

# Messaging & the Media

July 16, 2009

**Smart Growth  
America**  
*Better Choices For Our Communities*

**M+R**  
STRATEGIC SERVICES

# Session Agenda

- Planning strategic communications
- Messaging building blocks
- Becoming a media magnet
- Tools & tactics
- The Fun Part: spokesperson training

# Strategic Communications Planning

# Key Components & Moving Parts

- Informed by overall policy goals
- Spell out challenges & opportunities
- Get buy-in from allies/partners
- Train back-up spokespeople
- Get out early

# Building Power With Media

- News clips = first step
- Get public interested
- Change the public debate
- Grab policy makers' attention
- Change policies

# Message Building Blocks: A Formula for Success

# “Are You Talking to *Me*?”

- Elected Officials
- Stakeholders
- Potential Allies & Activists
- General Public/Media

# Becoming a Media Magnet

# Good Media Doesn't Just Happen

- Find story “hook”
- Clever subject line in email
- Know news cycle
- Frame your narrative
- Be bold to break through
- Follow up with a phone call

# Key Ingredients to Good Stories

- Highlight real people, human interest
- Counterintuitive
- Local
- Fascinating facts, new research
- Tap into current trends
- Unique partnerships, 3<sup>rd</sup> parties

# Example: The States and the Stimulus Report

Goal: Shift conversation around stimulus by highlighting best & worst practices in state stimulus spending on transportation

Challenge: Attract media/policymaker attention to a dense and nuanced subject matter

Solution: Produce a 120-Day Report

# Example: Framing Your Story

- Expanded frame from numbers of jobs created & amount of money spent ....

**TO**

- What kinds of projects were funded & benefits of those projects relative to one another

# Example: Knowing the News Cycle

- Pegged report release to 120-day deadline
- Remained nimble & adjusted release strategy to dovetail w/ last minute WH press conference
- Pitched the story as the *first comprehensive* analysis of state spending decisions
- Ranked the states according to their performance

# Example: Be Bold to Break Through

- In order to grab reporters' attention, the pitch went (a little) further than the report
- We offered advanced copies of the report to give reporters a “scoop”

# Example: How'd we do?

**The report was covered in over 45 news outlets including:**

- *Washington Post*
- *TIME Magazine*
- Fox Business News
- Reuters
- *San Francisco Chronicle*
- *Baltimore Sun*
- *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

# Tools & Tactics

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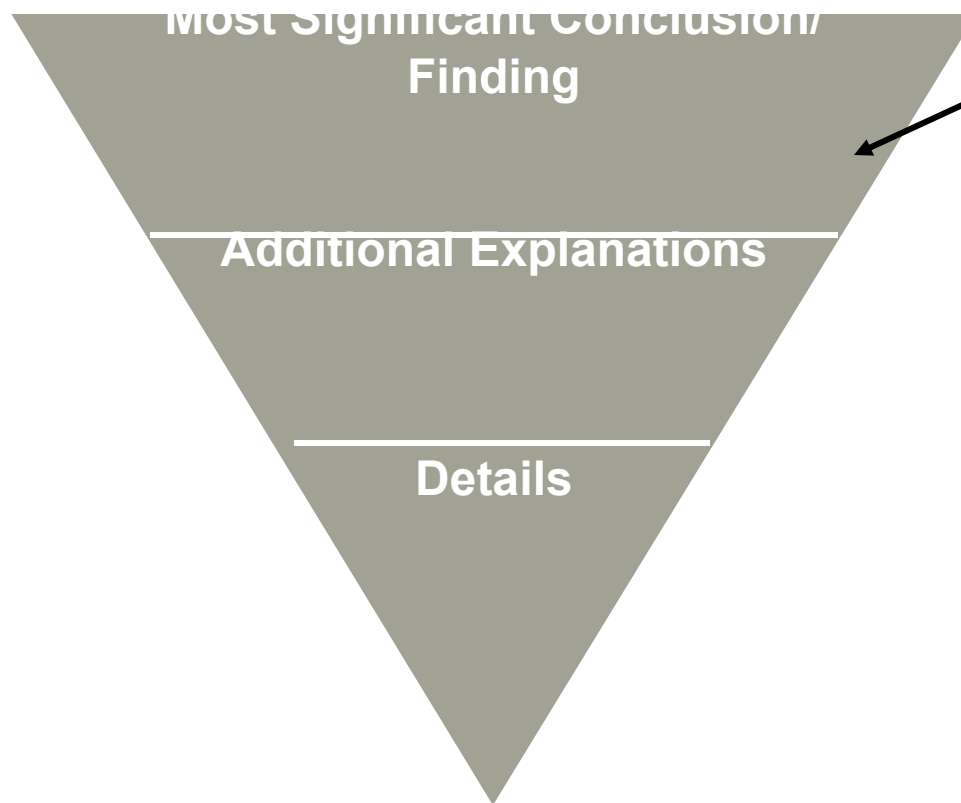
- Pitch Prep & Materials
- Op-Eds & Letters to the Editor
- Ed Board Meetings
- One-on-One Briefings or Panels
- Press Conferences & Tele-briefings
- Social Networking
- Strategic Events

# Media Monitoring

- Builds relationship with reporters
- Helps to keep on top of the news cycle
- Enhances reputation as a knowledgeable source
- Saves time by using technology

# The Lede: 10 Seconds to Make an Impression

Remember the Inverted Pyramid:



Lead with your  
most critical  
information

# Staging a Press Conference

- How will it be newsworthy
- Include “big” names
- Create drama with a bold event
- Think what if the TV’s muted

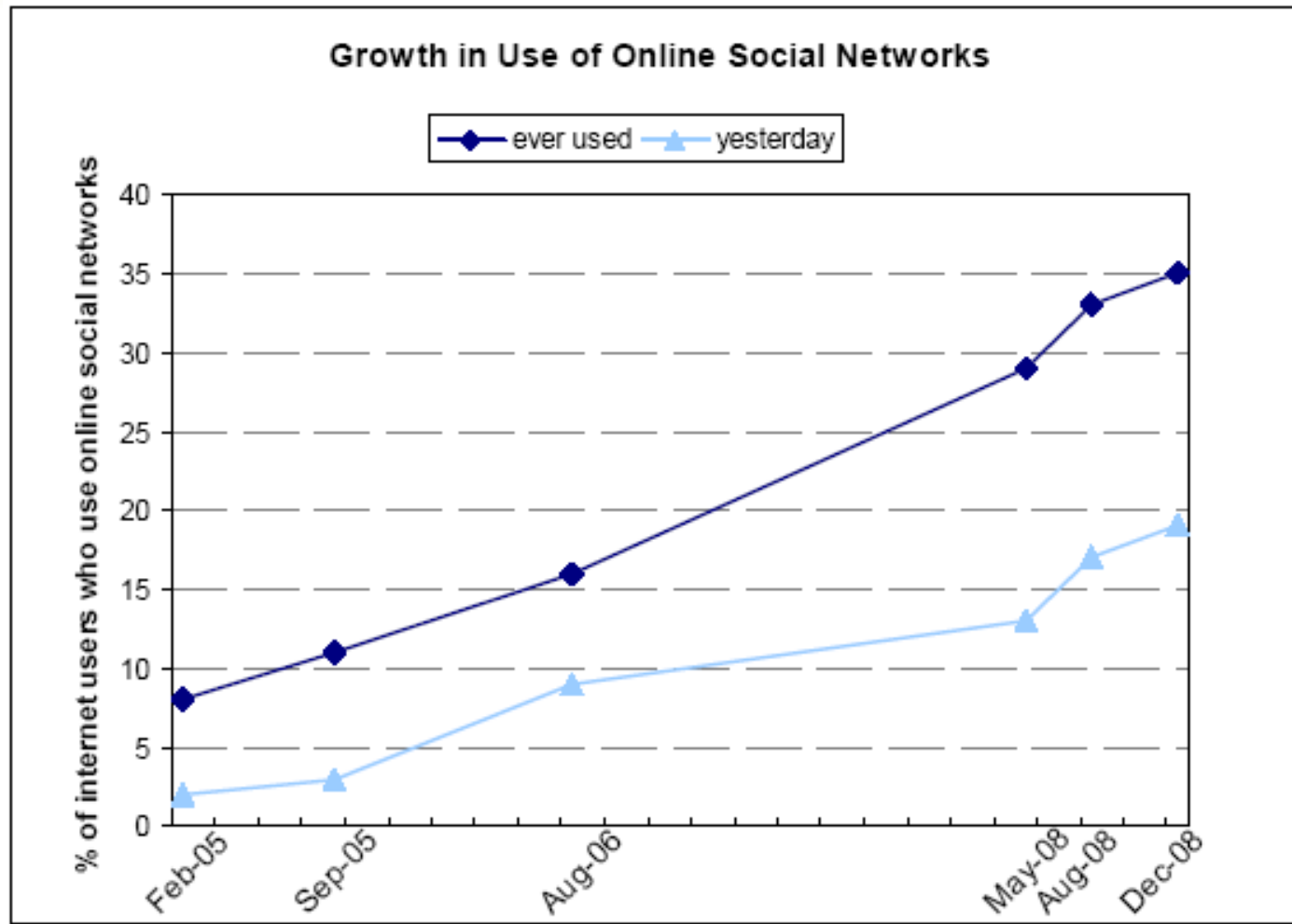
# Press Conference



# Social Networks: Put your List to Work

- Becomes a key component to communications
- Provides a way for content to spread organically
- Makes your organization accessible, build relationships, get people talking
- Interactivity = Two-way street

# Growth in Online Social Networks



The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a dark blue rectangular background. The logo is centered within a larger teal and light yellow gradient background.

- 175 million registered users worldwide
- More than 24 million pieces of content—links, news stories, blog posts, notes, and photos – are shared each month
- The fastest-growing user demographic is over age 30



- More than 4 million users worldwide—752% growth in 2008
- 11% of online adults in America have used the service
- The median age of a Twitter user is 31
- Twitter users are more likely than any other online segment to use blogs and share information and links online

# Overcoming Challenges

- Too much noise!
- Social networks emerged as tool for individuals, not organizations
- Significant time commitment for staffer(s)
- Difficult to convert social network “friends” to donors and activists

# Case Study



# How are they doing it?

- Cultivating engaged activists & asking them to get more involved
- Capitalizing on breaking news and real-world problems
- Integrating timing of online actions with offline campaigning and lobbying events
- Focusing on aspects of T4's work that people have demonstrated interest in (e.g. livable communities and public transportation)

# My Commute Sucks

G

## MY COMMUTE SUCKS

... AND I'M NOT GONNA TAKE IT ANYMORE!

HOME

LET IT ALL OUT

DO SOMETHING

READ AND RATE

SPREAD THE RAGE

LEARN MORE

TAKE IT UP WITH CONGRESS

**Sign the Petition!**  
See-sawing gas prices, crazy crowded roads, noxious fumes - who would love their commute?

Not us. Join Americans all over the country, in big cities and in small towns, who are making their voices heard in Washington. Tell Congress: **"My commute sucks and it's not getting any better. Stop pouring billions into a broken system. Transportation shouldn't be an expensive, dirty burden. Fix it, clean it, make it work!"**

**YES! I want Congress to fix my commute!**

You will receive updates from Transportation for America. You may unsubscribe at any time.

WHY TRANSPORTATION?

Transportation affects us all - drivers, cyclists, walkers, the young, the old, big city dwellers and small town neighbors. Whether you ride the train or brave the traffic, building stronger, safer communities starts with smart transportation investment.

Learn More

THE LATEST RAGE

Think your commute sucks? Go to this website <http://mycommutesucks.org> (thanks @mycommutesucks for letting us see ours isn't too bad mostly)

@K9077ydt via twitter 5 hours and 10 minutes ago

"Hi, Philip Nathan. MyCommuteSucks.org (mycommutesucks) is now following your updates on Twitter." FML.

@RobbieGoulet via twitter 6 hours and 9 minutes ago

Columbia to Silver Spring: hour and a half. Only halfway there.

@mycommutesucks

@buckrose1 via twitter 6 hours and 11 minutes ago

tattah

This commute really sucks. What about yours? Upload your rage.

Let it All Out!

or, if your commute sucks, drink beer.

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A Project of Transportation for America

# YIGLESIAS

The New York Times  
**Wheels**

The Hats and Balls of Whistener Moves Tom

**KickingTires** >>>  
THE BLOG FOR CAR BUYERS

LOS ANGELES METBLOGS CALIFORNIA

**Freep.com**

Chicago Public Radio Blog

Cali & Jody

**BikePortland.org**  
To inform and inspire

chicagotribune.com

**Auto**

LOCAL 4  
**TRAFFIC**

PortBurgle

**AUTOPIA**

The New Colonist  
...a web magazine about city living

**M+R**  
STRATEGIC SERVICES

# Using Twitter and Facebook...

**twitter** Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out

**@moran4governor** thanks for the follow. as governor, what would you do to support safer, cleaner, smarter transportation in virginia? #VA-Gov  
*about 2 hours ago from web*

**mycommutesucks**  
MyCommuteSucks.org

---

**twitter** Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out

**@mycommutesucks** You can read Brian's plan at <http://bit.ly/Sb2Yg> #va-gov #vagov  
*about 1 hour ago from web in reply to mycommutesucks*

**moran4governor**  
Brian Moran

**facebook** Home Profile Friends Inbox

Andie Huband Settings Logout

### My Commute Sucks

Group

**Basic Info**

Type: Common Interest - Beliefs & Causes

Description: Sitting in a metal box on a sea of asphalt surrounded by the toxic gases that are cooking our planet sounds like a lousy way to start and end your day. It's time to stop silently seething and muttering curses under your breath - we're inviting you to let it all out!

Take the Facebook Quiz: "What kind of commute are you?"  
<http://www.facebook.com/what-kind-of-goldfish?tab=13target=home>

**Contact Info**

Email: [mcs@fameerica.org](mailto:mcs@fameerica.org)

Website: <http://www.mycommutesucks.org>

**Recent News**

How to Let It All Out:

- \*\* Mail <http://www.mycommutesucks.org/comment.php>
- \*\* Post your comments here in the Facebook group
- \*\* Include #mycommutesucks in your rage-filled tweets
- \*\* Follow us at <http://www.twitter.com/mycommutesucks>
- \*\* Join the Flickr photo pool at <http://www.flickr.com/groups/166166166/>

**Members**

Displaying 8 of 136 members See All

Sam Spence, Kate Staysman-London, Caryn Carrere, Sam Lewis, Ryan Alexander, Brad Boulton, Jenna Lorenzetti, Michael Ward

**Discussion Board**

Displaying 1 discussion topic Start New Topic | See All

Worst commuter event?  
1 post by 1 person. Updated on May 26, 2009 at 1:29pm

**The Wall**

Displaying the only 2 wall posts See All

write something...

**MY COMMUTE SUCKS**

New Discussion Board  
Message All Members  
Promote Group with an Ad  
Edit Group  
Edit Members  
Invite People to Join  
Create Related Event  
Leave Group

Show

**Group Type**

This is an open group. Anyone can join and invite others to join.

**Admins**

- Stephen Lee Davis (Washington, DC)
- Andie Huband
- Brett Keller (Washington, DC) (creator)

**Related Groups**

Search Obama (One Million Strong For Barack)

Common Interest - Policy

College Democrats of America Alumni Association (CDAA)

Organizations - Political Organizations

The Democratic Party

Organizations - Political Organizations

We stand with Amanda Tarul

Business - Employment & Work

# Where to Start?

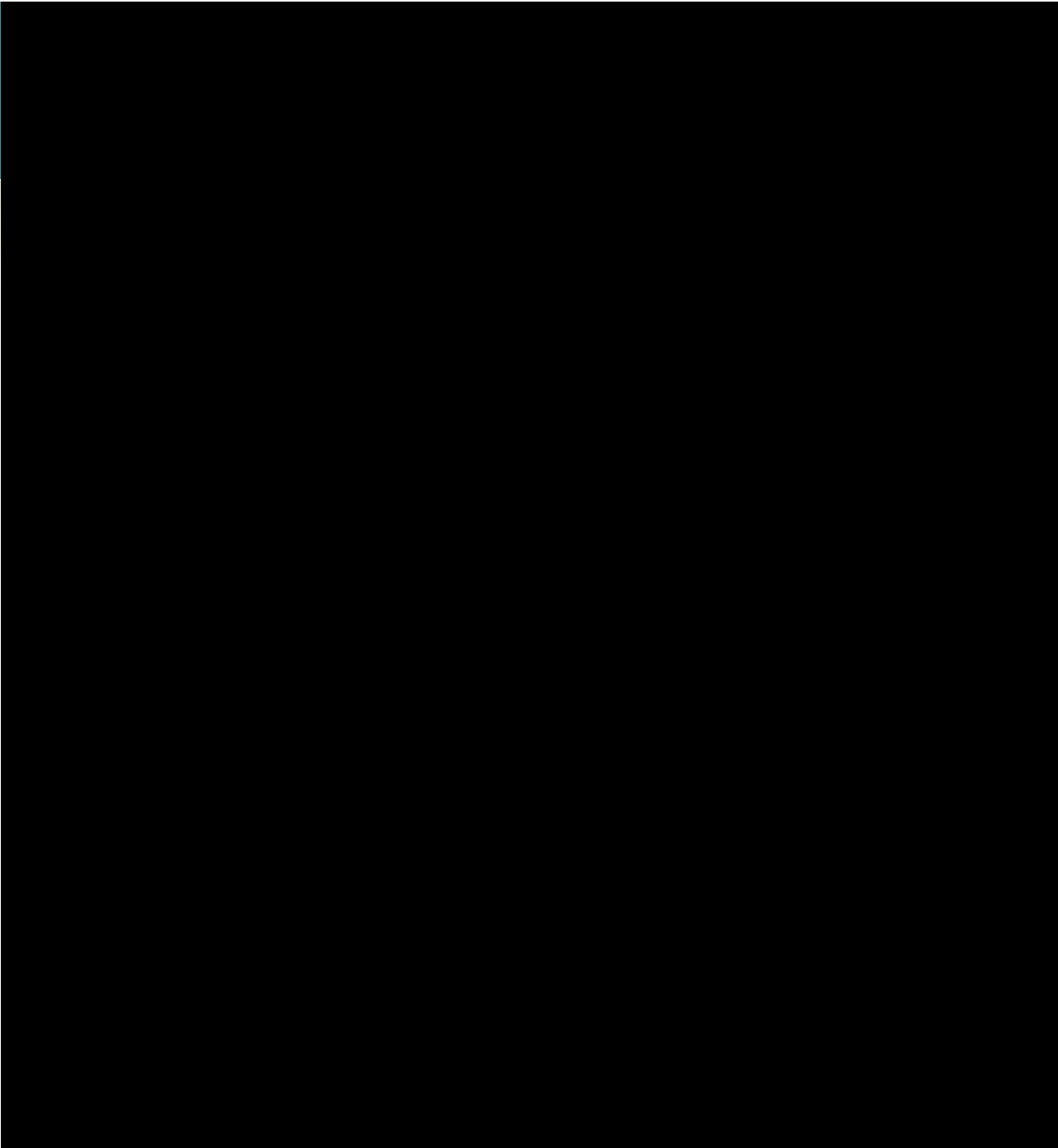
- Start small
- Figure out who you know
- Find your allies
- Make a good first impression
- Prepare to lose control
- Feed the beast
- Spend time
- Give people something to do

# The Art of the Interview

# The Interview

Securing the interview is just the first step, ensuring your message gets through the filter can be difficult.





# Before the Interview

- Do your research, be prepared
- Anticipate tough Q's
- Practice “bridge & pivot”
- Know the facts, key messages
- Confirm angle of interview

# Sealing the Deal: Staying on Message

- Clear, concise & confident
- Keep to 3-4 key points
- Avoid jargon, buzz words or acronyms
- Highlight your message: Flag it

# Bridge & Pivot: Staying in Control

- That may be the case, but one thing to consider is...
- That's a good point (interesting Q), but the main consideration is...
- We all agree w/ that but what's at issue is...
- That's not my area of expertise but I can tell you...

# Flagging Techniques

- The important point here is...
- The best part about...
- There are 2 reasons why...
- Let me put that into perspective...
- What that means is...

# No Matter What Don't ...

- Answer a hypothetical, speculate
- Guess, bluff or lie (they'll check)
- Say “no comment” or overreact
- Give long, complex answers
- Criticize the media

# Tips for Television (Live & Taped)

- Sit straight in your chair, don't swivel
- Use hands effectively
- Make eye contact with host (or camera) & use their name
- Correct mistakes politely
- Speak clearly, not too fast
- You are the expert

# Example: Geoff's Fox Business Channel Interview



# Bashing the Boss: How'd he do?

- Control the conversation
- Deliver core sound bite sooner
- Less is more
- Bridge & Pivot

# Activity: Honing your Spokesperson Skills

## **Scenario:**

The state budget is under negotiation in the state legislature. Your group is part of a coalition advocating for increased funding for public transportation and policies that encourage and provide incentives for transit-oriented development. The local weekend morning news show would like to interview your group about the state's budget and why increased funding for transit and T.O.D. should or should not be included.

# Activity: Honing your Spokesperson Skills

## **Challenge:**

- Crystallize key messages for use with reporters and policymakers
- Prepare appropriate responses
- Mock interview