

**Nonprofit 911 – September 1, 2009**  
**Pitching Your Cause:**  
**Effectively Working with the Media to Spread Your Story**  
with Zan Dubin Scott, Scott Martelle and Paul West  
Sponsored by Network for Good

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**Rebecca Higman:** So now I am happy to introduce our speakers and welcome them back. They were kind enough to join us on August 18<sup>th</sup> for a public relations writing session, and today is going to be more about public relations pitching and working more effectively with the media.

Our first speaker is Zan Dubin Scott. And Zan developed her public relations expertise largely as a staff writer for the LA Times. After her time as a journalist, she founded ZDS Communications, which is a national public relations, marketing, and writing firm that specializes in energy and the environment, education, the arts, and healthcare.

Secondly, welcome back to Paul West. Paul has offered on the ground communication and support services to progressive clients and causes across the US, Europe, and Africa since the 1990s. His Ashland based communications consultancy represents clients ranging from biodynamic farms to evolutionary authors whose products and practices promote personal and planetary healing.

And finally, a big welcome to Scott Martelle who is also a veteran journalist. His tenure includes 12 years as a staff writer for the Los Angeles Times. He has covered an array of stories from local government to presidential campaigns, author profiles, and book reviews. He has also taught journalism and narrative storytelling at UC-Irvine and Chapman University.

So without further ado, I am happy to turn the floor over to Zan to get us started.

**Zan Dubin Scott:** Thank you so much Rebecca. It is delightful to be back, and welcome everyone. I am going to start with three points that I think are helpful on this topic. The first one is to become the in-house journalist for your own organization. Second is become a media nerd; no everything there is to know about the media outlets that you pitch. And the third is for new media, social networking, etc, get personal. I will cover each one of these.

But I would like to start with number two which I think will make it easier for you to do number one. Identify the media you want to cover your organization. That is step one. And then read, listen, or watch everything. Everyday become attentive to those outlets so that you can know what they cover and who covers what, which reporters cover which topics.

Something I reminded myself of the other day is that this does not necessarily mean subscribing to all these various newspapers or online outlets. But of course we can all learn so much just by Googling a reporter and his or her outlet. You can often see lists of stories by that reporter.

And I would like to repeat something that Scott shared last time. And that is the value of knowing who writes about what so that you don't end up calling the LA Times, for instance, thinking that you are talking to the Hollywood Reporter, because that will instantly put a damper on the reporter's enthusiasm to talk to you or write about your organization.

So I like concrete examples, and I would like to start with one. One of my clients is a solar company. They install solar panels. I had a pitch, a product pitch, from really knowing the LA Times inside and out, pun intended. I knew that this particular product pitch would be far too commercial for the business reporters at the paper.

However, the LA Times has a relatively new blog called "California Consumer", in which literally publishes, on the website as a blog, daily discounts at Starbucks. You name it. This is something that would have been an anathema to reporters just a few years ago, but it is part of the landscape today. So I pitched my very commercial angle and they picked it up and blogged about it.

So again, I am hoping to illustrate the idea of really understanding what your outlet does and who does it. Time Magazine recently wrote a pitch related to another client. Their piece was about the failure of the juvenile justice system to rehabilitate youth. It is kind of a shocking story, actually.

And I have a nonprofit client who inspires incarcerated teens to reform through education. So I will be pitching that particular Time reporter, you can bet.

Someone asked on our last call whether we tailor our press releases for each particular outlet. I would like to answer that. I don't often alter my press releases, particularly because often the organizations will post them online and it is not a great idea to change them too drastically.

But I very, very often write a personal customized note on top of my pasted press release email to a reporter. And I try to link it to a timely issue. I am always seeking to make my issue as relevant to what is being covered in the newspaper day to do.

So for instance, during the depth of the recession, my solar client hired several installers. And I did tailor my pitches to that, also using kind of an element of surprise. "Hey you guys, do you want a report on good job news in a down economy?"

I also wrote a note for myself here to mention HARO, which many of you may know about. It stands for Help A Reporter Out, and it is a completely free service. It is a source of leads. Basically, I get three emails a day chalked full of reporters' queries. And your

organization is free to answer directly to the reporter if you have a relevant story. This also helps me keep a pulse on what reporters are looking for and favoring day to day.

Someone also asked whether getting a PRSA certification is of value these days, PRSA standing for the Public Relations Society of America. And I am just going to answer that in one word. Nope!

OK. So I am going to go now to my point number one. Now that you know what makes a good story, keep your eyes open for them within your own organization. We talked about what makes a great story last week and studying the media also is another way to reinforce that on a daily basis, what makes it into the media and what doesn't.

So anyway, to the point of becoming a reporter in your own organization, ask every one of your staff members to do the same, to keep their eyes out for great stories. I was on staff in a hospital for a while in the marketing department, and I would gather together the chief RN's on each floor for a 15 minute discussion. I sort of tried to educate them in what makes a great story so that they all could become the eyes and the ears. And we came up with some amazing stories.

One of the nurses told me about a woman with Cystic Fibrosis who had a double lung transplant who competed in a Triathlon. And out of that I got two great stories in the LA Times. I would not have known that had I not been in contact with the nurses and alerted them to what makes a good story.

In 2000 I was working on staff at a hospital and I heard about volunteers at the hospital helping the patients to vote for the president. It was a presidential election year and the volunteers would go bed to bed with absentee ballots. Again, I pitched it to the LA Times and it made the front cover of their features section.

And of course, as you dig through these details always keep in mind what your readers and your listeners, your audience, what you want them to know about your organization.

With the educational group that I represent, the director's own story of overcoming is directly related to the program he directs. So I used that juicy detail, but again, just to direct it back to what our organization does.

And if you are having trouble finding juicy stories within your organization, ask someone new to the group their opinion of what is new or what is novel or unusual. Sometimes it takes an outsider to give us that fresh view. This could be an intern or someone's spouse even who doesn't even work there.

And be creative about who in your organization might make a great story. A lot of us are wedded to the idea that it has got to be about our CEO or an executive director. But of course great stories can come out of a volunteer or etc. Let's face it. Sometimes it can be so difficult to break into the media that even if the story doesn't feature our CEO, it gets the organization mentioned and named.

There was another great question I saw from the last session, and that was how to break out of niche markets, which I assume to mean say, yes, you are getting a lot of coverage in your own neighborhood newspaper but you would like bigger exposure.

The best example I can think of was actually friend of mine, an environmentalist, who saved up all of his trash and recycling for an entire year. You may have heard about him because he got so much PR for this that he was getting...It was all reactive. We were getting the calls rather than trying to get him coverage. He was on Good Morning America, etc, etc.

So that was an extreme event. You might imagine how his wife felt saving up the trash. And of course what happened was he stopped accumulating. He was really able to cut back. But it was an extreme story. But it was a good example really of how to make news and how to break out and continue to think creatively.

So that is it for me. I look forward to your questions.

**Rebecca:** Great. Thanks so much Zan. Paul, maybe you want to take the floor next?

**Paul West:** Sure. I loved everything Zan had to say. I will try not to cover anything she has already talked about. She gave a great lead-in. I will cover a few tips and tricks that I have used over the years that have worked really well for me, as well as just a couple of ways of thinking about it a little bit differently.

I really look at it more as planting versus pitching. And what I mean by that is as you are looking, do you have the right seed for the right soil? And if so, where is that and how do you weed, water, and nurture that into the types of, not just a story, but the types of relationships that result from a lot of stories over a long time?

And so one of the things when you are starting out, especially if you are new and you really don't have any media relationships out there, you want to look at it as a very patient planting process.

Unless you are on some really hard deadline and you have got to call the assignment desk, and you have got to get coverage for a very particular event on a date certain, put yourself on a little bit of a longer leash for relationship development.

Realize that you are planting seeds with every single news release you send out, with every phone call you have, with every conversation you have. You are slowly, over time, raising awareness about your organization, the issues you work on, and developing a relationship individually and institutionally.

But when you are in the crunch, there are a couple of different things that I think can really help you make some distinctions and break your work up in a way that you can be

more effective with the people you know and constantly be increasing that universe of people you are working with in the media.

One of those things, too, is looking at the difference between having a big media list and a really special list of those who have covered you. Now your big list is those people who you don't really know. You might know that they cover a certain topic or they work on a certain beat. You haven't had the opportunity or occasion to have any direct interaction with them yet.

And those are the people that you are generally just making aware of what your organization is doing. Sometimes you hear back from them before you have had a chance to call them.

The people you hear back from off that list are golden because they are interested, so you want to give them a lot of attention. Any journalist that takes the time to respond... You are not even in a pitching mode at that point. They are very interested in what you are saying. And definitely put those people at the top of your list in terms of who you are giving attention to, because they took the time to call.

Now once you start getting coverage, you will develop a list of all the media who has covered you in the past, some of whom will be connected and some of whom won't be connected, some of whom may be at the same media organization if you are dealing with larger media organizations in your market or if you are working with national media.

There is, I have found, a big benefit to maintaining a small list of people who have covered you in the past, and you are not really ever going to pitch them again. You are going to call them and make what I call "call story offers" as opposed to pitches.

And the deeper your relationship, the longer you have had those relationships, the more latitude you have to call up a reporter, an editor, or a producer and say, "Before we go out with this, I would like to offer you an opportunity to consider this story before I take it to anybody else."

What is great is it really helps the relationship. It helps them. If you have gotten to a point where they really trust you already and you trust them, you can count on giving them something that might be sensitive and need to be embargoed, and they can count on the information that you are giving them checking out because they have had good experiences with you.

It is a really great way to not have to get into pitch mode on a story, and then break a story to generate those early inquiries and give those a lot of attention. And then pitching might be the third or fourth thing that you actually do in your outreach plan if you had this in a step by step kind of fashion.

So that is one thing to keep in mind. Treat your big list a little differently than you treat the list of those who have covered you before. And think about, "Is this a good

opportunity for me to call them up and offer them either an advance or an exclusive in their market or an exclusive in their media on this story?”

The other thing that I think I would like to build on in terms of what Zan was talking about on being a media nerd is that it is really, really important before every news release goes out to look at that release.

And obviously, many of us work in the same area, so we tend to kind of track the news in those areas. But if you are not already tracking the news in those areas, at least before that particular release goes out, even if you don't have a formal tracking service or access to one, you can use Google News and you can go on there and you can see which reporters are covering that topic, not just within your market, but nationally and internationally.

And sometimes, even though somebody is further a field, everybody is so connected now, especially reporters covering similar industries or similar issues. It is often nice to let those folks know. And you might even find opportunities to offer a story to somebody at the national level. And you might even find an opportunity to take your story national, although you may not have thought of it as that.

You might find a reporter at Time, a reporter at CNN, or a reporter at the New York Times who has been tracking this issue. And you might find that they have done six pieces on this. And in fact, they have done six pieces out of six different markets, and yours would make another good fit if they were going to do another one in following up on the development of the issue and what is going on.

So really being that media nerd like Zan talked about is super crucial. And if you are not tracking stuff beforehand, always make sure and kind of cross reference your news release and look for reporters, especially in your market, who are already covering those issues and reach out to them first. And often reach out to them even before you do a massive release if you have got the time to do that kind of research ahead of time.

And then the final thing that you can do is you can use social media to actually attract news. I call it the “attractor factor”. We don't think about it, but stars ultimately line up because of their center of gravity. And if you build a strong enough center of gravity around what you are doing, ultimately you begin to attract inquiries. You begin to attract calls like the example Zan used. And I actually know who she is talking about; the guy who saved all his trash.

Ultimately, what he was doing was so unique, so interesting, so absolutely out there that word got around. And there is no form of advertising better than word of mouth. And whether you are in the New York Times or on CNN, ultimately the goal is that people will read it there or see it there and then talk about it, and we see social change occur as a result.

And when someone like that does something like that, they activate like an attractor factor. They get people interested. They get people calling in and word will spread all the way up to someone like a “Good Morning America”. It will just ricochet around the right circles, and then the next thing you know you are getting some significant inquiries.

So you can activate that factor more now than ever before because of social media, because it used to be that maybe you had to know someone that knew someone that knew someone who could whisper in the ear of someone who could get it up to that level.

But now with everybody so closely monitoring what everyone else is talking about online, and on their Tweets, and on their Facebook pages, and there are so many monitoring tools, well these organizations are doing the same thing when they are looking for news. They are looking for what everybody else is talking about out there.

CNN and some of the larger networks have even gone so far as integrating Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace in with almost every anchor that they have in one fashion or another.

So you can actually attract news using social media, and this is especially effective when you may not have a full release but you have just got some significant update on something you just did a release on a week ago.

You can use social media to kind of fill in the troughs a little bit and keep the buzz going. And what I think you will see from time to time is that you will even have the power to ultimately start attracting some inquiries from various media around the world.

And with that, I will pass the baton and look forward to taking questions later.

**Scott Martelle:** Hi. This is Scott. I guess I am third up. And the problem with following these two great resources in the inevitability of redundancy, so I will try to keep that limited.

First, definitely be a media nerd. Look at this as kind of the carrot feeding of your journalists. In the last call we talked a little bit about doing outreach to beat reporters and I think this is crucial.

If you can make yourself a source for a reporter, tipping him or her off to things that are happening that affect your organization, you are going to be in a much better position with that relationship building that Paul was talking about.

This matters mostly, I think, with newspaper reporters, not so much with TV reporters. TV reporters are so drawn by the visual that it is kind of hard to lunge into that.

But read the paper closely. See who is covering the stories that seem related to your areas of interest. “Hey, I like that piece you did on the food bank. Do you have time for a

phone call or to sit down to a cup of coffee? I want to talk a little bit about what we are doing and what sorts of stories you want to hear about.”

The key here is journalists are wary of filling their daily calendar with a bunch of pitches. Point out that what you are trying to do now is just sort of have kind of a feeler chat with them about your organization, what you are doing, and where that reporter’s interest lies.

If you are running a food bank and you have seen a reporter has done a big story on a food bank, don’t contact the reporter and recommend they do a story on your food bank because they are not going to. It is just not going to happen. They are not going to do the same story twice.

Pick your punches. If you have got a nice human interest story about your volunteers doing something cool, you want to get some public recognition, that is fine. But if they have already done that kind of story, they are not going to do it again.

You also have to worry about your own timing. If you want to get your volunteers some recognition some months before your annual big fundraising event, then you really don’t want to be pushing the volunteers’ story, because if an outlet does a story on the volunteers, they are much less like to do a story on your fundraising program. The reason for that is they don’t want to be seen as being in the pocket of the organizations they are covering.

So you have to sort of figure out, and you can do an internal triage of your own public interest sections, and focus on two, three, or maybe four a year that mean the most to your group, and then try to build the campaigns around that.

With that said, if the volunteer effort is an unusual approach to your main fundraising thing, then the media loves these ancillary ways to get at a story. I used to hang out at a bar when I lived in Detroit whose owner used a nonprofit fundraising event as a promotional arm for the bar. Around Thanksgiving time the regulars would donate a few hundred turkeys at the bar. They would cook them at home and bring them back to the bar. They would be delivered by volunteers to local families in the neighborhood.

And then a couple weeks later the regulars would take pledges to dive into the Detroit River around the first week in December. And all that money would go into buying a present for each student in three nearby elementary schools. It was a very poor neighborhood on the eastside of Detroit.

The local media ate that up. I was one of them. I wrote my share of stories about this guy. And what happened was the bar owner got this incredible amount of free media for his business because he was focusing on this ancillary nonprofit thing. That kind of strategy is worth thinking about in applying ways to sort of shoehorn your projects into the media through the backdoor.

Also, a little more specifically. Your press release when you send it out is not going to be the only one hitting the assignment desk that day, and that is an obvious point. But to reinforce it, I emailed an old friend of mine who is the city editor at the LA Times, and I asked him how many contacts he gets a day. He told me he gets about 20 email pitches a day and a dozen phone calls a day. Those are just the ones that make their way to him. There are other sub-editors who get their own share of these things.

He said that maybe one of those contacts will lead to a story. So that is one out of 32 or so. He gets tons of corporate promotional items, things about new car launches, product releases, and new hotels opening. This is the kind of stuff the city desk would never cover. He gets a lot of announcements about protests, which unless they reach critical mass aren't going to get any coverage.

So if your organization is planning a "bang the drum for hunger" kind of thing, they are not going to cover it. There is just too much other stuff going on. Staged nonprofit events involving celebrities get nowhere. The example he used is, "Wolfgang Puck serves the homeless." They are not going to cover it just because Wolfgang Puck is there.

That might be a good program for your folks to push to your own people, that kind of internal community building that you need to do, but it is not going to get much play in the newspaper.

So what kind of stuff does he bite on? He said human interest stories, which is one of the broadest categories you can imagine. And you heard Zan talk about some of those things, like the guy who was saving his garbage.

But also, community events and fairs have some resonance if they can be linked to current events. If there is a big anti-gun information fair going on shortly after a well covered shooting, you are probably going to get some coverage or be able to persuade them to talk about coverage.

If you have got an innovative food kitchen program as the economy is tanking; that sort of thing. That resonates with assigning editors. But the key here is the event has to be made relevant to a wide swath of people and not just be something for your own supporters.

And obviously this is a sliding scale depending on the size of your community. Organizations in small communities tend to have better luck with the local media than those in big markets like LA. That is because there is less competition for news.

And that is kind of how you have to look at the other events of organizations in town, as competition. So plan your events and plan your pitches for the most advantageous times. Late August is a pretty good time to plan something because there is hardly anything else going on except for wildfires here in Southern California. So that can get you on the radar screen of assigning editors. And late Saturday morning, late Sunday morning are really good times because the papers are starving for live news and live events to cover. If you

do it late in the afternoon, you are not going to hit their deadlines. So if you do it late in the morning, you have got a better chance of drawing their interest.

I could go on like this for an hour, but I am not going to. I will cut it off here, and I think we are going to open it up for questions.

**Rebecca:** Wonderful. Thank you all for your presentations, and I am happy to dive on into our question and answer. We have already gotten quite a handful. I think we are going to have plenty to get us through the next half hour.

So I wanted to start off with a question that came in from Tony, and Tony had a question about continuing engagement after you do actually manage to strike a story with a reporter that gets coverage.

So Tony says, “After a story has run once, how do you continue to engage other outlets? Sometimes we find the first story didn’t hit the mark, and yet other outlets are not longer interested in covering ‘old news’?”

**Scott:** Find a new wrinkle. Find some way to update the information so when the newspaper has written a story about it and you are trying a week later to get some TV coverage, and the TV assignment desk says that is old news, say, “Well that part of it is, but this is a new wrinkle. This is the stuff that is not in the newspaper yet. This is the stuff that people need to know.”

So you have to look for ways to advance the information and improve upon the information to give it kind of that fresh relevance and resonance I talked about earlier.

**Zan:** I would like to give an example, too. I have a client who has developed an eco label program for sustainable apparel. We went out with a press release just like a week ago announcing the new program and inviting the public and the industry to answer a questionnaire so that they could actually help develop the parameters of the program.

You might imagine that since this is a startup, a lot of papers are hands off until a product is proven. In fact, a friend of mine at USA Today told me that...Some of you know about Tesla, which is the electric car company. They are the hottest thing going in the auto industry at the moment. And he refused to write about them for two years until they were proven.

So I think it is just helpful to remind ourselves of the challenges and not feel disheartened when we don’t get a media pickup. But anyway, so I went out with the first press release on this new eco label, and our plan is now to do really exactly what Scott said. Hopefully a lot of people will fill out these questionnaires.

And then I will go back to the same media, maybe not exactly every one, but a lot of the same media with either just a nice pitch saying, “Tons of people have completed our

questionnaire. This indicates the growing interest in sustainable in the apparel industry.” Or ideally, we will go with results from the public feedback.

**Rebecca:** So our next question comes in from Betsy, and she has a question about enticing journalists to attend events or other goings on that nonprofits have. So Betsy would like to know, “What does a journalist need if he or she comes out to my event, and what does he or she want that would entice the journalist to come to my event in the first place?”

**Paul:** I will jump in on that one. I think you have to look at what type of journalist you are asking to come to your event. So there are journalists who may cover what is going on in your area. And I think, I have found anyway, they much more appreciate being invited to come to the event with no expectation of coverage as an opportunity to get to know you, get to know the organization better, the organization’s supporters, etc.

They I think there is another type that you would invite to the event that you would be expecting coverage, and those would be people for whom that is their beat that they go out and they cover events. They might be a photographer who goes around and covers events around town, or they might have a column. That might be their beat, generally, just to cover goings on in your area.

So I think that you could have both of them there feasibly even on the same night even. But it is definitely good to look at events that your group is doing as relationship building opportunities with no pressure and no expectation of coverage from journalists, realizing that the bigger coverage you are going to get later will be worth a lot more than just a mention in the paper that you had an event.

Now leading up to an event though, I think you can also encourage this by just making sure that you are reaching out early and often so that they are aware that it is coming, even if it is only through their listings and calendar departments.

**Scott:** Let me just follow up on what Paul said as someone who was getting invited to a whole bunch of things. As a beat reporter, you want to be absorbing a lot of stuff you aren’t going to be writing about just so you can sort of keep your finger on the pulse of the trends.

When I was working as a beat reporter, I was more likely to go back to those sources of the events I attended. When I spotted a trend I would go back to that source because that is kind of where the thread was picked up.

And to go to the other kind of pulse, talking about the beat reporter who you want to do sort of a deadline story that is actually covering the event, two things are crucial. One is have all the information handy for the reporter as cleanly and accurately as you can have it. And if you are the publicity person, don’t stand at the reporter’s elbows while he is wandering around talking to people. Make yourself available. You offer to grab the CEO

if that person is needed. But don't shadow the reporter because they begin to resent that, and it will sort of erode their sense that this is an event they need to be covering.

**Rebecca:** Great. Excellent. I think it was Paul who was talking about reaching out to particular media and understanding what beats certain journalists cover, so that is a great lead in for Francesca's question.

Francesca says, "I would love to hear some advice on building a good press list. Is there inexpensive software that you recommend for a small organization, something that is easy to maintain, specific to issues covered? Furthermore, do you have any advice on finding up to do date contact information for journalists?"

**Paul:** Sure. There are a number of different services out there you can subscribe to. They can be very expensive. If you are an environmental group, you can have access to one of them through Green Media Toolshed, which is very affordable, and it is based on your annual budget.

Again, if you are working on environmental issues, you can use Green Media Toolshed. I don't know of any equivalents in other movements. But there is what is now called Cision, Vocus; those are two major ones you can subscribe to.

The way that I handle it is that I have... Those people that are in the equivalent of my personal Rolodex are people that I have worked with. I think that the way you build an effective media list is one contact, one relationship at a time over a very long time. That is really your gold in terms of making a career out of working with the media long term.

In the short term, if you can't afford a list then you have to build on yourself, and the best way to go about that is still one at a time as you look through all of the media in your area or in your sector that are relevant. There is more than enough material online now that it is very easy to identify who covers what.

And then sometimes you have to then find out how to get their email address so that you can reach out to them. And that may mean a phone call to open contact with them, again, if you don't have a way to access their email address.

**Zan:** I would like to add a bit to that. If you don't have the bandwidth yourself to do this, this might be a great job for an intern, and it goes back to being that media nerd. It entails reading.

The other day I was reading the New York Times and on the front page there was an article by their Hong Kong Bureau chief about solar power. I also work with electric vehicle companies. And just the theme of this story was very closely related to the electric vehicle industry. I just emailed the reporter.

Of course one handy little tip is that at the LA Times, The New York Times, and lots of other outlets the email formula is the same. LA Times, for instance, `firstname.lastname@latimes.com`. So usually you can figure it out.

And sometimes I just go poking through these outlets' websites. And even if I can't find a reporter's email, I can usually find, say, an advertisement department email. And then I sort of sleuth the formula that way.

But any rate, I emailed the reporter and just said a couple words. I said, "Thanks for the great article. You might be interested to know..." and then I gave him a bit of news about an electric car company outfit I work with, and also asked him if I could add him to my press list.

And when you send them really relevant information, as Scott said, acting as a resource, the answer is almost always yes. But out of courtesy I ask them, "May I add you to my press list?"

And then I also asked if we could add him to the receive blog identifications from the vice president at this EC outfit. So direct outreach...I think the most valuable thing I have ever told anyone, and I say it over and over again, is that reporters are people too.

So that is what I do. I obey the deadline rules. I always ask if, if I call, "Are you on deadline?" first, or at least when I remember to. But they are people too. They love to hear from the grassroots, the people really doing things.

**Scott:** And just to follow up on the personal outreach part. I spent a lot of years as a general assignment reporter, which meant I had no set beat. I was sort of at the mercy of the assigning desk. So I was covering a wide range of stories.

And quite often I would write about topic A, and I would suddenly get deluged with press releases from organizations involved in topic A when I had no interest in the topic other than I was supposed to write that story on that Monday afternoon.

So what Zan is saying is really important. If you see a story that seems like it is in sync with what you are working on, email the reporter. "Is this something you write about regularly? Would you like to be added to our email list? No commitments; just to keep you abreast of what we are doing." That can save you a lot of time and hassle, and you keep your credibility up. If you start adding people willy nilly, journalists tend to lose respect for your information. And that is the last thing you want to have happen.

**Rebecca:** Great. I actually want to share a follow-up that came in from another one of our participants. I hear all of the great information you are sharing about personal contacts. But for those organizations that are keeping a media list, Kelly would like to know, "With journalism changing so drastically, how much shelf life does a list have? So how often do you need to refresh it and go back and check all that contact information?"

For instance, if you send something to someone who is no longer at the outlet, will it get forwarded or will Kelly need to start all over again?"

**Zan:** Kelly will need to start all over again. And she is absolutely right. Unfortunately, like the staff of the LA Times when I was there were about 1,200. It is about 600 today. Is that correct Scott?

**Scott:** It is either a little higher or a little lower.

**Zan:** At any rate, yeah, unfortunately staff can change from week to week. So again, what I do is I pay close attention to their websites, which themselves can be outdated. But it is helpful to just look at who is writing stories.

Yes, unfortunately you do have to keep your lists updated. But I would not assume that your pitch was getting forwarded. Within reason I would redouble my efforts.

**Scott:** Hopefully a lot of times when reporters get email pitches and they have changed beats, they will email you back saying, "Please drop me from this email list. I am no longer covering this subject."

If they move under their own volition, sometimes they will tell you who replaced them. But you just need to use a lot of your own legwork. I don't know what the cycle would be, but I imagine it would be, what Zan? A couple of months you visit your list and see who is still alive?

**Zan:** Another thing I did a few months ago was send a very brief email to everyone on one particular media list I have asking them, "Do you want to stay or do you want to go?" And it was one line saying, "If you would like to continue receiving emails on this topic, please reply with the word stay in the subject line."

This was a revelation to me. I heard from people, like really important reporters that I had no clue if they were reading my stuff or getting it, or if it was going to their spam file or not. It was wonderful and it was really reinforcing because I predominately got stays.

And naturally there were some that I didn't hear from and may never hear from. But again, that is sort of part of the acceptance part of it. And one thing that just keeps coming back to me is again, it all boils down to, "Do I have significant news?"

I mean this is really one of the challenges in PR, because this particular media list I was refreshing is with a group that is just making a lot of real bonafide news. And again, it all comes down to that. So I would just like to reinforce that.

If you are struggling with, "What makes news?", again, it goes back to the principles of according to whom. Your neighborhood newspaper may be absolutely feeling that your news is valid. So again, it just sort of boils down to becoming a journalist yourself.

**Scott:** And just as a footnote to that if I could. I know there is a certain percentage of publicists who like to report back to their employers or their contractors that, “Yes. I did the contract on the event and I contacted 1,000 media people.”

But if you are sending news releases to people who aren’t covering that kind of stuff, it is a worthless contact. You have to be very sure that your lists are targeting the people who need to be targeted.

**Rebecca:** Great. Regarding the pitches, we have gotten a number of questions come in about how nonprofits actually go about reaching out to these different outlets.

So for instance, Debbie wrote in and Debbie said, “I heard that it is a good idea to fax your press release in addition to emailing it, because so few people actually use a fax machine anymore. I heard that it stands out a bit more than just another email in an inbox to send the fax in addition. What do you think? And also, just as a side question, how much does the size of a press release really matter?”

**Paul:** I think that on the second question the important thing is that you do keep the one page rule from the perspective of making sure that everything that they need to read is on the equivalent of one page or screen, not just too much of a scroll down.

The great thing about email is without attaching documents, you can then give a lot of supporting information. If you have got them to a full page and they look down and they say, “Wow. The reporting on this will actually be relatively easy because I have got a bunch of sourced facts here and a lot of credible spokespeople that have already clearly public ally spoken out that I can ring up directly.”

So I think that it is a both ends situation. And you get the bonus now of being able to tack on some additional information that might help push them over the edge in making their decision.

And what was the first question again?

**Rebecca:** Whether it was a good idea to actually send your press release via different vehicles.

**Paul:** Oh, the fax. I would say not really because most decisions are made online. They share emails back and forth to decide if they are going to cover something. You know how much we are all at our computers inside these news organizations, whether they are freelancers not in the office or they are in the office. That is generally how stuff gets shared very, very quickly.

So I think a fax might work well for you if you had some kind of breaking news that was happening right that minute and you needed to get reporters down there to see this amazing event unfolding. Yeah, I think in that kind of case you might look at fax, phone,

and email. But I think generally speaking, unless a reporter has said they have a fax preference, which many do, then email is a better default.

**Scott:** Let me throw just sort of a partial rebuttal up there about the fax and breaking news and that kind of stuff. Most fax machines that you are sending your material to are a centralized fax machine in the newsroom. And there is usually some intern, a news clerk, or somebody who has got 16 other chores to do going by every now and then clearing the faxes off the machine and dropping them on the desks of the editors and the reporters that they are being sent out to.

So a fax is actually one of the slowest ways to get information out to the media these days. Paul is spot on about the email stuff. A lot of journalists don't work in the home office anymore.

When I was working for the LA Times, the last couple of years I was working from home in Irvine, which is 45 miles from downtown LA. If somebody sent a fax to the paper, it was a royal pain in the neck to have that fax forwarded to me because I don't have a fax machine. I do everything on email.

When traveling on the road covering politics, faxes just wouldn't catch up with you. Email is sort of the courtesy of the realm these days for media contacts, and that should be the primary way of contact.

I much prefer getting an email as opposed to getting a phone call. Phone calls can come at opportune times. They go to voicemail. You get 26 voicemails stacked up and you don't pay them the same kind of attention that emails get. So I would make the email the first point of contact.

**Rebecca:** Great. That makes a lot of sense about all the journalists having their own points of preference and understanding how things are changing.

Let's see. We have a couple of questions. I will put them together because they are similar. The first one is from Joanna, and Joanna says her Cedar company works mostly overseas, frequently in areas that are in the news. But if she goes to the Cedar desk with their latest project, they say, "This is a foreign affairs story." And then if she goes to the foreign desk, they say, "This is an art story." "We would be happy enough in either section. How do we avoid being bumped out of both?"

And then another question that comes in from Pam, who is having a similar situation of kind of being bumped around, says, "We have difficulty getting coverage beyond just the community calendar listings, even in our local paper. To educate the community and personalize the services, we write some of the articles as features, but in many cases the published version is shorted to the who, what, when, where, why basics, and the photo and caption are really the extent of the coverage."

What advice do you have and what should these folks be doing differently than they are doing now?

**Zan:** I will take the second question. Save your garbage for a year. [laughs] Of course that is a joke. But yeah, you may again just have to think out of the proverbial box and do something different. Give them a reason to cover your group.

Maybe you are already doing events. So then I would have to say do something different. This is funny, but there is a book that I am pulling off of my shelf as we speak, and it is called “Public Relations for Dummies.” And yes, it is one of the Dummies books. But I keep it as a resource because it just has some really good tried and true ideas and some extremely creative ways to do something different and capture the attention of a reporter.

To the first question, sometimes it is just persistence. I have been pitching a nonprofit to the LA Times for the past, I say, two months solid. I am not sure that this is so orthodox, but I have sent it to, I think, eight different reporters and editors, each time trying to give it meaning that will be most relevant to that particular reporter or editor.

I thought it was a lost cause, and I got the call yesterday, woo-hoo, that they are going to look into it. So again, persistence, careful targeting, and more persistence.

**Scott:** Part of it also is the news hurdles, to go to the first part of those questions. If the foreign desk was pushing it off to the arts desk and the arts desk was pushing it off to the foreign desk, you have to wonder exactly how newsworthy that event is in the first place.

Both desks are pretty hungry to cover real news. And that may just be their polite way of saying your particular event doesn’t clear the hurdle. The second part of that, you are going to have trouble...Everybody is going to have trouble getting newspapers to cover their events, especially with shrinking staffs in terms of the news world.

What you might want to consider doing is putting up your own kind of news site about your own events. If you haven’t written a press release that is kind of a profile of one of the people involved in the production, you can put that up on your own website.

And as you send this information into the newspaper for the calendar listings, include the link to your website and ask them that if you are going to run this in the calendar listings, please include the link in the calendar listing. That way you are at least hopefully drawing some of the eyeballs over to the information you want them to see through the mass media, even if you are not getting that information, per say, in the mass media.

**Zan:** You know we have to talk about social media too, because it can be a huge headache. I went to a three day...Actually it was a three day conference on basically social networking for nonprofits, which is where I met Rebecca and her boss. And I came away from it, above all, just feeling like I don’t have the resources to develop this entire new sort of division.

But we are forced to these days, and that is the bad news and the good news, because we just have to look at things differently. Blogging, for instance, is a tremendous resource. If you can get various people in your organization to be blogging... You know it doesn't just have to be the CEO, but it can be a program director who knows more about his or her subject than anybody else.

And what we have to do is just find fascinating information. Keep it short. Find potential readers who are going to be interested in that topic and plant ourselves in those places.

I mean this isn't a conference call today on social media, but it is a whole new world that can reap tremendous benefits for us without having to go out and stage an event.

**Rebecca:** So Zan, actually as a follow up to that we have a great question from Mia in keeping with this understanding about what bloggers to reach out to. We talked about building up your traditional media list, but Mia wrote in and said, "I am interested to learn how my colleagues out there are screening bloggers who want to be added to the A list, especially those who are looking for tickets to review performances and test products. Here in Boston, many respected reporters who were let go from the Boston Globe have attracted a substantial following through their own blogs. However, there are just as many, if not more local bloggers who claim credibility, but verifying that to confirm if they should be added to the press list is hard to do. What are your thoughts?"

**Zan:** My first thought is they should be on Twitter. I am not a social media expert, but I do pay attention to how many people are following people on Twitter. If there are three people following someone on Twitter, we know that they are probably not well read. If there are 50,000, as there are or more, say, for reporters for Good Morning America, we know they are good resources. We also know that because of the brand Good Morning America. But that is one tip. Anyone else have others?

**Paul:** Yeah, I say that there are two things. The first is read their blogs and look at it and see if it looks like something that is of the quality that you want to be associated with. And the second thing is that there are free social media monitoring tools. If you put that in Google you will find them, "free social media monitoring tools." And they will help you monitor what is being talked about out there. And you can actually take a look at some of these blogs and see what kind of traffic and see how many links back they have.

**Scott:** You can go to, I think, Technorati.com is one of the good ones for that. You can plug in the website of the blog and it will give you its relative ranking and traffic, which is a pretty good way to show you who is irrelevant. And I am afraid most of those blogs are probably irrelevant.

And this is one of the weird things about blogging. Zan was talking about this a little bit earlier about getting something on one of the LA Times blogs. Any time you get a placement it is a good thing, but be wary of overselling blog hits.

Back in April, which was the last period I had access for the LA Times, their top blog got

71,000 hits in one day, and that was their Hollywood gossip column. Most of their blogs, almost all of their blogs, get fewer than 10,000 hits in a day. And this is a population base area of something like 10 million.

That is not a huge amount of penetration. That is actually a thin sliver of penetration. So any hit is good, but don't put too much weight on the power of a blog.

**Rebecca:** Great. I am happy to send out in the email on Friday, when we send out the links to download the two transcripts, to send resources; Technorati.com, which Scott just mentioned, as well as Google Alerts, which will help you monitor blogging activity and things like that, as well as Tweet Beep, which is a way to monitor what folks are actually saying on Twitter. So I am happy to follow up with that later.

Let's see. We will shift gears back a little bit. We have a question from Maud. This is similar to what you were saying about earlier about being newsworthy. Maud wrote in and said, "We have been in the same community for 37 years. As a performing arts center, our programs have evolved to meet the needs expressed by community focus groups. But how do we communicate to the media that we are not just the old folks on the block?"

**Zan:** Do something new.

**Paul:** Yeah, you have to show them that.

**Zan:** Exactly.

**Paul:** You can't just say it. You have got to set up some situation. I mean, look. Hopefully you have got some things that you normally and naturally do to demonstrate that you are not just the old folks on the block. And you just have to say, "Which of these are media appropriate? What can we invite people to to help them see that, and is it news?"

**Scott:** Yeah. And Zan was saying earlier, be a reporter in your own organization. What exactly is it that makes you new and not the old people on the block?

**Rebecca:** Great. And in talking about events, we have a question from Melinda who said, "I am particularly interested in thoughts and suggestions around special for media personnel events like film screenings and 'media days' like lunches hosted for local media to get to know an organization. I am curious about how affective they are, how well attended they can be, etc."

**Paul:** It depends on your market. It depends on who you are. I think if you are in New York and you are a multi-million dollar organization with a couple of big celebrities stumping for you, yeah, you can throw a get to know the media moment and they will all come out.

You might be in a really small town and everybody is super friendly and knows each other well, and you can have one of those and they will all come out. But sometimes in the middle there you are dealing with papers where staffs have been cut back and it is just not a priority to go to those kinds of events necessarily.

If the event is just for them in that sense, unless you are announcing something new, unless it is newsworthy just in and of itself, I say you would be better off inviting them to... You know, if you have a big annual fund raising gala where you bring in your heavy hitters and it is kind of a retrospective on what you have done that year, you might have dual purposes out of those kinds of events and actually give them a bit bigger experience than just inviting them to those things.

But I think in the middle you have really got to judge whether or not it is realistic for you given your market and your relative importance in the market versus the priorities of probably an overstretched staff as it is.

**Zan:** I agree there with Paul. I would like to add one memory I have while I was at the Times. The local theater company, which was very well known, but that is irrelevant in this case, was nationally known, they did a... It was actually for their donors.

They invited their top level donors to come to like a scene painting studio where their scenic designers were literally creating scenery for an upcoming play. And they had one of the designers there. They invited a large group in, probably 30 people, to watch the artwork in process and speak to the artists.

This sort of answers the immediately prior question as well. OK. So say you don't have the budget to do something new or that your donors in fact don't want you to take any risks with your programming. Maybe there is a corner of your programming that has never seen the light of day, but which, let's face it, can be fascinating. I mean I think everybody loves the idea of seeing something that the audience who buys tickets can't see, something in the wings. And so the theater company also invited me as a reporter and I ended up writing something about that in great detail.

So again, it goes back to thinking creatively about what makes news and what a reporter might be interested in.

**Scott:** There is also an ethical line involved. As a staff writer for the LA Times, I never went to things that were solely staged for the media. I just thought it was an attempt to get coverage. I just stayed away from those things.

But the kinds of events that Zan is talking about work perfectly. There is a news interest or a legitimate beat development interest in a journalist being there. And it is not to be solely for the journalists. It is kind of like the journalists come along and watch how you are interacting with your big donors and you are getting a glimpse behind the scenes.

That stuff is part of beat development and that is very much worth your time and your effort. But a lot of journalists will go to these free media things, the media breakfasts, the media brunch, media happy hour. I never go to those. I see it as an ethical breach. I don't know how many of my colleagues look at it the same way, but I suspect quite a few just through anecdotal conversations.

**Paul:** I am wiggling my fingers over here big time at everything he just said.

**Scott:** In a bad way? [laughs]

**Paul:** No! In a good way! In agreement.

**Scott:** I thought you were like finger wagging me, like, "No, no, no, no, no!"

**Paul:** No, no, no, no. Not wagging, wiggling!

**Rebecca:** [laughs] Excellent. So for those folks who aren't necessarily doing the on the ground work, if their nonprofit is focused on something different, we have a great representative question, I think, from Valerie, who says that her organization does substantial efficacy work, so they don't have direct service or what media professionals tend to consider human interest pieces. How can she and organizations like her develop stories to pitch when they don't have visual footwork?

**Zan:** Would that be...Perhaps they are doing research, do you think? Help me out.

**Rebecca:** Her organization in particular is the Sergeant Shriver National Center on Poverty. So it sounds like an advocacy group that might be working to get bills in front of folks and reaching out to legislators and working on the grassroots with supporters to get the word out.

**Paul:** I think you have got to look at what kind of stories you have, again, through the filter of, "Is it newsworthy?" We all think our stuff is newsworthy. So on the premise that you have got a few nuggets in there that at least you can reach out with; you want to say, "OK. Some of this will be very interesting to law journals as legalese." It is fine in that context, but it is not going to really translate over if you want a feature to raise general awareness about your work in the paper in another section.

And in that case, you may have to bring some of those statistics or some of that research or data to life with some real world examples. You are going to have to get them to look inside the research behind the scenes.

Sometimes that means doing your own internal news gathering as you go along and are doing the research as well so that you have got something more to offer. I definitely work on a lot of report releases and it sure helps me get coverage, not when we stage any big thing to do the release with, but it helped me get coverage when I had photos, video, and people that could speak to not just the research or report form an academic point of view,

but people on the ground who may have been the subject of or involved in the report in some way.

**Zan:** Another thing you can do is position your staff as experts, which they are. For instance, this eco label that I mentioned before, again, she is a startup. But you know what? She has been studying this issue for four years and she is an expert in this field. And one of the reporters I pitched, just hoping that she would write a story about the organization in sort of a traditional way, she came back to me and said, “I want to get this woman’s, basically, opinion on the field at large.”

And how do we pitch people as position people, as experts? Sometimes it just results from the standard press releases we are sending out. With another nonprofit a major legislative action came down a few weeks ago and I had no time to write a press release. But I just actually sent out to my press list for this group one line saying, “Our officials are available for immediate comment on this issue.” That is all I did.

And we do have a reputation, so it wasn’t like hitting people cold. But I just offered that and it worked. We got quoted in some major media.

**Scott:** Just to add to what Zan was saying, since it is an advocacy organization, there is always legislation floating around somewhere. And what your organization can offer to the media is kind of the instant analysis, and also the bird-dogging of the legislation.

Legislation that gets introduced every fall for the past 10 years isn’t going to get any coverage. But if suddenly this new legislation has a different wrinkle on it and it has approval by a top minority member of a committee, say, you can bring that information to the media and say, “Hey. This thing looks like it is getting a little bit of traction. We have got these experts here that can talk about it.”

At the same time, you can have some op-eds in the hopper ready to go on that topic, so that when the issue that you are advocating for bubbles up into the major media, so it gets noticed on its own, you are there to provide a resource to reporters and put this stuff into context.

**Rebecca:** That makes a lot of sense. Let’s see. It looks like we have hit our hour mark. We have three left that I will round out the call with. Thank you to everyone who has already sent in their inquiries. If you do have to hop off now, I understand. We are going to be sending the links to those written and audio transcripts on Friday morning. They will be posted in our learning center. So keep an eye out for that email and thank you for joining us if you do have to hop off.

For those of you who are still with us, just these last couple of questions. We have a question from May who wrote in and said, “Zan talked about new media and getting personal but didn’t really get to get into it as much. Can you talk a little bit more about this?”

**Zan:** I meant to get personal. Thank you for reminding me. I thought of that myself. What I meant was say, for instance...OK. With this eco labeling program I am actually working with a social media expert. And what she has instructed, Eleanor, the head of the program, the creator of the program, to do was once we had identified the influential bloggers, rather than having the press person, me, contact those folks with our press release, our expert instructed Eleanor to go to them directly.

So you get your CEO or whoever it is to themselves reach out to the bloggers and send them the essential information that is in your press release, but not in press release form. Make it more conversational.

What I hear over, and over, and over again about new media is that it is a two way conversation or more. So it is not about this blast of information from me out to you with no retort. And getting personal, the obvious there, of having not one step removed by having a publicist send out the information, but the program director themselves reaching out in that way.

And then that can unleash a lot of dialogue. So just be wary of the time that it may take and sort of pre-plan for that. But some of it will be necessary. But again, that is the way to get personal.

**Scott:** And just to add to that, you can do kind of a two step process. One is doing exactly what Zan is saying. So your CEO has made this contact with the bloggers at nine in the morning. And you can say, "I just want to give you a heads up that our publicity department is going to put a press release on this at one this afternoon. I just want to give you a little advance notice that this is going on." An "email me if you have any questions" kind of thing.

That way they feel like they are getting something exclusive and they are under the gun to do something with it in case you sit on it for a while. And that will help light a spark. Whether it goes anywhere sort of depends on the topic. But that is a good way.

**Paul:** And you can also just release through bloggers. Not all the time, and you certainly have to have all the stars lined up for it to really work well, but it is possible to do that, to give something exclusively to one or more bloggers that have the exact audience you know needs to know about this in order for it to resonate out further.

**Scott:** And the proof of that lies, I think, in a lot of this environmental stuff. A lot of significant environmental stories first get out into the Internet through blogs and through what are generally considered to be marginalized and topic specific wire services that then filter through to the mainstream.

**Rebecca:** Great. Let's see. We had a couple questions come in about how folks can work with the media to counter maybe negative press or to revisit a topic if... Well let me share this particular question from you. It comes from Jim, who says, "How can you work with or cultivate media so they develop stories that focus on the bigger fact based picture of

your issue rather than just putting energy into those episodic newsworthy stories that frequently reinforce certain views of the issue that aren't necessarily completely accurate or aren't indicative of the trends overall?"

So in his case, for instance, he works with an organization that deals with sexually abused children. It says, "In our case, for example, most risks of children being sexually abused are by trusted adults as these risks can be mitigated by adult action. By contrast, abuse and abductions by released pedophiles are the rare exception, yet these are what drive peoples' fears and the majority of the media attention."

**Zan:** Boy, I would say right there you have got a gem. What you have got, you could call it the surprise factor, the contradiction...I think reporters are hungry to break the mold, to report something that is, at the moment, underground.

Again, reporters are people too. So I would just spell all of that out briefly but powerfully in an email, make that your introduction, and just say exactly what you stated in that question, that there is a bigger picture here that is going unreported, basically.

**Paul:** Yeah, and it is also important to remember that reporters can get information in ways other than, and in addition to, just words. And sometimes that kind of information is very impactfully communicated in some kind of a chart or something that they could look at and eyeball, and it has that "get it in a glance" factor so that they could look down and have a "wow" moment with some of that data, seeing it all in one snap.

**Scott:** And just to be the contrarian of the crowd here, I don't think you really can do much in that circumstance. I have written a lot of child abuse stories over the years and I know that that is the case. And if you are lucky, you will get a paragraph of that kind of context buried in the story.

But you are likely to get a story about all the close abuse you are talking about. What you might be able to do is, after the dust settles, you can get back to the main reporters on that story and say, "Hey, you might find this interesting. This is kind of a counter type piece," and give them specific people they can talk to who have gone through this kind of abuse so they can do sort of a new feature a week or so after that signal event and come back around it that way.

**Zan:** I can't emphasize enough how important it is to always have a subject, a person to offer the reporter. It just helps so much to be able to offer up that kind of focus and, of course, the proof and the real life experience.

When I pitched the voting from a hospital bed story, the reporter said to me, "That sounds interesting. I will do it if you get me three patients who are voting by proxy."

**Rebecca:** That is great first-hand advice. Let's see. I guess we will round out with this last question just to kind of bring us back to the theme about reaching out to those reporters.

We had a question come in, and the writer said...If you don't want to role-play, that is fine. "Could you walk through what an actual pitch phone call might sound like? What questions can we anticipate that reporters are going to ask us? And then can you offer up some tips also for those written pitches that go out?"

**Paul:** I can give you some steps really quickly First, identify who you are, why you are calling. Ask if it is a good time for them to talk. If it is not, honor that immediately and see how they would like to reconnect with you. They may ask you to send an email.

I think you should let them know that you are familiar with stuff that they have written and show why you see a connection with them and why you think they would be interested in doing it. Explain what you have got to say in a sentence, maybe two and why readers will care. And check if they are interested. And if they are, continue, and see how they would like to continue forward.

**Scott:** Not to get too crass; reporters have finally honed bullshit protectors, so don't be too obsequious when they answer the phone. You were just saying you have to be direct; who you are, what you are doing, and what you want. And be prepared not to get through.

When I was covering books and covering music, I rarely answered my phone at work because I knew it was going to be a publicist pitching something. I would much prefer to get something in an email that I could then respond to and call the publicist back.

When you are trying to get on a reporter's radar screen, you have to make sure that the reporter knows you have something that will interest them. And the way to do that is just to drill it into wherever they want to receive this stuff, usually by email as we discussed before. Occasionally by fax. In my experience, phone calls never got very far with me when I was a reporter.

**Zan:** Ditto to everything.

Rebecca: So Paul, thank you for your tips in terms of, if you do get someone on the phone, what to say, and also to Scott and Zan for all those folks who don't necessarily always answer the phone.

And then we just want to wrap out with some tips in terms of the written pieces. We talked a little bit about this in our last phone call, but what sort of formats people want to send in, where they should put their focus and emphasis on the facts, just in general, writing tips for when you are sending things electronically.

**Scott:** Well Paul has got a great recipe. He was talking about this last time, that one page approach.

**Zan:** Was that the idea of his written statements? In other words, don't load down your first one page press release with tons of facts of quotes, but follow it up with some supporting statements from experts?

**Paul:** Absolutely. Frontload the facts at the top. Frontload what you are getting in touch with them about. Don't give the perspective and the spin. Put that stuff at the bottom in a lot of supporting statements.

Don't try to write a news story for a journalist. Give it to them in a format that is easy for them to digest given the media that they are reading it in, which is their inbox.

**Zan:** And don't feel wedded to real formal practices of a press release. I mean, shucks, if you don't even know how to do that, it just doesn't matter. What matters is your news. But don't ever send any attachments. Always cut and paste into the body of an email until you know that reporter and they trust they can open attachments from you.

**Scott:** And the key to remember is that the same things that matter in a news story matter in a press release- who, what, when, where, how, and why. Make sure you get those covered up quickly.

**Zan:** Exactly.

**Rebecca:** Wonderful. Well thank you so much. We really appreciate you joining us again and shifting gears and really kind of giving us two great snapshots into the world of public relations and how us small nonprofits can reach out to the media. We really appreciate having all three of you on the phone. So a big thank you from us and from everyone who participated today.