make contact as a new news cycle begins. With magazines, stories are mapped out weeks or months in advance, so if you're pitching a story around a calendar date or upcoming event, you'll want contact editors six to eight months in advance.

Television

Television production cycles, especially for 24-hour news stations, tend to be fairly consistent. Contact programs as far in advance from their production period as possible in order to have your pitch heard.

Online

Web-based publications tend to have fluid production cycles and will want to hear story ideas as soon as they break.

Radio

Talk show program schedules are usually organized in advance but with a relatively short lead time, so build relationships with producers to ensure your organization is the first contacted when your issues are covered.

CAPITALIZE ON THE MEDIUM

Before you contact a news outlet with a pitch, a story idea or to offer yourself as a resource, think about the ways you can tailor your idea to that specific outlet. Ask yourself what makes the outlet unique and what information or resources you have that will be most useful given the needs of that outlet.

Print

Print outlets can give a story depth and complexity in a way that few other media outlets can, particularly in long feature stories, so think about ways you can show as many dimensions of an issue or community as possible. For shorter news stories, make sure you focus your attention on the who, what, when, where and why without too much extraneous information.

Television

If you're seeking television coverage of a press conference, event or rally, make sure you have a visual hook to get the attention of producers—something that will look interesting and engaging when it shows up on the evening news.

Online

The real-time pace of the Internet, paired with the fact that most websites don't have to go through rounds of editing and fact checking before being posted, allows you to jump on an issue as soon as a story breaks.

Radio

When pitching to radio, think about who else might be included in a piece so the program has a variety of voices to interest listeners. Some radio programs will include snippets from meetings, rallies or debates to give a particular segment color, so think about possible events for the station to record that might add some breadth to a segment.

A WORD ABOUT THE LGBT PRESS

LGBT publications originally emerged both nationally and locally from organizations and individuals looking to create community forums. Over time, major publications gained a wider audience as they expanded from community-based operations to advertiser-supported publications with full-time paid staff.

Nationally distributed LGBT magazines such as *The Advocate*, *Out* and *Curve* cover news, entertainment and culture for an LGBT audience. Local LGBT publications, such as *Gay City News*, *The Washington Blade* and *Frontiers*, include both national and local news and provide information about area meetings, events, readings, performances and nightlife.

Remember when contacting the LGBT press that while they focus on the LGBT community, they operate like any other news publication and should be treated as such. Don't immediately assume that you have an "in" if you're an LGBT group talking to an LGBT publication. In many cases, the LGBT press will be more likely to scrutinize your messages and challenge your work, since they feel their readership has more invested in your organization than many mainstream publications will.

While LGBT reporters can be tremendous advocates and allies, don't assume that they are always "on your side." Approach those relationships with the same professionalism and caution that you would any reporter.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Before reaching out to any media outlet, make sure you know in advance whom you're contacting. Ideally, you should have a specific name, but a title or department name will do. Once you've identified your contact, make sure to tailor your communication to their stated needs—for example, one reporter might want to receive every press release your organization sends, while another might prefer two-line pitch emails.

Respect Media Professionals

It's important to build good relationships with media professionals to establish credibility for you or your organization and help get your story placed. Make sure to do your homework by reading articles and following up with emails and phone calls. Offer yourself as a resource, ready to give information or supply quotes relevant to your organization or to refer them to other people who can assist when you can't. If you're making a pitch, always make sure to ask reporters if they have time to speak with you. Stay patient and persistent when communicating with media outlets, but don't be pushy. Suggest setting up a coffee or lunch meeting so you can get to know the reporter face-to-face and give them the full scope of the resources and information you can provide. Treating relationships with reporters respectfully will pay off when they begin to call on you for background information or spokespeople.

Know Their Audience and Your Audience

Know the audience that you're trying to reach, and know the media outlet's audience as well. Do these audiences overlap? If not, are they worth contacting? What are you trying to communicate about your issues, your organization or an event that you're planning? Whose perceptions are you looking to impact or change? How do your statements impact your base, your opposition, other members of your movement and those who have never given much thought to your issues before? By targeting your media goals to specific audiences, you'll have a better chance of getting your messages across in the most effective way possible. Always remember that there is no such thing as a "general audience"—every audience is different, no matter how big or how small.

III. Communications Planning and Strategy

As with any kind of advocacy, media work requires time, commitment and strategic thinking. To best get your messages out there, you'll need to map out a communications plan. This section will help you to develop a communications plan to help you meet your organization's advocacy goals.

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Communications work is not just a way to publicize an event or advertise your work in the media—it can also help you reach your programmatic goals. Media work is a way to engage the public and can work hand in hand with other organizing strategies, such as lobbying or door knocking. A good communications plan can help you participate in media conversations on your issues and deliver messages that can be repeated in classrooms, churches and dinner table conversations.

As you draft a communications plan, remember that your goal is not just to get reporters to show up to press conferences or to write stories about the work you're doing. Your plan should focus on the ways your organization can work with the media to educate and inform the public. As you develop your plan, keep these goals in mind as a way of thinking broadly about how individual strategies fit into a larger objective.

EVALUATE YOUR PAST COMMUNICATIONS WORK

As you begin planning, take a look at your communications wins in the past and your current reputation with the media. Think about the goals of your organization and how you might be able to use media to more effectively reach those goals.

Begin by taking a look at your previous media accomplishments. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Has your outreach to the media helped you achieve your goals?
- Have you expanded your base or the audience for your issues?
- Have your messages helped to change the conversation about a particular issue?
- What are your biggest media-related accomplishments and setbacks? How can you use them to take stock of the resources you have and the ways to most effectively use them?
- How do the media cover you now?
- What is your reputation with the media outlets you've worked with in the past?
- Why do media outlets call you? If they call you only in certain circumstances, do you want to expand your communications to cover more issues?
- To whom do they speak when they request a spokesperson? Do media outlets always seek quotes from your executive director or a local "star spokesperson?" Do you want to expand your communication with the media to more departments, your entire organization or a larger base of community spokespeople?
- How can you change your organization's current interactions with the media to strengthen your credibility, increase your visibility and expand your communications efforts?

ASSESS YOUR CAPACITY

Now that you've looked at your past media work, the next step is to look at your budget and personnel resources and how they can be used to meet your communications goals.

Do you have any staff that you can commit to communications work full-time? If not, do you have any staff who might be able to take on communications work on a part-time basis?

Communications work is not always intuitive and requires both experience with and understanding of the media. If your staff does not have experience with communications work, have them attend media trainings and take professional development courses. Organizations like glaad and the SPIN Project provide these types of classes and workshops.

Ask yourself if you have the resources, financial and otherwise, to build an effective communications plan. Media outreach only works well if your communications staff is available and can be reached by the media whether you're in the office or traveling. Make sure you can commit money to information technology resources, graphic design, mailings, publications, press kits, website development and other components that will help you to get your messages out there. You won't be able to start with everything right away, but as you build up your communications work you'll want to be sure you have the resources to keep it growing.

If you don't have the resources to devote to a communications plan, look for fundraising or grant opportunities to expand your budget for communications work. Remember that you should expect to devote at least 30% of your budget in order for your media work to really make an impact. As you develop your communications plan, remember that good media work helps you to serve your development goals. If you can show the ways that your messages have helped to move public opinion to foundations or potential donors, you'll have a great new way to sell your work.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

After you review your available resources, you can start to make a concrete communications plan.

Remember, communications work takes time to develop – you do not need to do everything at once to get things moving.

Analyze Current Coverage: Do some research to see how your issues are being covered. Take a look at the frequency, accuracy and quality of reporting on your issues. You'll notice certain trends and patterns that will help you shape your goals and develop your messages.

Set Your Goals: Think about what you want to gain through your communications work. Are you seeking heightened visibility for your organization? Increased awareness about the needs of your base? Pressure on a politician, lobbying group or another organization? Frame your goals as part of a positive vision for the future.

Target Your Audience: Think about whom you need to reach to meet your goals. For a short-term goal, you may want to just focus on mobilizing your community around a particular piece of legislation. You may also want to think about longer, more abstract goals, which may assume that a certain amount of social change has to happen before the goals can be reached. If you think about whom you want to reach and how this fits into your goals, you can better determine the concrete steps you need to take to reach the right audience.

Frame the Issue: Focus on core principles that will both resonate with journalists and connect to the audiences you want to reach. Present your issues in a way that appeals to your base, expands your audience and has enough compelling hooks to interest journalists. More information on message development and framing appears in Chapter IV.

Discipline the Message: Make your messages to the general public succinct and focused. Be clear about your goals and distill your mission into concise language that speaks to shared values. Include specific courses of action that can encourage people to make a difference in your larger cause.

Media Tactics: Think about the best way to reach your audience. Build your media list, target journalists to build relationships with and pitch stories to, plan events that will interest the press, offer yourself as a resource for stories and schedule interviews with media outlets.

Analyze Your Progress: At every step of the way, you'll want to track the growth of your influence. This will take time, and progress can be frustratingly slow, even with a full-time commitment to communications work. Over time, you will build relationships with reporters and gain the trust of news outlets as a valued source of information. Track your media hits to measure your progress, think of new strategies and rework your message as necessary.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

A communications staff should have an understanding of current and recent coverage and be prepared to both respond to and initiate media coverage of your organization and your issues.

Monitor: A communications staff monitors media coverage of issues relevant to the organization. Simply conducting Internet news searches will help you get a sense of how stories are being written. If you have more resources, paid databases like LexisNexis can provide a more comprehensive way to monitor coverage.

Track: A communications staff should carefully track media coverage of your organization. As you build a database of stories, you can see trends in reporting and how coverage evolves even over a short period of time. Once you have a base of knowledge about who covers your issues and how your issues are covered, you'll be better equipped to make informed decisions about the best way to respond to individual stories. As your organization and spokespeople begin to earn media hits, tracking successfully pitched stories or placed spokespeople will help you evaluate your progress.

Respond: A communications staff is there to respond to the media, and your team should be ready to let reporters know when they've produced fair coverage or reports that misrepresent your community or organization. It's best to take the initiative to offer yourself as a resource and give reporters or editors information on how they can improve in the future. In instances where the coverage is routinely defamatory, this may not be possible, but your communications staff will do their best work if they focus on cultivating relationships rather than just reacting. It's important to commend reporters who produce responsible coverage, and to let reporters who have made a good faith effort but missed the mark know how they can improve in the future.

Initiate: Your communications staff should initiate contact with the media to pitch stories about your organization and issues. You'll need to be proactive about letting media outlets know when important events or stories related to your work happen. You need to be seen as a source of news, whether you're holding a press conference or event, or pitching a story or giving a quote to a reporter. Your communications team

should be ready to write media releases, provide quotes and make pitches to reporters and editors across different media formats.

MONITORING THE MEDIA

Monitoring news coverage plays a key role in media work. Familiarity with reporting on your issue will help you develop more effective messages and will strengthen your advocacy efforts with individual media outlets.

Monitoring is not simply reading the news—it's reading between the lines to understand how a certain issue is being covered. When monitoring the media, it's important to carefully examine the order in which the information is presented, what facts or pieces of evidence are included or omitted and which spokespeople are or are not quoted.

At first glance, these details may not be immediately obvious, but the problem becomes apparent with a closer look. In many cases, the journalistic impulse to create so-called "balance" leads to situations in which arguments that have no relation to the story end up being included in news coverage. Over time, you'll begin to see this and other trends in style and content that will help you to advocate for better coverage and tailor your messages more effectively. Look for resources at the end of the book for monitoring the media.

BUILDING A MEDIA LIST

A media list is a detailed list of contacts at press outlets that have covered your issues or that you want to pitch in the future. A communications plan is not feasible if you don't have a good media list – if you have trouble getting started, contact glad for assistance gathering press contacts in your region.

When building a media list, you first have to determine whom you want to reach and where they get their information – you won't be able to develop relationships at every press outlet right away, so be strategic about whom you approach initially. Once you've determined the proper outlets to contact, find out which reporters cover your issues. Often you can find this information from Bacon's or other media databases, on the outlet's website or by calling the organization.

Develop a spreadsheet with all of the relevant information you'll need for press contacts: name, phone number, fax number and email address are most important. From there you can add address, circulation, beat and other relevant details that will help you decide where, when and how to send materials.

It's worthwhile to include a column on your spreadsheet that tracks your contact with that particular outlet – that way you can track how often you're in touch with a given outlet and have your most recent communication readily accessible when you contact them again.

When figuring out whom to contact when a specific story arises, you want to have as much breadth as possible while at the same time tailoring your pitch and supplemental materials appropriately for each individual outlet. For instance, you won't want to send the same materials to a daily newspaper that you would to a local TV station.

Make sure to narrow your list of contacts so you're not contacting people in the same department at the same press outlet – while it may be useful in some instances to reach out to multiple reporters or departments at the same press outlet, it can also be considered annoying.

The most important thing to do is build professional relationships with reporters. This is an ongoing process, since there will be regular staff changes at any media outlet. Once you have an established rapport with a

particular organization, you'll easily be able to handle these transitions. Making good-faith efforts to cultivate relationships by holding lunch or coffee meetings can help get your foot in the door and determine the most effective way to get information to a reporter—some prefer a short pitch sent via email, while others may prefer a full press release every time. As you get familiar with different outlets, you'll be able to determine the most effective ways to pitch to individual reporters.

IV. Communicating with the Media

Now that you're familiar with the media landscape and know the basics of building a communications plan, it's time to get your message out there. This chapter maps out how to cultivate relationships with media professionals, make your story more newsworthy and pitch your ideas to reporters.

ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY WITH REPORTERS

Personal contact between journalists and LGBT organizations plays a crucial role in effective media relations. Many mainstream press outlets do not have full-time staff members that specialize in LGBT issues, so LGBT organizations play an important role in supplying news, background information and quotes. Organizations and journalists both benefit from this kind of arrangement, but you have to establish your credibility first.

In order to establish credibility:

- Offer yourself as a resource
- Provide useful pitches
- Supply accurate and thorough background information
- Refer journalists to other organizations and spokespeople when you're not the right contact – it shows you're not talking to them just because you want to get on TV

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPORTERS AND LGBT CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Once reporters feel comfortable with the reliability and credibility of a source or organization, they'll seek you out for quotes and information, trust what you say and cover the work you do.

While these relationships can be mutually beneficial, the two sides often have different – and sometimes conflicting – interests. Journalists often look for controversial or sensational stories, and LGBT organizations in particular look to dispel controversy and sensationalism. LGBT advocates are often hesitant to make a statement in fear of being misquoted.

However, if you don't participate in the media conversation about LGBT issues, you miss out on a big opportunity to reach an audience that makes decisions about LGBT issues both in their day-to-day interactions and in the voting booth. It benefits you to build professional relationships and foster goodwill.

While you'll inevitably get some less than ideal coverage, it's a necessary risk that you'll need to take in order to heighten your organization's profile and get your message out there. If you have a solid communications plan, a strong network of media contacts and carefully planned messages, you'll minimize any potential risk.

THE BASICS OF EFFECTIVE MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS

When reaching out to the media, you want to keep several important principles in mind.

Professionalism: The relationship that you establish with a reporter is a professional one, so be sure to treat it as such.

Respect: Treat reporters as you would a new co-worker, and remember that not all reporters will be informed

about LGBT issues.

Honesty: Never lie to a journalist. If you're not sure how to answer a question or don't have a piece of information readily available, don't assume or guess. Say "I don't know, but I will help you find what you need," and then get back to them as quickly as possible.

Knowledge: Be informed. Know the subject matter that you're discussing and the media outlet you're speaking with before you make initial contact.

Confidence: Make sure they understand the stakes. If you can show the media outlet you're speaking with how important the issues you're discussing are to you and your community, they will be more likely to become engaged with your issues and use you as a resource.

Clarity: While you're an expert on your issues, the journalist you're speaking to may not be an expert — yet. Speak clearly and directly and don't use jargon. While certain phrases and acronyms may be part of your everyday conversations with your colleagues, they may be unfamiliar to a journalist. If a journalist doesn't know a concept or term, consider it an opportunity to be the first one to explain it to them.

Prudence: Assume EVERYTHING you say is on the record and can be used in a news story. Even the way you decline to answer a question conveys information to a reporter.

PITCHING

When you pitch a story to the media, you suggest an idea or angle for a story that a reporter can build upon and develop. Many LGBT rights advocates don't realize the power they have in getting their stories heard. Reporters are constantly on the lookout for compelling stories that will engage their audience.

Timing Is Everything. Do not call them when they're on deadline, usually after 1:00 p.m. It's always best to call earlier in the day and earlier in the week.

Hook Their Interest. When you're pitching a story, make it interesting and engaging to a reporter. Sometimes an organization or event will merit a feature article, but this is the exception rather than the rule. Think critically about what you're trying to say and think of ways that you could hook a reporter who might then hook a reader—there's a lot of news every single day, so you'll need to make your story stand out.

Be Specific. Provide supporting facts, names and details.

Know the Issues. Have your messages ready and be prepared to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of both the main and related topics.

Be a Resource. Be ready to provide photos, background information and relevant sources.

Document Your Progress. Record what stories you pitch and to whom as a way of keeping track of reporter interests and preferences that may help when working with reporters in the future.

FRAMING

When you make a pitch, use an interesting frame or an angle to strengthen your concept. Here are some possible frames you can use:

Controversy: Call attention to the way your issues fit (or don't fit) into a political or social conflict or scandal. Controversy sells stories. You should use this frame judiciously, as excessive controversy can lead to

disinterest or backlash.

Dramatic Human Interest: Humanize an issue by telling the story of a significant personal triumph or difficult personal setback. As long as you have the consent of the subject, you can hook a reporter and readers with a heart tugging tragedy or triumph.

Trends: Connect your issue to a current opinion, attitude or pattern of behavior. Reporters naturally respond to trends, and many press outlets will try to anticipate trends. Remember the “rule of three” – as long as you can find three examples, you can back up your statement that a trend is emerging.

Timelines/Calendar: Frame your story around a holiday or notable calendar event, using your issue to bring a new angle to a story that might otherwise be a light “filler” piece. For example, you might use Mother’s Day or Father’s Day to talk about the struggles faced by LGBT people trying to adopt children.

New Announcements: Find stories that are unprecedented, groundbreaking or “first ever.” Even if you’ve known something for a while, figure out angles that you can use to sell it to reporters as something new and fresh.

Localize a State or National Story: Take a piece of national news, such as a court ruling or piece of federal legislation, and show how it impacts your community. You can also take a story of local interest and connect it to a larger cultural trend or pattern.

Anniversaries or Milestones: Look at an anniversary one year later, ten years later or twenty years later. Milestone stories track progress or setbacks and help create context. For example, you might consider pitching a story commemorating the anniversary of Stonewall or the Massachusetts Judicial Supreme Court marriage equality decision.

Profiles and Personnel: Feature spokespeople, community leaders or activists who may become news themselves because of their personal stories and experiences.

Special Event: Use unique framing techniques to talk about an event, whether it’s a conference, rally or gathering. By focusing on the preparation process or the larger political or social goals of the event you’re more likely to get coverage than if you just discuss the event itself.

Respond and React: Be proactive about your messages as a rule, but in some cases you may want to respond to claims or statements, particularly those that are inaccurate or defamatory. Counter-frame the message to change the course of the conversation so it represents your point of view.

Celebrity: Bring attention to an organization or issue by including a public figure in the story, whether it’s a cultural, religious, political or entertainment personality. Be careful not to overshadow your messages and your organization.

Strange Bedfellows: Discuss unusual alliances that may emerge from an event or piece of legislation. Stories about unlikely allies can be great for news or feature pieces.

THE CULTURE OF NEWSROOMS

The fast-paced culture of the newsroom sometimes makes it difficult for journalists to talk, but if you work within the confines of their busy schedules you’ll be able to have meetings that will have a bigger impact than a voicemail message or an email.

Start by contacting reporters who have covered LGBT issues in the past. If you are working alongside another LGBT advocate, you may want to involve that person in the discussion as well. Once you've established a relationship with a reporter, she or he will be more receptive to your inquiries and also more likely to pitch your story to an editor. You will also have a better shot at arranging a meeting with the Editorial Page editor and other people in the newsroom.

For instance, one GLAAD staff member had success going to the newsroom and asking to be introduced to different editors and reporters. By visiting the newsroom, he had opportunities to meet several different reporters, which gave him the chance to make a number of contacts at one time. If he had tried to build the same relationships over the phone, the process would have been much more drawn out. When you're arranging these in-office meetings, ask who will be in the office in advance.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Once you know how you want to frame your story, you make the actual pitch. Here are some things to keep in mind when pitching to a reporter:

Offer Reporters What They Need: Reporters need a good story, and you're in a position to give it to them. Much of the success of the pitch depends on your confidence level, while the rest will follow with your message and how you frame the issue.

Keep It Brief: Reporters do not have time for long calls. You will only have a few minutes to get their attention and capture their interest—make sure your pitch contains the who, what, where, when and why. Do not call simply to ask if they received your media advisory. Pitch the story, reference the advisory of release and offer to send it again if they haven't seen it.

Begin with Reporters You Know: Target specific reporters with whom you have relationships. If they have done a piece on your issue or a similar subject, reference their prior work. At the very least, target reporters in the relevant section of the paper. If you must make a cold call, ask the general assignment editor or producer whom you should contact.

Pitch What Is Newsworthy: Reporters need to like your story, but they also need to sell it to their editors. Remember to pitch a story that is exciting and engaging—see the previous section for some strategies on how to find a creative angle on a story.

Be Ready with Backup: Make sure you know the key points that you want to convey to the reporter and that you also have an in-depth understanding of related information and supporting details. Have supporting facts, names, details and resources readily available.

Express enthusiasm: If you are not excited about the story yourself, the reporter won't be either. Don't go overboard with your enthusiasm—give reporters the necessary information, offer to provide more and then get off the phone.

Be Timely, Not Obnoxious: If you sense that a reporter is busy, offer to call back later. Acknowledge their situation: "Listen, I know you're very busy. Do you have a moment now, or should I call you back later?"

Close the Deal: Ask reporters whether they are interested in your event and would like an invite. Most reporters will not immediately commit over the phone, so don't be afraid to follow up to secure a confirmation.

Have Back-Up Pitch Angles: If it becomes clear that a reporter is not interested in your initial pitch, consider

a different angle. Perhaps the reporter cannot attend an event but would be interested in interviewing a speaker at another time. A reporter might respond better to the local human-interest angle than the national policy angle, for example.

DEADLINES, DEADLINES, DEADLINES

All media professionals, whether they work for print publications or television, work under strict deadlines. It's a good general rule to simply ask a reporter, "Are you on deadline?" when you call them to pitch a story. If they are, find out when they'll be available to talk and contact them then. Reporters will be more likely to help you if they feel that you respect and understand the way they work.

Tips about deadlines:

- **SEND OUT A MEDIA RELEASE:**
- **Print:** if possible, send several days before your event; at the latest, between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. the day the news is scheduled to break
- **Electronic press:** two to three days prior; send a media release the day before
- Most news organizations can schedule a reporter or a news crew right away, but some will wait until the last minute
- The day of the event, make an early morning call to verify receipt of material
- If your media release or press kit is not accessible, fax, email or messenger another copy as soon as possible

V. Developing Your Talking Points

Whenever you respond to an interview request, plan a press conference or pitch a story, you must craft your talking points in advance. While an interview or a media event gives journalists a chance to ask you questions about your issues, it also gives you an opportunity to share your messages and your story with an audience.

DEVELOPING TALKING POINTS

Talking points are brief one- or two-sentence answers calibrated to your message. When a journalist asks you a question, you'll want to be ready to respond with one of your talking points. Talking points should be tied to your message and should speak broadly to the issues facing your organization and community in accessible language that speaks to shared values.

By planning your messages in advance, you'll have more control over what shows up in the media—if you speak at length to reporters without prepared talking points, you run a greater risk of being misquoted or having something you say taken out of context.

SOUND BITES

Today news media outlets are increasingly driven by sound bites. Sound bites drive home a message in a concise, direct fashion. While they do not give a detailed understanding of the speaker's stance on an issue, they are often the only statement an audience will hear.

While sound bites are a direct byproduct of televised news media, they now appear in all types of media. Print reporters primarily use sound bites when quoting politicians, advocates and pundits. It's crucial that you distill the core messages of your organization into succinct, catchy quotes that can sum up your position on an issue quickly and effectively. A good sound bite will connect with a reader or viewer and stay with them in a way that a longer or more detailed comment cannot.

Most sound bites are between five and 15 seconds (preferably closer to five). The use of rhetorical devices, such as repetition or parallel structure, can make your sound bite stick more in the minds of your audience. Most importantly, remember that you can't say everything all at once. Decide on a key message and stick to it.

FRAME THE DISCUSSION

When you step into any interview context—whether it is for print, television or radio—you want to be in control of the conversation to ensure the audience gets your message. To frame the discussion you must prepare talking points in advance.

- Identify two to three broad messages that you want to deliver based on the subject of the interview or pitch
- Ensure those messages support your organizational objectives
- **Your messages should fit in one of three categories:** personal story, affirmative general statement or facts or data to support your claims
- Think of the interview as a public forum through which you can disseminate your message to a broad audience

- Consider the ways your message can influence people who might be misinformed or undecided
- Maximize your time by thinking about the audience you'll be reaching and how you can be most effective in connecting to that audience

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Keep these ideas and principles in mind as you develop your sound bites.

Share Your Background, Knowledge and Experience by Using Specific Examples: Making general statements or citing facts and figures is not nearly as persuasive as telling your personal story or sharing your professional expertise. People respond to personal stories more than they respond to statistics, so connect your message to events and experiences in your own life or use your standing as an expert to drive home a message or clarify a misconception.

Tie Your Expertise and Experience to a Broader Goal or Message: Telling your personal story or giving your expert opinion is only the first step. You need to contextualize your remarks within a broader goal or message. Think about the ways that your story fits into a larger conversation about the struggle for LGBT equality.

Talk About How Your Issues Affect the Community: By sharing what is personal, you make a statement about how certain issues, debates and political battles relate to real people. When you put a face and a story to LGBT issues, you can bridge the conversation to broader challenges faced by the LGBT community.

Don't Be Afraid to Correct Misrepresentations and Factual Errors: While you want to stay in the affirmative, don't hesitate to dispel myths and dispute inaccurate information. The most effective way to do this is to say, "A lot of people have that misconception, but . . ." You won't put your interviewer or your audience on the defensive, since the language acknowledges a misconception and invites them to rethink their perception.

Talk About Shared Values: People respond to shared values of equality, family and community. When you can connect the struggle for LGBT equality to shared American ideals of equality and opportunity, you have a much greater chance of connecting with your audience.

Know Your Boundaries: Don't share anything you're not comfortable seeing in the newspaper, and don't feel the need to bring your private life into the public arena. It's often best to speak broadly about your own experience and then tie that to your larger message.

Practice Delivering Your Message: Even the most seasoned media professionals practice before interviews. Try delivering your messages to other members of your organization and fine-tune any potential problems. Try the "brother-in-law" test: Speak to someone outside of your immediate circle who might not fully appreciate the challenges you face, and see how they respond to your messages. If you find that your messages are confusing, offensive or vague, take a step back and re-evaluate.

THE OPRAH PHENOMENON – THE POWER OF PERSONAL STORIES

Oprah Winfrey has built an incredibly successful format with her talk show, by using the personal stories of her guests to talk about larger issues facing Americans. Advocacy groups can learn a lot from Oprah's strategy of putting a face to an issue in ways that can change hearts and minds much more effectively than

statistics or policy discussions.

When Oprah talks about an issue facing millions of Americans, like gun control or child abuse, she doesn't present a lot of statistics or discuss the decisions being made at the top levels of government. Instead, she brings someone directly affected by that issue to share their story. Audiences put a face to the issue, and when they talk about the issue at the dinner table or think about it in the voting booth, they'll remember the story and how it emotionally affected them.

The lesson that advocates and organizations can learn from Oprah is that personal stories are an effective way to connect with audiences. While readers may not be able to relate to articles about legislative processes or legal battles, a personal story about a lesbian couple's struggle to adopt or a gay man speaking about being unable to leave his estate to his partner will resonate.

VI. Responding to Interview Requests

RESPONDING TO INTERVIEW REQUESTS

As you establish media relationships, occasions will arise when you and your organization will be called upon to comment—on the record. You must resist the temptation to immediately agree to an interview request. The worst thing you can do in response to a question from a media professional is offer an immediate, knee-jerk answer. Before even agreeing to an interview, you must first interview the interviewer.

INTERVIEW THE INTERVIEWER

The media are not looking only for information when they request an interview; they are usually looking to shape your answer to fit the piece's angle.

You have the right and the responsibility to interview the interviewer before you agree to be interviewed. The following questions must be answered prior to accepting an interview:

- Has this outlet interviewed anyone else in your organization before?
- Does this outlet/reporter have a history of covering LGBT issues?
- What is the slant of the piece?
- Who will represent the “other side of the issue” in the piece?
- What is the reporter/interviewer's style?
- How long will the piece run?
- If for television, will the interview be live or taped?
- Who will the audience be for the interview?
- Will there be an audience question or call-in section?

INTERVIEW SITUATIONS TO AVOID

If a media professional is unwilling to answer your questions, be wary. Asking the above questions to any media professional who is fair-minded will only add to your credibility. If the premise of the piece is objectionable, or if you feel you will be put in a compromising situation, you can and should refuse to be interviewed.

One situation you may find yourself in is when you are asked to appear on a television or radio program with a virulently anti-gay individual. This is a frequent strategy to claim that an extreme debate will present a “balanced” view of a topic concerning the LGBT community. It is more often a ploy to sensationalize the topic at hand. It is impossible to have an intelligent exchange with an individual or organization dedicated to portraying LGBT people as evil, sick or immoral. By putting yourself in this situation without the proper experience, you stand a good chance of losing your temper and looking as irrational as your opponent. Try and suggest a more moderate alternative and consider your options when approached in these cases.

IMPORTANT TECHNIQUES

Bridging: Linking the question asked to the message you want to convey. Example: “*What I really want to*

talk to you about is...

Flagging: Highlighting a particular portion of a sound bite to raise a red flag and indicate the importance of an individual aspect of your message. Example: “*The most important thing to remember is ...*”

Hooking: Technique used to direct an interview that involves “dangling a hook” that leads to the next question. Example: “*...but that isn’t the only important part of this program.*”

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

Before you step into an interview setting, there are several steps that you’ll want to take in advance to ensure that you’re ready.

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare: Decide in advance what you want to tell the audience, and coordinate your message with the appropriate parties.

Know Your Audience: How much familiarity do they have with LGBT issues? Are there race, age, class or geographic differences to take into account? Tailor your message so as not to “talk down” to the audience, but aim to be understood. Talk to your audience, not the interviewer, and don’t lecture.

Write Down Your Messages and Practice: Write down your key message points, and then turn them into catchy sound bites. Have a colleague act as a mock interviewer and ask challenging questions. Get feedback from others about how understandable, interesting and informative your messages are and the quality of your presentation.

Personalize Your Message: Tell your story—don’t just recite a list of esoteric arguments or statistics. Your story as it relates to the issue you’re talking about can be one of the most effective ways to persuade your audience.

Gather Facts and Figures: Make sure the statistics you use are accurate and accessible. Don’t let your statistics become your main points; they are simply evidence that proves the validity of your arguments.

Be Animated: Your energy level will indicate your enthusiasm about an issue. Use body language to emphasize your points and remember to be likable, show your concern and show emotion when appropriate.

Look Confident: Excellent sound bites lose their effectiveness when delivered without confidence. Project a confident, credible and expert image.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND DURING AN INTERVIEW

Be Yourself: Talk naturally. Don’t freeze up or become a robot when you start talking with a reporter.
RELAX!

Stay On-Message: Don’t talk about anything unrelated to your message points (they’re often topics you may not be qualified to talk about in the first place). Redirect the conversation back to your message whenever the interview strays from it.

Avoid Overkill: Be careful of the language you use. If you over-dramatize the situation, your opponents can say you’re just exaggerating.

Get to Know the Reporter: You may have the chance to talk with the reporter before the actual interview. This is your chance to determine the reporter’s level of awareness on your issue. Take the time to make sure

he or she understands your organization and constituents. Also, always call the reporter by name – it establishes goodwill.

Remember Your Audience: Once the interview begins, remember that your words should target the audience that reads the newspaper or watches the newscast. Although you are having a conversation with the reporter, you are actually talking “over her shoulder” to the audience.

Control the Terms of the Interview: Don’t allow the reporter to choose your words for you. Be sure to respond carefully to questions that begin with phrases like “Don’t you think that . . .” or “Isn’t it true that . . .”

Manage Multiple-Part Questions: If the reporter asks you a multiple-part question, answer only the part you want to answer. Start with the easy questions and only address the difficult questions if you have time.

Don’t Speculate: Don’t offer speculation if you’re asked a hypothetical question. Stick to the facts.

Watch Terminology: If your interviewer uses an incorrect term, gently correct him or her. If your interviewer uses a hostile term, don’t repeat it. Don’t give the reporter permission to paraphrase.

Stay Calm: Above all, stay calm and courteous at all times, even if the reporter becomes hostile or says something that embarrasses or flusters you.

Say Only What You Want to Say: Don’t ever let the reporter make you say things you don’t want to say or answer questions you don’t want to answer.

THINGS TO AVOID

When you’re in an interview setting, steer clear of the following pitfalls.

Don’t Ever Let Your Guard Down: Never forget that you are talking to a journalist, and anything you say could end up on television or in print. Don’t be thrown off by flattery or condescension.

Don’t Feel Obligated to Answer the Question Exactly as It Was Asked: Remember, in most cases the audience won’t hear the question – only your response. Frame your response so that the audience hears your message point, not the question you’re answering.

Don’t Respond too Quickly— Think!: Take time to organize your response before speaking.

Don’t Be Afraid of Silence, Even in TV Interviews: When you are finished answering the question, stop talking. Avoid the natural tendency to babble. Instead, smile and act expectant (if you’re waiting for the next question) or pretend like the interviewer is still talking (if you’re mentally preparing your response to the question he or she just asked).

Don’t Play into Pauses: Allow the interviewer to finish asking the question (sometimes, the interviewer may attempt to trap you by saying something incendiary and expecting you to cut him or her off). If there is a pause (and the interviewer is clearly expecting you to say something), use it to clearly reiterate one of your main points.

Don’t Use Off-The-Cuff Humor: It can fall flat or make you seem flip. If you’re planning on making a point through humor, script it and rehearse it.

Don’t Repeat Loaded or Slanted Words Used by the Interviewer: Doing so gives double exposure to the accusation. Answer the question in the positive, using your message points. Don’t say, “We’re not trying to

recruit young people into the homosexual lifestyle.” Instead, respond with, “We’re providing a safe, supportive environment for gay students where they won’t feel isolated and alone.”

Don’t Rely on Your Memory: Have all the relevant message points, facts, figures, statistics and story cues written down in front of you.

STAYING ON MESSAGE

One of the greatest challenges created by interview settings is making sure that your messages are front and center, regardless of the questions being asked. Even aggressive or hostile questions can be used as prompts for delivering your messages. Here are a few examples of possible messages that might be used around different kinds of questions related to one issue (in this case, marriage equality). The following answers illustrate how, no matter what the question is, you can get your messages across.

When Asked about Marriage Equality: “People are resistant to change, especially in the abstract, but if you ask those same people about the gay couple down the street that has a couple of kids, you get a different response. By asking, ‘Do you think that family should have the same rights and protections as the straight married couple that lives down the block?’ the debate makes us real, and it makes a difference.”

When Asked about “Traditional Marriage”: “We are not looking to redefine marriage. We are looking to participate in the way it is currently defined, bringing security, clarity and dignity to families.”

When Asked about the “Homosexual Agenda”: “Opponents of marriage for same-sex couples try to keep the discussion abstract in order to arouse suspicion and fear. They do not talk about couples or families. They paint us as strangers and portray our lives as radically different from what they are.”

When Asked Whether Children Are Better Off with a Mother or a Father:

“Stability is the key to raising children, and excluding same-sex couples from parenting harms children who need parents to love and provide for them. Children of lesbian and gay parents grow up as happy, healthy and well-adjusted as the children of straight couples.”

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Stay calm
- Stay on message
- Don’t repeat your opposition’s messages
- Correct misconceptions inclusively
- Underscore key points – it’s okay to repeat yourself

VII. Planning a Media Event

Media events – such as a rallies, demonstrations, public actions or press conferences—should play a role in your communications plan, as they can help bring visibility to an issue, serve as a call to action for constituents or elected officials or set the record straight on a current media event.

PLANNING A MEDIA EVENT

If you can begin planning your event early, you'll have more opportunity to mobilize your constituents to participate and get the word out, especially if you're working with other organizations who will also want to communicate with their supporters. However, due to the nature of LGBT media advocacy, you may be planning a press conference or a rally with less than 24-hours.

Regardless of your timeline, here are some tips to keep in mind when planning a media event:

Location: Your location should be accessible, both to the public and to the media. Make sure you've thought about how people are going to get there. Try to choose a location that has particular significance—the location can play an important role in conveying your message.

Space: Make sure that you have space that's appropriate for the number of people you're expecting—you don't want a space that's too small if you're expecting a lot of people or too big if you're only expecting a handful. Also remember that television crews will need space to park news trucks and get equipment to and from your event.

Permits: If you're hosting a media event in a public space, you may need a permit. Double check with local officials to make sure you have the appropriate clearances and any necessary security.

Equipment: Make sure you have a podium for your speakers, an amplification system, a table and chairs for participants (if needed) and a malt box, a piece of equipment that allows reporters to plug in audio equipment to record directly from the sound system. Some local stations may be willing to bring a malt box if you aren't able to.

Visual Hooks: Visual hooks will help entice media. If you're doing a demonstration or a press conference, make sure that you have enticing visuals. Crowds, banners, signs, props and other visually engaging elements will be more likely to draw media attention.

Daybook: Make sure to get your event in the Associated Press daybook, a listing of all media events occurring that day. Call your local Associated Press bureau (listed on the Associated Press website) to get deadlines both for weekly and daily daybooks to ensure that your event is listed.

Timing: Keep your event to under an hour if possible. Use a moderator to give a brief opening statement and introduce the speakers. Individual speakers should address different aspects of the issue and keep their comments to two to five minutes at a press conference, or five to 10 minutes at a demonstration or rally. Ensure that you have at least 20 minutes for reporters to ask questions if you're holding a press conference.

SCHEDULING A MEDIA EVENT

When timing of event, keep the news cycle in mind:

- Be judicious about scheduling events on the weekends—media outlets tend to have skeleton crews

over the weekend, and breaking news may overshadow a smaller media event. However, if the media hook is the turnout at a march, demonstration or rally, you may want to hold it on a weekend so you can maximize participation

- Mid- to late- morning tends to be the best time to hold an event, as it will ensure that media professionals will be able to attend before they are on deadline
- Late afternoon and evening events will improve your chances of getting live coverage, but you run the risk of losing out on outlets that may skip the event to focus on their broadcasts

COLLABORATING ON A MEDIA EVENT

As you plan your event, make sure that everyone involved is on the same page. Hold meetings and conference calls to clarify responsibilities, determine action items and develop consistent messages. Make sure that all of your spokespeople have the same set of messages and know how long they'll be expected to speak.

If you're collaborating with sister organizations, community leaders or elected officials who may not be involved in the day-to-day workings of your organization, it's particularly important to confirm that everyone has the same messages and talking points.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- If possible, send your media release several days in advance
- The day before, confirm that your event is listed in the Associated Press daybook
- Follow up with your media contacts early in the morning on the day of the event
- Check in with newspapers (the city desk), television stations (the assignment desk) and radio stations (news directors) to ensure they will attend
- Confirm you have all the necessary permits, clearances and equipment
- Make sure all of the speakers have been given consistent messages are aware of time limits for remarks and reporter questions
- Fax or deliver the news release to media that did not come to the event, and make follow-up calls to see if you can get a story placed after the fact

CONCLUSION

Working with the media presents a set of unique challenges to advocates for LGBT equality, and it takes patience and persistence to meet your communications goals. The skills and techniques presented in this guide will help you analyze and improve your communications goals and take steps to make a difference in the ongoing media conversation about LGBT lives. Despite the political and legislative setbacks our community has faced in recent years, we've also made tremendous progress in changing hearts and minds all over the country. Your media work will continue to play a central role in the struggle for full equality.

Remember that you can always call on *glad* for support and resources. We provide media training nationwide for community members new to media work, as well as seasoned advocates who have been part of the movement for years. *glad* also provides media planning and strategic support for organizations,

whether you're an organization that's just getting started or are rethinking your communications goals after years of experience. Don't hesitate to contact us for information, support or resources—we're here to help. Visit us at www.glaad.org or contact us via email at mediaprograms@glaad.org. You can also reach us by phone in our New York office at (212) 629-3225 or in our Los Angeles office at (323) 933-2240.

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This training manual was developed and produced by Sean Lund, Tom Ogletree, Rashad Robinson, Adam Rogers and Rebekah Spicuglia.

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VII. Media Toolkit I: Media Releases, Press Kits & Letters 101

INTRODUCTORY LETTERS

Once you have determined whom to contact regarding coverage of your organization and its issues, one the most efficient ways to first approach them is by sending an introductory e-mail.

The e-mail should contain the following:

- The name of your organization and its mission
- Key individuals in your organization with brief biographical information
- What issues your organization speaks to, and why those issues are of importance to their audience
- Any information you feel will give the media outlet insight into your work
- Suggestions (keep them brief) for stories with a local angle
- Ways in which your local organization's issues and events tie in with a national story

After sending an introductory e-mail, be sure to follow up with the media professional to see if they need more information, have any questions or are open to further discussion. Keep media professionals updated on your group's activities, and put them on your distribution list for any publications.

Note: If your mailing list includes daily announcements, then you may not want to include media professionals, because it could overload them with information and prevent you from earning coverage on your important issues or work

MEDIA ADVISORIES

OVERVIEW

Media advisories (or media alerts) are generally used to inform the media of an upcoming event or press conference and provide only basic information without many details. The goal of an advisory is to encourage coverage without giving away all the substance.

EFFECTIVE MEDIA ADVISORIES...

- Hook readers with their headlines
- Only include the "5 W's" (who, what, where, when and why)
- Are no longer than one page
- Are emailed or faxed to reporters three to five days in advance
- Are followed up with phone calls to targeted reporters the day before the event to make sure they are coming

INEFFECTIVE MEDIA ADVISORIES...

- Are missing key information

- Do not contain any news
- Contain spelling or grammatical errors
- Are boring or confusing

MEDIA RELEASES

OVERVIEW

A media release allows the opportunity to provide more background information on news items, along with editorializing in the form of quotes. Examples of topics that would warrant releases include: breaking news items, key staff hires or board appointments, announcement of event winners, etc.

EFFECTIVE MEDIA RELEASES...

- Are written like news stories
- Summarize news with quotes and background
- Are written at a quality to appear in the morning newspaper
- Are not more than two pages long

PRESS KITS

OVERVIEW

By combining a media advisory with basic information on a particular subject, you can create a press kit that media professionals can access and utilize in a variety of ways. Press kits can be customized depending on the event, issue or campaign on which you are working. For example, an organization may want to have a different kit for media they are speaking to about anti-gay harassment in schools than for media they are talking to about marriage equality. While the basic information on the organization will be the same (this should be included in the left side of your folder) there will be specialized information on the issue and your organization's work, event, etc. (this should be included in the right side of the folder).

EFFECTIVE PRESS KITS INCLUDE

- A one-page summary of your organization (mission statement, constituency, goals, other important facts)
- A list of upcoming events
- Issues of concern, with any media releases or background information you have available on the subject
- Contact information, especially for your designated spokesperson
- A list of key staff and/or board of directors, with biographical information
- Any publications or brochures your organization distributes
- Business card of media contact or designated spokesperson

EXTRAS TO CONSIDER INCLUDING DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION ARE

- Relevant photographs with captions (black and white pictures are preferred)
- Statements of support (testimonials) from allied groups
- A copy of an op-ed you have placed

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OVERVIEW

A simple, effective forum to voice your message is the Letters to the Editor section. Letters are guest opinion pieces of about 250 words that allow you to offer a brief rebuttal to or support of an event or article. Every day, newspapers receive numerous submissions, all of which compete for editorial space.

EFFECTIVE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR...

- Comply with publication submission guidelines
- Include all contact information so the publication can verify authorship
- Carry the most important message in the first paragraph
- Do not assume reader knowledge
- Inform readers of something they are not likely to know
- Contain credibility plugs that demonstrate that you are qualified to write on this topic
- Use positive language rather than negative commands

INEFFECTIVE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR...

- Use self-righteous language
- Exaggerate points
- Make readers feel as though they are being preached to
- Are untimely or irrelevant
- Are impersonal or dull

OP-EDS

OVERVIEW

Op-eds are guest opinion pieces of about 500 to 800 words that summarize an issue, develop an argument and propose a solution. Like letters to the editor, many op-eds are submitted to newspapers every day.

EFFECTIVE OP-EDS...

- Comply with newspaper submission guidelines
- Include all contact information so the newspaper can verify authorship

- Are timely and relevant
- Provide a provocative idea or opinion on a controversial or unexpected topic
- Inform a neglected issue
- Contain a personalized message

INEFFECTIVE OP-EDS...

- Are too long
- Are untimely or irrelevant
- Exaggerate points
- Are impersonal or dull

VIII. Media Toolkit II: Tip Sheets for Print, Television and Radio Interviews

When you're preparing for any kind of interview, use these tip sheets to brush up on the most important things to remember. No matter how much experience you have, it never hurts to remember the strategies that help you to connect with your audience and change hearts and minds about LGBT equality.

SPECIFIC TIPS FOR PRINT INTERVIEWS

- Send background materials to your interviewer
- Use notes to help you stay focused
- Speak slowly and clearly, and be aware of your vocal inflections
- Respect the interviewer's deadlines
- Don't ask to preview the piece
- Offer yourself as a resource on similar issues
- Follow up after the article is printed

SPECIFIC TIPS FOR TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

LIVE INTERVIEWS

- Should be approached with care, since they are not for the faint of heart
- Talking points should be diligently prepared in advance – remember that quotes cannot be edited out or, conversely, taken out of context
- May require preparation for call-in questions from viewers
- Remember that everything you say is ON THE RECORD

TAPED INTERVIEWS

- No one is watching yet, so you may pause, organize your thoughts and steer back to your major points
- Most of your interview will not be used – the sound bite is key
- The audience usually will only hear your answers — not the interviewer's questions

ON-THE-SCENE INTERVIEWS

- If you're hosting an event (like a rally, protest or speech), you should expect media to show up – in fact, you'll probably want to invite them
- Assign media roles to two or three key people. One person should be the spokesperson, another should be handling media requests and the third should be shadowing the spokesperson to move him or her from interview to interview (in cases where many reporters are present).

- Make sure you ask whether you're live or being taped. There's no way to tell in these cases unless you ask.

TELEVISION APPEARANCES

- It's not just what you say, but also how you look and act
- Dress conservatively. Your clothes shouldn't distract the audience from your message. Wear solid, tailored clothing with few accessories. Avoid flashy prints or patterns, white shirts without a jacket, all black clothing and shiny fabrics. If you are wearing a tie, try and select one that has few bold patterns and does not distract from your face. Avoid wearing red ties.
- Don't wear excessive makeup. TV studios generally have makeup artists who will assist you, but if not, use powder to remove glare or shine from your face.
- When on TV, don't look at the camera, look at the reporter and smile whenever possible
- The camera sees everything, so don't fidget, put your hands on your face or play with buttons, tie, pins or earrings. Keep your hands on your lap.
- Don't nod to everything that is said. While you might nod to denote understanding, it will appear that you are agreeing or worse, bouncing.
- Be mindful of the microphone on your lapel. It is sensitive and will pick up most sounds.
- If you make a mistake, correct it by repeating the entire statement. If you misspeak, stop, regroup and start the statement again from the beginning.
- Remove all bulky items from your pockets. If you carry a pager or cell phone, turn it off before the interview, or, better yet, give it to someone else to hold.

SPECIFIC TIPS FOR RADIO INTERVIEWS

- Radio interviews can also be live or taped
- No one can see you, so use notes to stay focused on your message
- Sound bites are key

TALKING POINTS CHECKLIST

- **Are they succinct?** Talking points should be no longer than a sentence or two, and when spoken should only be five to 15 seconds long.
- **Are they punchy?** Talking points should be engaging — a quote that feels dry or mechanical will not usually result in a media hit. Be clear, use vivid, values rich language and connect your mission to personal stories and professional expertise.
- **Do they use jargon?** Avoid technical terms and acronyms. While certain expressions may be a part of your everyday conversations, they may confuse or turn off your audience. Be as clear and understandable as possible.
- **Do they simplify an issue?** While the issues faced by the LGBT community are complex, the purpose of a talking point is to change opinions and attitudes, and to most effectively do so you must clarify and simplify complex issues. Boil down a legal or legislative issue to core values.
- **Do they use relatable terms?** Everyone can relate to values of equality, fairness, family and

community. Make your message more effective by using language that speaks to everyone's core values. By doing so, you can change hearts and minds and connect with people who might not be fully sympathetic to LGBT issues.

Appendix A: Resource Directory

MEDIA MONITORING

Google News

<http://news.google.com>

Search engine that can locate news coverage of your organization or find a specific news story with targeted searches. Results are provided from national, regional and local news outlets as well as LGBT press, news wires and international outlets. After a press release is submitted, you can track how many outlets have picked it up by conducting a Google News search with unique terms from your press release.

LexisNexis

<http://www.lexis.com>

An extensive database for searching news sources by specific term, date and publication. If you are looking for a transcript, you can either search the actual news source (e.g. CNN) or you can select “transcripts” which will search all available news sources. LexisNexis is a paid service, but it is available in many public libraries and all university libraries.

New America Media

<http://news.newamericamedia.org>

The country’s first and largest national collaboration of ethnic news organizations. Targeted searches can be modified by ethnic group to produce more specific news results.

PlanetOut

<http://www.planetout.com>

PlanetOut is a leading LGBT online community. The website features news, information, entertainment features, chat rooms, message boards, personals, shopping and travel. The website also includes pages targeted to families, seniors and teens, among others, as well as sections that focus on religion and spirituality, leather communities, HIV/AIDS and coming out.

Technorati

<http://www.technorati.com>

The most comprehensive search engine for the blogosphere, currently monitoring more than 50 million blogs. A good tool to monitor which blogs are covering your organization’s news.

Yahoo TV Listings

<http://tv.yahoo.com>

Yahoo will customize television listings to fit your time zone and cable or satellite listings.

365gay

<http://www.365gay.com>

LGBT-based news wire owned by LogoOnline.com. Covers a wide variety of LGBT news from around the world. This news wire sometimes feeds mainstream news outlets.

MEDIA TARGETING

American Journalism Review (AJR) NewsLink

<http://www.newslink.org>

Search for your local news outlets on the Internet using a database of more than 9,000 newspapers and magazines on the Web.

Bacon's MediaSource

<http://www.bacons.com>

A database that provides access to information on reporters, editors, columnists, syndicated writers, freelancers, analysts and research firms which can help you to quickly build an accurate media list for pitching stories or sending out press releases and media advisories. Bacon's requires a subscription, and the cost depends on your organization's needs. You may request a trial or demonstration from the website. Note that some users feel that Bacon's interface has functional limitations, especially since Internet Explorer is the only browser that supports Bacon's.

BurrellesLuce

<http://www.burrellesluce.com>

Media contact organization that targets, monitors, manages and analyzes media information. Targeting and monitoring services are useful, as they help target stories to the right reporters and outlets. They also offer an extremely comprehensive press clippings service that includes print, broadcast and online news sources delivered to you electronically.

NewsDirectory.Com

<http://www.newsdirectory.com>

Search local news outlets on the Internet by entering your area code. Searches through a database of more than 12,000 newspapers, magazines and local television stations.

News Media Yellow Book

<http://www.leadershipdirectories.com>

The News Media Yellow Book serves as a personnel directory of national news media organizations. Fully updated quarterly editions give you complete contact information for journalists, including assignments, direct-dial telephone numbers and email. Annual subscriptions are available.

News Voyager

<http://www.newspaperlinks.com/voyager.cfm>

A service of the Newspaper Association of America, Voyager is a gateway to your local newspaper. It will help you find domestic daily, weekly, college and alternative newspapers, as well as international newspapers and media organizations.

Radio Station World

http://radiostationworld.com/locations/united_states_of_america/usastates.asp

An informational directory of all radio stations in the country, organized by media market.

Vocus

<http://www.vocus.com>

A comprehensive yet easy to use media contact database. Vocus features a functional interface, pitching profiles for both media professionals and outlets, contact lists and list management functions, customizable email campaigns with analytics, detailed editorial calendars allowing for more proactive pitching, and a news clipping service that can utilize LexisNexis and Google news searches. Vocus is an ideal tool for organizations with complex needs for managing contacts and tracking media communications internally and

in comparison to other organizations.

RESEARCH & RATINGS

Arbitron Radio Ratings

http://www.arbitron.com/radio_stations/home.htm

An international media and marketing research firm serving radio broadcasters, radio networks, cable companies, advertisers, advertising agencies, outdoor advertising companies and the online radio industry.

Columbia Journalism Review (CJR)

<http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/>

Outlines which corporations own which news outlets in the “Who Owns What” section. This will help guide your media targeting and monitoring by seeing which outlets are related to each other.

Google Analytics

<http://analytics.google.com>

Use Google Analytics to analyze traffic on your website by learning which online marketing initiatives are cost effective and how visitors actually interact with your site. Make informed site design improvements and drive targeted traffic.

Nielsen Media Research – Designated Media Markets

<http://www.nielsenmedia.com/DMA.html>

Search local news outlets on the Internet by entering your area code. Searches through a database of more than 12,000 newspapers, magazines and local television stations.

The Pew Research Center

<http://people-press.org/>

Pew is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. They are best known for regular national surveys that measure public attentiveness to major news stories and for polling that charts trends in values and fundamental political and social attitudes.

MEDIA RESOURCES

GLAAD Media Reference Guide

<http://www.glaad.org/media/guide/index.php>

A comprehensive guide for media that outlines acceptable, offensive, problematic and defamatory LGBT terminology. It also provides several “In Focus” sections that outline ways of covering specific LGBT issues and a complete community directory that lists contacts for LGBT advocacy organizations.

The SPIN Project

<http://www.spinproject.org>

The SPIN Project strengthens nonprofit social justice organizations, small and large, to communicate effectively for themselves. They are loaded with valuable publications and resources that will enlighten your communications efforts.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Connexion

<http://www.connexion.org>

An online social network specifically for the LGBT community.

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com>

A social networking site originally designed exclusively for college students and young alumni. While the site is now open to everyone, it is still most popular with young people.

Friendster

<http://www.friendster.com>

Despite the recent popularity of MySpace, Friendster still has a very loyal demographic of social networkers. This site can be a great vehicle for spreading your news and generating grassroots interest in your organization.

MySpace

<http://www.myspace.com>

The social networking craze is still alive and well, and MySpace could be a great way to spread your organization's messages and news. Creating an organizational MySpace page can also aid in volunteer recruitment and creating a recognizable brand for your organization.

IMAGES

Creative Commons

<http://www.creativecommons.org>

A comprehensive directory that supplies reusable audio-visual media.

Getty Images

<http://www.gettyimages.com/>

Supplies top-notch stock photography to strengthen your press packets and marketing materials. An easy-to-use service to find the images you need at a reasonable cost.

WireImage

<http://www.wireimage.com/>

Digital photo agency and wire service that can be utilized for your photography needs. WireImage also licenses its photos at a reasonable cost.

Appendix B: LGBT Press

LGBT media outlets are a fantastic way to spread your messages. Here is a sampling of some of the LGBT publications across the United States:

NATIONAL

The Advocate

Monthly

www.advocate.com

Clik Magazine

Published monthly

www.clikmagazine.com

Curve Magazine

Published eight times annually

www.curvemag.com

Genre Magazine

Monthly

www.genremagazine.com

Instinct Magazine

Monthly

www.instinctmag.com

Out Magazine

Monthly

www.out.com

Transgender Tapestry

Quarterly

www.ifge.org

CALIFORNIA

LOS ANGELES

Frontiers

Biweekly

www.frontierspublishing.com

IN Los Angeles

Biweekly

www.inlamag.com

Lesbian News

Monthly

www.lesbiannews.com

SACRAMENTO

Out in Sacramento

Biweekly

www.outinsacramento.com

SAN DIEGO

Gay and Lesbian Times

Weekly

www.gaylesbiantimes.com

SAN FRANCISCO

Bay Area Reporter

Weekly

www.ebar.com

San Francisco Bay Times

Weekly

www.sfbaytimes.com

COLORADO

DENVER

Out Front Colorado

Biweekly

www.outfrontcolorado.com

FLORIDA

CENTRAL/WESTERN FLORIDA

Gazette Tampa Bay

Monthly

www.gazettetampabay.com

FT. LAUDERDALE

411 Magazine

Weekly

www.the411mag.com/

Express

Weekly

www.expressgaynews.com

She Magazine

Monthly

www.shemaq.com

ORLANDO

Watermark

Biweekly

www.watermarkonline.com

GEORGIA

ATLANTA

David Atlanta

Weekly

www.davidatlanta.com

Labrys Atlanta

Monthly

www.labrysatl.com

Southern Voice

Weekly

www.southernvoice.com

ILLINOIS

CHICAGO

Chicago Free Press

Weekly

www.chicagofreepress.com

Windy City Times

Weekly

www.windycitymediagroup.com

SPRINGFIELD

Prairie Flame

Monthly

www.prairieflame.biz

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE

Gay Life

Biweekly

www.baltimoregaylife.com

Baltimore OUTloud

Biweekly

www.baltimoreoutloud.com

MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON

Bay Windows

Weekly

www.baywindows.com

IN News Weekly

Weekly

www.innewsweekly.com

MICHIGAN

DETROIT

Michigan Pride Source

Weekly

www.pridesource.com

MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS

Lavender

Biweekly

www.lavendermagazine.com

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS

The Vital Voice

Biweekly

www.thevitalvoice.com

NEVADA

LAS VEGAS

Out Las Vegas

Monthly

www.outlasvegas.com

NEW JERSEY

Out In Jersey

Monthly

www.outinjersey.net

NEW YORK

NEW YORK CITY

Gay City News

Weekly

www.gaycitynews.com

GO NYC

Monthly

www.gonycmagazine.com

HX

Weekly

www.hx.com

New York Blade

Weekly

www.nyblade.com

Next

Weekly

www.nextmagazine.net

Velvet Park

Quarterly

www.velvetparkmagazine.com

NORTH CAROLINA

CHARLOTTE

Q Notes

Biweekly

www.q-notes.com

OHIO

CLEVELAND

Gay People's Chronicle

Weekly

www.gaypeopleschronicle.com

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia Gay News

Weekly

www.epqn.com

TENNESSEE

NASHVILLE

Out & About

Monthly

www.outandaboutnewspaper.com

Inside Out

Weekly

www.insideoutnashville.com

TEXAS

DALLAS

Dallas Voice

Weekly

www.dallasvoice.com

HOUSTON

Houston Voice

Weekly

www.houstonvoice.com

Out Smart

Monthly

www.outsmartmagazine.com

WASHINGTON

SEATTLE

Seattle Gay News

Weekly

www.sgn.org

WASHINGTON D.C.

Metro Weekly

Weekly

www.metroweekly.com

The Washington Blade

Weekly

www.washingtonblade.com