



CHAPTER 15

THE MEDIA AND PROTECTED AREAS

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Convention on
Biological Diversity

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TITLE PAGE PHOTO

NSW National Parks and Wildlife marine specialist Geoff Ross briefing the media in relation to a marine mammal incident, Newport Beach, Sydney, Australia

Source: Stuart Cohen

Introduction

No matter where you are in the world the media will always play a critical role in the long-term management of protected areas, so it will pay to know how it works and how effective management of the media will help you achieve your conservation objectives.

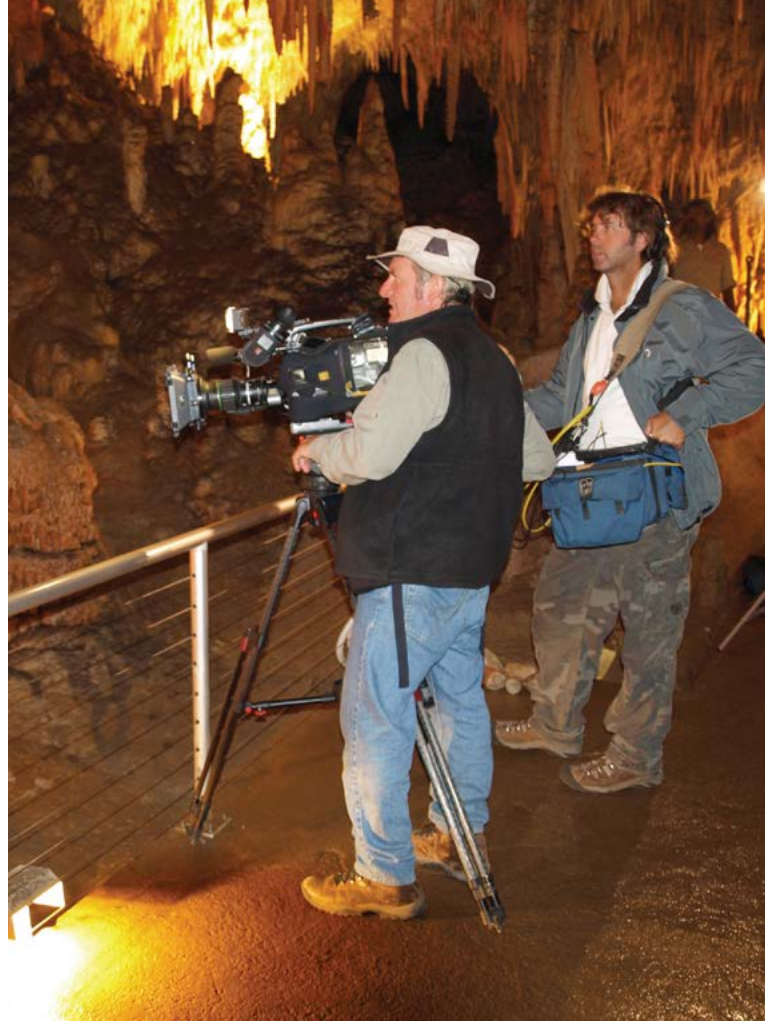
Before you start to think about how to manage the media in the pursuit of your goal to communicate important messages to a broad audience, there is a very important caveat to consider. Do not be deceived into thinking that the mass media alone is a communication tool separate to other channels around you. It is complementary, and in the digital age the ways and means of communicating with your audience have been revolutionised.

Certainly the conventional news media will be vital in reaching a larger audience but there is often much more work to be done communicating with the public and key stakeholders well before you provide any information to the media.

In the management of communication it is worth adopting as your mantra the idea that those people or groups who feel directly affected by anything you do or say have a right—indeed a justifiable and reasonable expectation—that they will be informed first. In other words, if what you are doing as a protected area manager is really important to your stakeholders or will have an impact on them, they should not be reading about what you are doing for the first time in a newspaper without having prior knowledge. This requires a broader communication plan that identifies objectives and communication actions whereby the media is but one element in the communication process and not the first and certainly not the only one.

As protected area managers, we use the media to reach a wide audience with messages and information that support management objectives either by creating awareness and understanding of the rationale behind our actions or to achieve compliance and cooperation from the public because they understand and support your goals. The mass media is very important to how your conservation messages and your agency's reputation is managed and received in the wider world.

The definition we have today for 'the media' is quite different from the one we would have provided for the previous 100 years. The advent of social media has changed forever our traditional concepts of what we have always understood the media to be. The ability and ease for any individual or organisation to simply and cheaply establish and manage their own 'broadcast



Documentary filming, Jillabenan Cave, Yarrangobilly Caves, Kosciuszko National Park, an Australian National Heritage-listed protected area

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

channel' using any number of social media platforms have resulted in a significant dilution of the influence and power of traditional media, and given those with limited resources the ability to broadcast to the world. The democratisation of information means anyone with a computer and an internet connection has the potential to broadcast information.

There has also been a fundamental change in the way people receive information upon which they base important decisions. The internet has also created a platform for the 'citizen journalist' and there are many who daily exert an influence on the opinions and ideas of the broader community that were once the sole domain of the traditional mass media.

For protected area managers, this presents major benefits as well as additional challenges. No longer do we focus our attention solely on traditional media in broadcasting key messages. Today we must consider things like social media platforms and their audience, bloggers and their influence as well as an army of individuals with a creative talent to broadcast to and engage a targeted and influential audience.

So you must be crafting your messages and approach in a far more complex manner that considers the different modes of delivery, from newspaper and television to email, from Facebook to Twitter and so on.

Types of media

Traditional mainstream mass media

Throughout the 20th century, the definition of the media covered the three primary mediums of radio, television and print, but digital and internet technologies of the past decade in particular have changed significantly the range and types of media that are now in use. The traditional mainstream media and the newer social media have merged to become multifaceted communication platforms. Few of the mainstream traditional media, for example, function today without a website offering the full range of media within. A traditional newspaper, while continuing to exist in hardcopy, also exists as a digital version that can be accessed on mobile devices. This system offers additional access to video and photography, infographics and podcasts plus the ability for the reader to interact and respond in a way that is instant and constant. There are also a growing number of newspapers that do not print hardcopy and exist solely online. Furthermore, the arrival of social media and the massively increased range of options for the audience to source daily news have resulted in a steady and marked decline in the audience of traditional mainstream media and a resultant drop in profits that has impacted significantly on the capacity of the media to report news as it has done in times past. This has had a big impact on how news is gathered and by whom, with the result that the media—previously quite particular about what it will report—is now more likely to run your story if it is well presented.

What all this means is that traditional media still exists, but now alongside the new digital media as independent and overlapping mediums for communication. This is because some people, particularly older generations, will continue to access their news and information in traditional ways while a younger cohort has clearly started moving away from this as they adopt faster, more instantaneous and interactive digital news formats accessible on a growing range of mobile devices such as the smart phone and tablet.

It is very important to realise that within the traditional media there are various shades, colours and attitudes highlighting differing sociopolitical agendas. Despite an

underlying philosophy of maintaining objectivity within the news gathering and reporting process, commercial and public broadcasters and newspapers can approach the issues around protected area management with vastly different attitudes. Even the notions of objectivity and balance can no longer be taken for granted as the democratisation of information in the internet age has blurred the lines between traditional reporting and commentary. As a protected area manager, you need to be aware of these attitudes, as they will govern the direction a journalist will take on any particular story.

Bear in mind that, aside from publicly funded media, the media in general is there to make a profit primarily through advertising, and to do that newspapers must be sold and there must be an audience for radio and television. Therefore the content provided by the media must attract, engage and maintain a readership or audience and this drives the approach taken in the reporting of news. More commercial television stations may take a much harder or more emotive line in reporting conflict than might a publicly funded station. Some newspapers (and journalists) will be more sympathetic towards the environment than others. It will always pay to know just where they stand before you pitch or explain a potential story to a journalist.

Social media

The advent and rapid manifestation of social media and internet communications have revolutionised the dissemination of information and the ability of people to correspond and connect. Communication of one to one, one to many and many to many has never been easier on hyper-local and global scales. The public is no longer reliant on receiving news and information from traditional mass media sources.

The ability to instantly share events and news as it happens using mobile devices has given momentum to the phenomenon of ‘citizen journalists’ and ‘online influencers’ who can establish their own broadcast channels from the thousands of social media platforms available. Many of these have an integrated function, which enables publishing to one platform and pushing the content to many others at the same time.

What was once the exclusive domain of large media companies with the capital to afford expensive infrastructure is now within the reach of the general public. In 1990 the production of television news, for example, and the ability to broadcast were only possible with the backing of financial and technical resources well beyond the average individual. Today the same



The spectacular landscape of Waterton National Park, an International Peace Park, Canada

Source: Charles Besançon

individual can shoot, edit and produce a high-quality multimedia news broadcast from their bedroom using a single smart phone or tablet.

The ease of content creation has, however, resulted in an overload of available information, and the ability to filter out accurate information is clouded by this massive volume of noise online. This means those with recognised governing roles and responsibilities, such as government agencies, need to strengthen their voice as the official source of information.

Social media allows you to share information directly with stakeholders and communities more easily and efficiently. You can now publish as much information as needed as often as needed without relying on traditional media for dissemination.

Social media has an unquenchable thirst for stunning imagery in the form of photos and video content, so for protected area managers the world over this is incredibly beneficial in promoting conservation values because the subject matter within protected areas is so photogenic, whether it is a panoramic landscape or a newly discovered species of insect.

The social media broadcast channel

A typical social media broadcast might look like this: a piece of news is published on the organisation's blog that may sit within their website or as a sub-brand. If the blog post contains images, video or audio, this content may be hosted on a specific platform such as Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo or SoundCloud that sits embedded in the blog post. Then a link to the news is shared with the headline or other appropriate descriptor via a number of social media platforms each with a specific purpose and audience such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Vine.

Social media has enabled the development of a constantly evolving news service with information relevant and interesting to an audience which has opted in to receiving content. Offering 'push notifications' available on some social networks such as Twitter can alert people to news items in real time. This audience can grow to become a robust online community whose members share, comment and engage in conversation with one another and with the organisation or agency.

The fundamental difference between people's use of traditional news media compared with social media platforms is the facilitation of interaction with and



Prescribed burning to reduce fire fuels, Victorian Alpine National Park, Australia

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

between anyone also using that social network in a manner that traditional news media in the past did not offer. It is important, however, to note the integration of social media with traditional news and how the media uses social networks to stay relevant and connected with their audiences. The traditional media is also looking to social media for news items, sources and content. The relationship between traditional news media and social media is evolving at a rapid pace so it is important to stay up to date with how they are being used together.

While your audience will take time to build, it is possible to grow an online community with bigger reach than traditional media channels. While your audience may at times be small, one of its most valuable qualities is that it is one that has come to you willingly and with a direct interest in the news and information you have to share. In the management of protected areas around the world, the establishment of your social media broadcast channel is increasingly important in selling messages that help meet your management objectives.

Sharing news and content can help an organisation drive the discussion agenda. Conversely, listening to conversations online about your organisation and

relevant themes and topics can help an organisation better understand sentiment, stakeholder needs and assist with issues and crisis management.

The opportunity truly exists and will at times surprise you, when content you post strikes a chord with an audience and suddenly goes viral and is viewed overnight by thousands, and if you have really hit the mark, millions.

Strategic use of the media

No matter how large or small, any conservation agency or non-governmental organisation (NGO) managing protected areas must consider media management strategically. Failure to do so is fraught. Careful consideration needs to be given to many aspects of media management. Your agency's media strategy must consider the following.

- **Objectives:** What exactly are you trying to achieve for protected area management in the process of engaging the media?
- **Messaging:** What are the key messages the agency wants to promote?
- **Resources:** What equipment will be necessary to implement effective media management such as office infrastructure, computers, sound recorders and cameras?
- **Staffing:** How many people will be required and what skill sets will they need?
- **Spokespeople:** Who will be chosen as the primary spokespeople for the agency and do they present well? Which people will be best able to represent the agency on specific subjects?
- **Media policy and protocols:** To whom will you delegate the responsibility to talk to the media? What steps should staff take when contacted by a journalist? When should a media issue be escalated to higher authorities?

Using the media to build your case

The media will play an important role in building your case or argument on a subject of importance to the management of protected areas. It might be about fire or pest management or issues related to visitor access, but a carefully considered media plan can be very helpful in swinging public opinion in the direction you need. The aim is to find situations and circumstances related directly to the issue and promote them in the media over an extended period in a way that continues to validate and strengthen your argument.



A rare and endangered mountain pygmy possum (*Burramys parvus*), Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales, Australia, found near the tops of Australia's highest mountains and threatened by climate change

Source: Luciana Porfirio

Take the example of fuel management in national parks—a contentious subject in many countries where wildfire and the impact on lives and property are a major issue. If you want to emphasise and promote the agency's commitment to effective fire-fuel management, you should be preparing key messages and looking to promote every instance of fuel management being undertaken by the agency, backed with updated facts and figures, video, photos and a solid social media presence wherever possible. This in effect is an ongoing campaign and can be applied to one-off issues or ongoing management objectives.

How the media works

'The media' is a term that covers a broad range of communications dedicated to the dissemination of news and information to multiple audiences. Today this includes both traditional news media and social media that are delivered to an audience in the form of electronic, print and internet mediums. The traditional media's primary focus is on providing information that is relevant, interesting and fundamentally 'newsworthy', and whereas this also applies to a large extent in the world of social media, it is also a truism that social media

content can and frequently is irrelevant and trivial, creating 'noise' in a space that can make it hard for your message to break through.

What, then, qualifies as 'news'? When is something news and when is it not? 'News' carries certain values that make it worthwhile to the individual to read, listen to or view and these values are generally self-evident. There is no end to the criteria of what constitutes news, but the following are just some of the news values that individually or collectively will result in a story being reported because of its newsworthiness.

- **Timeliness:** News is 'now', not yesterday. If it happened a week ago, it will not find its way into a news bulletin. It can help if it is the first time this news has been revealed but it will be more newsworthy if it has just happened.
- **Prominence:** What the President of the United States says carries prominence and is therefore newsworthy in a way that the general views and thoughts of an ordinary citizen of the United States are not.
- **Impact:** On an international scale, a natural disaster that causes significant loss of property and life has impact and receives coverage on a broad scale, but

a minor disaster on a localised level can be just as impactful and therefore relevant to a country-town newspaper.

- **Conflict:** Much of our daily news is about conflict, whether it is distant wars or arguments between political parties. Conflict is a primary ingredient of what constitutes news.
- **Proximity:** The location of a story and how close it might be to a given audience combined with other news values may make a news story. In other words, if the event, incident or conflict occurred within the broadcast area of a radio station, proximity will ensure it is a lead story in a bulletin.
- **Magnitude:** When something is big on a scale that is noteworthy to an audience, it has a magnitude that makes it a news story.
- **Oddity:** When something is odd or very much out of the ordinary it can be newsworthy—for example, the discovery of an unusual creature, odd events or behaviours. It was once said that ‘dog bites man’ is not newsworthy, but ‘man bites dog’ is.
- **Negativity:** Everyone knows bad news sells a newspaper better than good news. When something goes wrong or when someone does something wrong it is far more likely to be reported than when the opposite has happened.
- **Celebrity:** Someone who is famous, locally or internationally, is also assured of space in a news bulletin and often not for doing anything of particular note other than just being well known.
- **The ‘st’ factor:** If you are describing the magnitude or scale of something in words that end in ‘st’ then you more or less have a certain news story. In other words, if it is the biggest, widest, longest, fastest or worst, it is very likely to be covered by the media.

Ultimately, the single biggest factor is relevance to the audience. Editors ask themselves, ‘How much does this event affect my audience?’ If the answer is ‘a lot’ then the item has news value.

The news gathering process

The process of gathering news is endless and relentless. No sooner is one story used than another must replace it in a round-the-clock process. To gather news, journalists must seek information from a wide variety of sources, analyse it quickly and decide whether it carries enough ‘news values’ for it to warrant publication or broadcast. This information comes to the journalist from a variety of sources, both formal and informal. Perhaps the most common is in the form of the ‘press release’, also



Australian Government Minister for the Environment, The Honourable Mr Greg Hunt MP, launches the official commencement of the Sydney November 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress preparation, Sydney Harbour, Australia

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

called a ‘news release’ or, better still, ‘media release’. These documents are generally sent to the journalist from individuals or organisations seeking to pitch story ideas to promote their particular agendas, messages or needs.

Journalists also receive information directly by phone, email or by monitoring other news organisations. Importantly, ‘personal contacts’ are a mainstay in the news gathering process. Journalists will maintain and nurture a good contact as a primary source of news. This relationship is usually one that is beneficial to both the journalist and the contact. Social media has become another important tool in the news gathering process. A recent survey of more than 400 Australian journalists found that 40 per cent sourced stories from social media on a daily basis, with two-thirds saying social media has made it easier for journalists to source content and 89 per cent saying social media spreads stories more quickly to increase readership (Newsmaker 2013).

There are also news organisations known as ‘wire services’, such as Reuters and Associated Press, which do not broadcast directly to the public but which produce news around the clock for other news organisations that pay for this service.

Media planning

Preparation of a media plan

Inevitably, planning to engage media on a particular subject is usually part of a larger plan aimed at communicating targeted messages to a specific audience. Media plans are rarely complicated but need to consider some strategic objectives. Key considerations include:

- objective
- key messages
- audience
- targeted media
- spokesperson or spokespeople
- whether a media release is required
- whether other supporting materials are required
- supplying video and/or photos
- transport
- locations
- news conference
- monitoring.

Types of media event

Openings and launches

You will want good reason to undertake an opening or launch of any type, as they frequently require a lot of resources and staff. There are two reasons for staging an opening or launch. The first is good stakeholder management—that is, an opportunity to celebrate an achievement for which the community and stakeholders can be praised and where media coverage is of less importance. The second reason is if the potential media coverage is likely to be worth the trouble and definitely positive.

An event of this nature may involve:

- executive approval
- guests of honour and VIPs
- carefully considered invitation lists—do not invite people likely to be critics at an event if this can be helped
- invitation lists: you need to ensure you have invited the most appropriate people with due regard to those who might be offended if they have been left off this list
- information: reports, facts sheets and media kit containing additional information



Media conference involving the Premier of New South Wales, State Operations Centre, Sydney

Source: Stuart Cohen

- location and venue organisation: is the venue appropriate and easy to access for the media and invitees?
- consideration of timing so the event or launch does not conflict with other events, holidays or major sporting or cultural events
- transport, especially for groups or individuals who might be disadvantaged financially or socially
- speech notes and background briefing for key speakers and guests
- photographers—make sure you have a photographer or videographer on hand if possible and use the opportunity to tweet images and video or even post to Facebook or YouTube to promote the event.

News conferences

As with any major event, you will want to think carefully about why you would want to host a news conference. You will decide to stage a press conference for two reasons. The first is because the announcement you have to make is of such importance that you are likely to receive so many requests for media interviews so the easiest way to manage large numbers of media is to stage a single news conference where all media can be present at once. The other reason is that you want to give the announcement greater impact. Having a large group of journalists gather in one location to hear the details of



Indian spotted deer (*Axis axis*), Bandhavgarh National Park, India

Source: Ashish Kothari

your announcement provides additional impact, which gives your announcement a sense of gravitas that would not otherwise be achieved by one-on-one interviews.

It is good to remember that your announcement must be important in the truest sense of the word. It can be embarrassing to stage a news conference at which there is little or no media attendance. If you have bad news to convey, you need to think very carefully about whether a news conference is wise. Gatherings of large numbers of media to announce anything that may be greeted negatively or with suspicion can result in an atmosphere of real tension when the media starts an aggressive line of questioning of the key spokespeople presenting at the conference.

Type of media targeted

When deciding how best to present the issue or story you want to promote in the media, you will need to give thought to the type of media that best suits. Frequently, a story you want to push to the media will work on all mediums; however, not every story will work for all types of media. A radio story may not be suitable for television and a television story may not work for a newspaper.

Television

This is a highly visual medium. No pictures can often mean no story. ‘Vision’—that is, video imagery—is essential to illustrate the narrative in the story.

Fortunately, most stories regarding protected areas lend themselves well to television because of the very nature of the subject and the imagery that matches. Frequently, however, because protected areas can be remote from major television stations, it may pay for you to provide video you have organised separately in advance.

Print

Newspapers and magazines are not dissimilar to television in the desire for visual impact although photos are not essential. The promise of a great photo, however, frequently provides additional motivation for a journalist to chase a story without which he or she might not write. A good photo can and often will lift the prominence of your story from the back pages of a magazine or newspaper to the front news pages. A spectacular photo can result in a relatively average news story making it to page one. With smaller regional newspapers, which lack the resources of large metropolitan dailies, it is always a good idea to provide good-quality photos with your media release.

Radio

The primary attribute of radio from a news perspective is its immediacy. Radio has the capacity to broadcast things as they happen in real time. Stations that produce news and current affairs as part of their staple will generally produce news bulletins on a half-hourly or hourly basis and program talk and current affairs content in between, with the added capacity to break into regular programming to update the audience on important events that have just occurred. While on many occasions stories might not suit television or print because obtaining vision or photos might not be possible, radio can generally cover most issues.

Social media

There are hundreds of social media platforms available that are valuable tools for promoting protected areas and their management. An integrated approach to social media and traditional media management will provide more robust communication and engagement with your stakeholders. Social media tools are evolving rapidly. While many government agencies around the world appear slow to adopt the numerous social media channels as a means of communicating compared with the private sector, the pace of growth in this area is gaining momentum.

As a means of publishing, blogging is one of the oldest social media practices although not necessarily the most widely used. One of the advantages of developing a blog is the hub functionality it provides for housing all content



Media photographer, Langshan National Park, China

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

and the control you have as the owner of your content and the space it occupies. When you post content to social networks it generally becomes owned by the platform to which you are posting. For example, if Facebook decided to shut down and become inaccessible, you would lose all of your content. Blogging, however, can require a greater dedication, commitment and diligence to maintain than many newer social networks that offer more instant messaging and novelty features and functions.

Video-hosting social network YouTube has also had a significant impact on content creation that has positioned this social network as one of the most popular online search engines. Facebook has also captured mass attention and the investment of time and emotion in sharing updates, likes, pokes and photos by users, although as the business model of the platform changes, so do usage and sentiment about the social network.

More and more agencies are establishing Facebook pages, as this platform has been one of the most widely used social networks and one of the first to gain mass popularity. You should assess, however, whether this is really the most suitable platform to meet your objectives as users change the way they use Facebook and how they feel about brands on Facebook, and, as the global giant

moves towards a monetary spend requirement from brands, this impacts the reach and success of content on Facebook.

Listed here are some of the available social networks that are widely used, but you should research the gamut of social networks available and which best meet your objectives.

Facebook

It is important to consider that people use Facebook for social sharing and recording special moments in their lives. To date, this social network has given protected area agencies the opportunity to become broadcasters directly to stakeholders who opt in to receive messages, bypassing the need to go via traditional mainstream media. As a brand on Facebook, you need to research guidelines and best-practice case studies for managing your reputation and opening a direct line of communication with your audience in a very public domain. Define why you want to use Facebook, what you want to achieve, associated risks, required resourcing, expectations for success and how your audience wants your brand to behave on Facebook.

YouTube

Not long ago the only way to broadcast video news was through a television station. Today, posting to YouTube is instantaneous and possible with a smart phone and internet access. The cost of more sophisticated equipment and editing tools has also become affordable so anyone can shoot, edit and broadcast news and current affairs. Protected area agencies the world over are beginning to embrace YouTube with great results. YouTube can be embedded into your website and shared via other social networks, and the use of tags, titles and descriptions allows people to discover content more easily. It is also one of the most used search engines after Google.

Vimeo

This has similar functionality to YouTube but allows the broadcaster to maintain copyright ownership. Some agencies are now using Vimeo as a cloud storage facility to keep and share broadcast-quality video footage that can be easily sent with a link directly to television broadcasters. This is enormously beneficial when television stations can utilise the footage, as increasing financial pressures limit the ability to justify travelling to remote destinations to cover stories. A protected area agency with staff skilled in shooting reasonable-quality video can store and send the raw footage to a station that is then able to be 'recut' as a news or current affairs story, and because you have provided the vision you have more

control over what exactly is broadcast. Quality vision can also generate media coverage you may not have otherwise garnered without it. You can even provide interviews that contain precisely the messaging you want.

Twitter

Twitter is an online social network and micro-blogging service that enables users to publicly send and receive ‘tweets’, which are text messages limited to 140 characters. Images can be added directly to tweets and links to sites like YouTube can also be uploaded to a tweet at the cost of a portion of the 140 characters. It is a fast and simple way of communicating with large audiences. Tweets can be shared by ‘re-tweeting’, which can help gain wider exposure to other users’ audiences, which can also help build a Twitter following. The more you engage in conversation with other Twitter users, the faster your Twitter community will grow, but remember to refer back to your social media strategy so that tweets and cross-promotion with other Twitter users stay relevant. Responding to tweets should also be timely as the expectation of immediacy is greater on Twitter than on many other social networks. Twitter is popular among influential people such as politicians and celebrities, with the average Twitter user over thirty years of age.

Flickr

Aside from being a cheap and reliable image library, this is perhaps the most useful site for sharing high-quality photos to a broad audience, especially the news media. Gone are the days of having to email small groups of images to the news media; now you can simply load a large quantity of photos to your Flickr account as a ‘set’ and then email or tweet a link directly to the media, which can then easily and quickly download the photos. Your agency maintains copyright control and it is a useful cloud storage facility.

Instagram

The visual nature of this photo and video-sharing social network has attracted a wide audience. Its popularity is growing among those with visually interesting content to share, and it is used by celebrities, influencers and brands to provide a different perspective of information or news being shared publicly. The use of hashtags and re-posting can assist with the discovery of content, which helps grow your following.

Podcasts

Telling stories is the crux of social media and podcasting provides an effective way to share interviews, discussions, readings, music and sounds best communicated as a

direct recording. For example, night-time noises in a protected area can be overlaid with a voiceover that tells the story of nocturnal activity. You may also share recorded statements with traditional media when audio is required or where it adds media value to your pitch.

News releases and media interviews

Writing a news release

Journalists decide within seconds on the value of a media release. This may be just seeing your subject line in their email inbox. If you get past this first hurdle, they will open the email and invest a further 10–20 seconds scanning the first few paragraphs for newsworthiness. If a journalist invests time in your media release only to decide it is non-news, you then risk being ignored and they may not bother to open an email from you in future. If you get it right and they like the content then you are on your way to establishing a productive and fruitful relationship with that journalist.

The news release encapsulates the message or story you wish to present and it is issued explicitly to elicit a response from the media. In other words, when you issue a news release to the media you are inviting them to contact you for more information and probably an interview. Therefore you *must* make yourself available to the media agency to which you have sent the release. Frequently—and this is especially the case for smaller regional media outlets—the news release is reproduced as a news story without calling you for an interview.

The benefits of issuing a news release are many and varied. The news release should always be a well-crafted, considered document written for news, which saves time for any journalist in understanding the issue and it helps to ensure the journalist receiving it gets key facts and figures correct.

The news release, written properly, should get straight to the heart of the matter at hand. It will usually include direct quotes that cannot be used out of context and it is often used word for word. It enables you to clear information for approval with senior management and it sets out your argument in a logical, well-articulated and easily digestible fashion, containing key messages that you will repeat if an interview is required.

At present the media mostly wants to receive releases via email, with web links to images, video and audio where available. Direct email is best because the recipient can

reply, however, paid distribution services are useful backups if you lack media contacts in a region or for a particular subject.

Be strategic developing and distributing media releases. No matter how valuable your story idea, you are basically requesting free advertising so the content needs to be instantly judged as high quality.

A well-written media release can be used exactly as you have sent it and this is particularly true for resource-poor regional and local newspapers. It will therefore pay to make sure that your media release is well crafted and written as news for news outlets. Traditionally, media releases are written in newspaper style rather than like radio or television news copy. When writing a media release, consider:

- ensuring the top of the page says in large font 'Media release'
- having the agency brand or logo alongside the agency name prominent next to the 'media release' title
- making sure it is clearly dated at the top of the page, and if sending out more than one release on the same subject during the course of a day, such as during incidents like a bushfire, make sure you show the time the release is being issued
- including a punchy headline that summarises the story in a few words
- the very first sentence should encapsulate just what the release or story is about; it contains your news 'hook' or 'angle'—this is the most critical part of the media release as it will tell a journalist whether it is newsworthy
- making sure your release contains the who, how, what, when, where and why but not necessarily in that order
- remembering the key points of newsworthiness
- telling a story
- including critical facts and figures
- using direct quotes
- avoiding the use of agency jargon, in-house terminology and acronyms
- always writing the agency's name in full when first used and then the acronym after that
- always making sure there is a contact name and other contact details such as telephone numbers and email addresses at the bottom so the media can contact you at all hours
- double-checking all facts and figures
- using simple, active, lively and engaging language
- fitting the media release onto one page in a readable font with normal margins
- including relevant links to useful internet sites such as Flickr or Vimeo where photos or broadcast video footage can be downloaded by the journalist.

Where do you send your news release?

It is fundamental to the management of media that you have a comprehensive media contact list. Building one is essential and it will constantly change as journalists come and go.

The way you decide to structure your list is also important. For most protected area managers, you will need to develop lists that contain the regional media outlets that have a direct interest in what you do as an organisation. For large areas, you might want to consider breaking this list into smaller regions. A newspaper in the far north of your region may have absolutely no interest in protected areas in the south, so you do not want to be sending all your releases to one large list for fear of wasting the time of journalists.

One region may have three or four newspapers, a radio station and a television station as a media contact group. You might have half a dozen different groups like this and on occasion when you need to communicate a message that is relevant to all media within the area you manage you will simply send your release to all of the groups. You will also establish a metropolitan media contact group or groups when there is an issue that will be relevant to a much broader audience and this usually pertains to major incidents.

You should also consider establishing a contact list based around particular interests—possibly lifestyle and recreation groups that contain magazines and programs with recreational interests that relate to the protected areas you manage. They could be fishing and boating, camping and bushwalking media outlets. Another group to seriously consider is one based around major incidents and emergencies. Having an email list to which you send urgent information in an emergency will be very important to you and something you do not want to be developing when the incident occurs (see Chapter 26).

Fact sheets

Facts and figures fascinate the media. They are important additions to your package of information that best illustrate what you are trying to say. A media release, while carrying many facts, cannot always contain all of them, so a fact sheet can be a useful addition to send



The magnificent garden emerald hummingbird (*Chlorostilbon assimilis*), an endemic species to Costa Rica and western Panama, protected area, Costa Rica

Source: Charles Besançon

along with a media release. It is always smart to build a series of fact sheets on a variety of issues, from pest management to fire management and tourism, and so on.

Video, photos and other useful tools

The ability and capacity to provide video and photography to the media that best illustrate your story have never been so important as they are today for achieving good coverage for protected areas. The media will generally appreciate access to good video footage and photography, especially of places too remote for their access. Sometimes the quality does not even have to be that good. Video footage is being seen on television and on the websites of newspapers and radio stations that has been shot on smart phones and tablets by journalists or by members of the public.

It is very easy using today's smart phones and tablets to shoot reasonable-quality vision and photos that can be instantly edited in camera, then 'shared' directly with news outlets, and this is especially true during incidents

such as bushfires where firefighters themselves take images and video and upload from the fire line to a video or photo social media platform.

There is another real benefit of having a quality video and photo library and that is that these images of beautiful landscapes and amazing plants and animals offer a constant rationale for maintaining protected areas. It is a soft sell but it works. Infographics, maps and diagrams that can be reprinted and broadcast can also be very useful tools.

Spokesperson

When issuing a media release it is always essential to consider well beforehand just who will be representing the agency or issue once you receive a call from the media requesting an interview. Generally it will be the person quoted as the spokesperson in the media release, however, it does not have to be. Due to time constraints and availability, it is worth considering back-up options and selecting a second person to be interviewed in certain circumstances.



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service marine specialist Geoff Ross providing live media interviews concerning a marine mammal issue, Newport Beach, Sydney, Australia

Source: Stuart Cohen

On politicised issues and major announcements, it is general practice in many organisations to have a CEO or senior manager be the spokesperson. You do not want to have a junior staff member addressing questions that are beyond their professional capacity to answer.

The spokesperson should preferably be someone who is able to be engaging and explain complicated operational or scientific matters simply in a way the broader audience will best understand. Some conservation agencies have spokespeople who are specialised in being interviewed, in being the ‘face’ of an organisation. The media, however, will almost always prefer to interview a ‘real’ person—that is, the person most directly related to the subject or issue rather than a corporate media spokesperson.

Timing the news release

Just when you send your media release is an important question to consider in order to give yourself the best possible media exposure. You must first and foremost

think about the ‘news cycle’—that is, when in the daily news cycle are journalists looking for information to fill newspapers, radio and television news bulletins?

Radio news in a metropolitan context is a 24-hour process as most metro stations will run at least hourly bulletins and many will run a half-hourly service from the early morning. Daily consumption of radio news is usually reaching a peak in the mornings, so it is obvious that issuing a media release around six in the morning is best. By nine in the morning, the peak is over.

Television news, however, is focused on a nightly bulletin and journalists in this field are beginning the news gathering process around 9 am when the chief of staff in any metro television newsroom will be talking to journalists about what stories to cover during the course of the day for the nightly bulletin. Daily newspapers follow a similar timetable to television. They have the capacity to include late stories but the daily newspaper is often ‘put to bed’ by around 8 pm. What all this means is that pitching a media release to metropolitan news media is best done in the morning unless of course it is related to an incident or emergency, in which case the release is issued as soon as it is appropriate. Daily newspapers lead the daily news cycle. Morning radio takes its content from the first few pages of the paper, and if you are featured in the paper, there will be high radio and television interest in the story.

Dealing with regional media can be quite different as they have a somewhat different news cycle. Many of the smaller town and regional newspapers, for example, may be weekly, biweekly or even triweekly, so deadlines will be different. You need to know the deadlines for each. There are circumstances when you will issue a media release to a region in which there are several small newspapers all with somewhat different deadlines. Think about which of them is the most important to you in terms of readership and impact and aim to meet that paper’s deadline rather than trying to please all of them.

If you have developed a good working relationship with your media contacts, it is often quite alright to discuss the story in advance with a journalist with regard to the timing of the release and how it might fit with the journalist’s other stories planned for the same paper. The journalist might even suggest you going earlier with the announcement or holding off to a later edition to get better coverage.

The interview

So now you have issued your media release at the right time and the journalist has responded by telephone requesting an interview. You know who will be the spokesperson and you are looking forward to ensuring you get the best possible result. Just how you handle an interview will depend very much on which medium you are dealing with, the nature of the inquiry—that is, negative or positive—and whether it will be a news interview, extended print feature or a program piece for television or radio.

Never go into an interview without a plan, whether it is a good-news story or a negative one. Critical to your interview will be the ‘key message’, and the best way to think about what this message should be is to ask yourself, ‘what is the most important thing I want someone listening to my interview to remember and take away with them?’ Consider it carefully, phrase it carefully and make sure it is the same message that appears in the media release, in social media posts, in your interview and any other form of communication you have with the outside world on the same issue. Always take time to predict what the likely questions will be and think through, if not actually write down, the answers.

If this is a ‘news’ interview where the journalist is seeking grabs, you will take every opportunity to repeat that grab, increasing the likelihood that this will be the one the journalist uses in the news bulletin or the newspaper as a quote. This we will call your ‘A’ points.

Your ‘B’ points are a series of secondary, but nevertheless important, facts or statements that you might also want to use to illustrate your point if the opportunity prevails.

It also pays to be aware of the nasty issues you may be questioned about and how you will answer them. And finally, the interview is not over until either you or the journalist has left the location. More than one person has been caught out continuing to talk after they thought the interview was over, only to find that the more relaxed and sometimes less constrained answer makes its way into print or broadcast.

Before going into a media interview, consider the following questions, where relevant.

- Have I notified my supervisor and the media professionals within the agency?
- What audience is the interview intended for?
- Do the time and arrangements for the interview suit me?

- Did I ask the interviewer what points might be raised and the general area the interview might cover?
- Have I avoided using industry acronyms and jargon?
- Have I made sure I make reference to my agency in full and not as an acronym?
- Have I considered what questions might be asked?
- What are the main points I will want to make in my interview (A points)?
- What other information might I want to impart (B points)?
- Is there anything negative that I might be asked on this subject?
- Is there any additional material that I can provide that might be useful for the journalist such as photos, video or maps?
- Did I do a ‘dummy’ run with someone to rehearse the interview?

Radio

There are generally two types of interviews on radio. The first is a ‘news’ interview, frequently done over the telephone. This will involve a series of fairly obvious questions usually around the matters of who, what, when, where, why and how. They will record the interview and then take one or two short sections (known as ‘grabs’ or ‘sound bites’), generally no longer than 15 seconds, and insert these into a news bulletin with an introduction read by a newsreader.

Because the ‘news’ interview is being cut, it is usually quite acceptable to stop mid interview and ask to start that part of the interview again if you are unhappy about the way you have phrased your answer. Remember the journalist interviewing you wants to tell a clear and coherent story so it is within their interests to give you the chance to be clear and tell the story as best you can.

Given you have a fair idea of the likely questions, it pays to think in advance about what your ‘grab’ or ‘grabs’ might be: how you phrase it, what words you might use, what tone you might apply. You will have a key message that you want to get across and the important point is to stick to the message.

The extended interview for programs will generally run for approximately five minutes and not much longer unless it is a highly contentious topic. These interviews are generally run in their entirety so there is not the same flexibility to stop and start. They are preferably ‘live’ interviews—that is, broadcast in real time—although they can be prerecorded in order to deal with issues of availability. Such interviews are by nature wide ranging and exploratory.



Documentary film crew, Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales, Australia, including camera person, sound engineer, interviewer and still photographer

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

You are going to use this as an opportunity to tell an entire story that covers the basics of the issue. For protected area managers, these are gifts of an opportunity to really sell your key messages and promote the value of the protected areas you are managing to a wider audience. Make the most of this. Do not enter an interview like this without having first thought through at least a basic plan. If you are expecting hard questions then you must think and plan before you walk into such a situation.

Television

Television is a somewhat different creature to radio in that the logistics of the interview and setting them up are more involved, requiring the cooperation of more people, more distance to be travelled and more gear. In the majority of cases, the television interview is face-to-face either on location or in a studio and usually involves at least a journalist and camera operator and on occasion a sound engineer. More and more, however, you will be received and interviewed by a lone journalist operating a camera.

Television news interviews are similar to those on radio. A series of questions will be asked to be cut into a written script read by the journalist, but today's television news grabs are frequently much shorter than those on radio and can be as short as a few seconds. As with radio, it is

often acceptable to ask to stop and rephrase your answers unless this is an adversarial situation in which case it is best to keep going.

There are occasions when your agency or organisation might be asked to provide a spokesperson for extended interviews for current affairs programs. You should always prepare for these properly and ensure that the spokesperson is well briefed and has a plan for tackling the interview.

Newspaper

There are obvious similarities with radio and television but because the interview is not being delivered to an audience as a recorded piece of information there is ample opportunity to 'discuss' issues with a journalist rather than approach it as if it were a recorded interview. You can stop and start your answer to rephrase it but remember that at all times you can still be quoted almost as if you were being recorded so if you do stumble in an answer it is entirely possible the very same words will appear in print. The better your relationship with the journalist, the less likely this is to happen. More often than not you have dealt with the journalist before and you will have the ability to ensure that your quotes are correctly phrased as you wish. In rare cases, a journalist may read the story back to you to ensure accuracy before going to print, but do not expect this.



Meeting between community representatives and protected area officials, Taining National Park, China

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

Media management skills

Skill in managing the media for the purpose of promoting your protected areas and agency brand is something that is acquired over time. Most people have a general understanding of the media because they watch television, listen to radio and read newspapers, but just how these products are developed is more often than not a bit of a mystery to many people unless they have undergone some training or gained some experience. While most conservation agencies and organisations employ communication professionals, the responsibility for managing media and implementing media and communications strategies must be shared. Accordingly, staff and management should be taught or developed under the tutelage of those with this specific skill set. While there might be a media team to guide media management, frequent delivery of the message and information will fall among the many responsibilities of protected area managers. That requires training.

In the field of protected area management there are many reasons why working closely with the media helps your organisation achieve its management objectives. You have something you want to say to a community or you wish to influence a public debate on a particular aspect of conservation. It might simply be messages about

what you want to see happen in relation to a protected area or something you wish not to happen. It is often the case that you want the community to understand, acknowledge and recognise the values of protected areas and why and how they are managed the way they are.

In managing protected areas, you need to have a supportive community and one way of achieving this, alongside strategic and considered stakeholder management, is to help people realise how achieving your objectives will benefit both the protected area you are managing and the community as a whole. The media by and large owns the platforms and structures upon which large amounts of information can be passed on to the community, so working with the media in a positive and collaborative way is vital.

Media coverage of protected areas throughout the world is a constant mix of positive and negative. It is a never-ending process of push and pull, of disparate groups with conflicting views on how protected areas should be managed. There is, however, ample opportunity to focus on the positive attributes and community views and to nurture a positive and productive relationship with the media to represent your arguments for effective management of your protected area's cultural and natural heritage.

Supportive media

Protected areas are often well supported by communities which understand their importance to the general health and wellbeing of both people and the planet. This view is widely shared by many journalists and it is well worthwhile nurturing and fostering these relationships for the longer term, and there are many ways this can be achieved.

‘Hook’ or ‘angle’

First and foremost is being able to identify stories and issues that possess real news values that make them worthwhile to report to the broader audience. This means finding the ‘angle’ or ‘hook’ to a story that will most appeal to a journalist. Once you have this in hand, you must consider the needs of the journalist reporting on the story. What photographic or video opportunities can be exploited to best illustrate your message? What facts, figures and anecdotes may make the story more interesting and set it apart from other stories of the day? Do you have a spokesperson who tells a story well, is engaging, entertaining, authoritative, credible? Can you provide transport and even accommodation? Can you offer exclusivity for a period?

Exclusive stories

‘Exclusivity’ can be an important way of achieving high-profile coverage through a relationship with a particular journalist on a story that might not ordinarily achieve coverage if you were to issue a media release to the broader media simultaneously. It means offering to give a story only to that journalist so that he or she has the lead on that story. To the editor, this is far more appealing than a story that might be given to all media. Frequently, an exclusive will get good coverage with the media or journalist you have worked with and they in turn will put in more effort and more often than not will send a photographer or television news crew to cover it. Exclusivity can also ensure greater prominence, pushing your story to the front pages of a newspaper, for example, whereas it might ordinarily have been buried in the back pages.

Building relationships with the media

For protected area managers it is very important to maintain good relations with local or regional media who generally cover the day-to-day stories you want covered that metropolitan media will not, because the smaller

stories do not have the higher news values that the city media wants. It can be very disheartening for a regional newspaper editor, for example, to discover that you have given an exclusive to a metropolitan news outlet without first supporting the regional media who covers the less important stories for you on a regular basis. So it always pays to consider your local media in this equation by making sure they are informed of your higher-profile story in a way that allows them to cover this at around the same time as the story is covered in metropolitan media. While this can often be somewhat challenging to achieve, failure to do this can sour your relationship with local media and that is not good.

Timing a story

‘Timing’ the release of information or a media release on a high-profile story is critical. Always attempt to ensure that the release of information to the local media can coincide as closely as possible with the publishing of the same exclusive story by the metropolitan news journalist you have been working with.

Off record versus on record

What you say or write to a reporter is, in practical terms, always on the record and it may be quoted or paraphrased. They may attribute it to you by name, even if you request otherwise. Many professional communicators live by the adage ‘there is no such thing as off the record’, and this is certainly the safest stance, but there is a place for providing background or information that will help a journalist get a better understanding of an issue; however, there are caveats to this approach.

Speaking off the record gives the journalist (and usually their management) credit for adhering to their code of ethics. Sadly, this credit is not always due. As with all communications, your off-the-record divulgements must be honest and accurate.

Providing off-the-record comment can have powerful benefits. It can strengthen your relationship with a journalist, it can stave off negative media coverage or it can provide valuable context to guide a reporter towards a more balanced story.

Speaking off the record is generally *not* something you would do when dealing with a journalist for the first time. It is something you should only consider with someone with whom you already have a good understanding through previous regular contact.

If a journalist asks for off-the-record comments the same rule should apply. Be strategic and only divulge off-the-record comment if you know the journalist and have dealt with them extensively beforehand. Off the record has a mutual benefit so many journalists will honour this, but remember there is always risk.

Do not underestimate the cadets

While an established aggressive reporter may make life challenging, some of the most dangerous reporters are actually new recruits or even students. They are unlikely to appreciate the value of having a relationship with you and are trying to impress their bosses or teachers. Where time and circumstances allow, assist these people, but warily. Treat them with great caution until you have established a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

Another side to this is recognising that journalism students, cadets and new recruits are forming their professional standards and work methods and you carry some responsibility. You have nothing to gain from making an enemy of a student who may go on to become an influential journalist. Your colleagues worldwide will not thank you for turning a reporter off conservation issues or, worse yet, making them interested but antagonistic.

Managing social media

A social media strategy developed to meet overall goals and communication objectives will keep content and activity focused and with purpose. This should sit across the organisation or agency, and social media plans developed specifically for all programs, campaigns or initiatives should be in line with the strategy.

Social media team

You may need a staff member or team dedicated to managing all social media activity to ensure your objectives are met and to keep the organisation updated and informed about relevant online activity.

Plan thoroughly

Have a plan. Alongside your strategy, develop a risk-management plan that has protocols and processes for dealing with conflict on your social media channels. Consider how you will respond to vocal critics who attack your brand on your social channels: how will you monitor your social networks, how long will it take for you to respond, what is the escalation process for questions or comments for which you need to consult with others?

Best practice for reputation management online means you need to monitor conversations about your agency happening on social channels. How will you find these mentions online? How will you respond in a manner appropriate to that social network and for that community?

A content management plan will help you organise the creation and dissemination of content to ensure social media activity is strategic and meets objectives. Below are suggestions for what to include in your plan.

- **Idea:** What is the overall concept or idea you want to bring to life via social media?
- **Rationale:** Why do it? What is it going to achieve? How does it meet business goals?
- **Social platforms:** What social media platforms will you use—for example, a video hosted on YouTube embedded into a blog post that is shared via Facebook and Twitter?
- **Implementation:** Operational logistics of what needs to be done, how it will be done, who will do it and when it will be done.
- **Reporting:** How will success be measured?
- **Budget:** What resources will you need and how much will it cost?

Be transparent

Be honest with your audience and provide helpful information that positions your organisation as accessible and open. Transparency is paramount and has a huge impact on the success of your social media activity. If your brand is seen to be secretive, reluctant to share information, is unavailable to answer questions or if you ignore conversations online, you will breed negative sentiment and distrust, which are damaging to your reputation.

Be interesting

Your presence on social media should be engaging, entertaining, useful and interesting, to generate conversation and be shared by others. Tell stories and share timely news, interesting facts and insights that help build a relationship with your audience so you have a loyal and engaged community who will support and amplify your agency. Take people behind the scenes and introduce them to the people behind your brand. Make it personal and build a human connection.

Be nimble

Conversations that happen on social media happen in real time. You need to build a consistent and constant social media presence as part of your broader communications strategy in the management of protected areas. Engagement with your community should happen as quickly as is possible, but you can manage expectations of your availability online by including details about this in the profiles of your social networks and via messages to your community in real time.

Immediate response can be difficult for protected areas managed by bureaucracies, as responses may need to be escalated to others, so it is important to communicate the expectation and process for those involved prior to engaging online. A holding statement should be developed for immediate response online until further information is provided.

Tone of voice

Consider the style of content you will develop, the tone of voice and the language used in your posts and responses. Generally, communication should be conversational, colloquial, vernacular and engaging so the community feels compelled to ask questions and share their opinions and stories.

Listen and respond

Social media is a powerful tool for building your community and communicating with your audience, but it can equally be disruptive and damaging to your cause if not planned thoroughly from the beginning. Do your homework and listen to what is being said about your agency and any relevant person, organisation or topic before you engage online.

Understand the nuances of different social networks and who the dominant voices are in those communities. When you do interact online, be helpful, approachable, friendly and inclusive and know when to take conversations offline if they are inflammatory or irrelevant to the wider audience.

Reach out to peers and influencers

Identify complementary social media users and engage with them in conversation or to contribute to your content. These might be conservation volunteers, similar agencies, celebrities sympathetic to your work and journalists. Share their content and promote relevant posts via your social channels. Conversely, if you are approached to engage online in this way you

should oblige unless there is good reason not to as this will also help build your network and strengthen your relationship with influencers.

Resourcing

Social media requires an investment of time and there are social media tools available at a cost for community management, marketing and analytics that enable more efficiency and quality data than free tools. You need to investigate the need for employing paid platforms or services and the associated costs of these, and human resourcing of those who will be managing social media. You may also need to seek consultation from specialists for social media training, strategy development and community management, so this should also be considered as a cost.

Another budgetary allowance to be considered is the cost of paid content. In recent years there has been an increase in online influencers and personalities charging a fee for working with brands to generate awareness among their fans via social media. Professional bloggers, YouTube users and Instagrammers, for example, may even be managed by a talent agent who will negotiate a fee for activity. Targeted advertising on blogs and social networks can also be an effective way to reach a large audience and should be considered when planning social media activity.

Adversarial media

The rules for dealing with adversarial approaches are very different from normal media relations. Protected areas around the world are frequently under pressure from certain quarters to relax their rules and regulations. Some sectors of the community want to exploit natural resources or obtain access for recreation in ways that might be damaging to the values for which the area has been reserved. When conservation agencies take responsibility for an area, they sometimes close off access to areas that are very important to community members—for recreation, gathering firewood, beekeeping or other activities.

As a result there is rarely a shortage of people ready to criticise management. Given the media's strong attraction to the news value of 'conflict', there are many media organisations and journalists keen to report on such conflict and in some cases provide a platform to attack the fundamental reasons for conserving protected areas. As a consequence, many protected area managers find themselves engaged in long-running public debates in the media arguing a case on behalf of their protected area.

This is a very tricky place to be. You need to judge when engaging in a debate will be a smart move and when it will not. In many adversarial situations, arguing your case will be the right thing to do, but in other circumstances you might find you are providing oxygen to a debate that, without your involvement, will wither, whereas engagement may add further fuel. It is a judgment that is best made based on experience. More often than not, however, dealings with the media, negative or positive, are an opportunity to state your case.

When your management of or rationale for conserving protected areas comes under attack, this is an opportunity to restate your case. Failure to respond or failure to engage often means that criticisms will go unanswered, leaving the public hearing only one side of a debate. It is a common reaction of many to appease and to avoid conflict, and equally common is fear that a strong response to criticism will only exacerbate conflict, and certainly this can occur. In the majority of occasions, however, the debate is based on self-serving assumptions by critics that need to be addressed immediately.

It is often the case that your arguments in defence of the way you manage your protected area will be based more soundly on common sense and science than those of your critics. Conservation of our cultural, natural and historical heritage is often a selfless endeavour. It frequently involves restraint on the part of communities and on occasion individuals, so as a protected area manager you will hold the moral high ground. Use it and respond.

In the realm of social media, however, it is wise to exercise considerable caution since the ability of critics to wage campaigns anonymously can result in a considerable number of participants berating managers. Your response in traditional media can ultimately find itself the subject of viral condemnation in social media so when weighing up whether to engage and respond you will need to consider how the debate might transfer across to social media platforms.

It is generally fairly obvious from the first contact by email or phone that you are dealing with an adversarial journalist. You will generally hear it in the tone and type of questions being asked. As soon as you realise there is a likelihood that a journalist will take a position critical of your management, you need to start thinking about how to get the best outcome from a difficult situation.

Never provide an instant comment. Buy some time: 'I just need to check the latest information on that' or 'I'll need to talk to some of our field staff/scientists to get the details you need—I want to make sure I get back to you with accurate information'.

Be as methodical as the situation warrants, and consider the following general 'rules of thumb'.

1. Get a thorough list of the points the journalist wants to cover.
2. Contact your agency's media professionals. They will have been through this before and know best how to act. Work with them to craft the agency's response.
3. Think carefully about the line of questioning. What points will be the most difficult to answer? What is the slant the journalist might take and how might you best defend your position? Write down the likely questions and those you would least like to be asked and prepare answers or 'talking points' that best present your arguments.
4. The talking points will cover the content of the interview, but that is only half the issue. The other half concerns your image. A spokesperson can deliver the content perfectly and still have a disastrous result if the image was a negative one. For instance, a person strongly defending their agency's safety record might appear extremely uncaring in the wake of a tragic event.
5. Consider the visual imagery that might be captured by media intent on exposing you to criticism. Think about where you would prefer to be interviewed. If you are in an office wearing a suit, you risk looking out of touch with the real world. Think about what your critics will be wearing (you probably know them quite well). Make sure you match their image.

If, for instance, you are defending the agency's management of swimming water quality, consider doing it at the beach in a wetsuit. If the agency spokesperson is happy getting in the water, the visual image it sends to viewers is worth a thousand words. Will you wear a uniform? Will you appear in vehicles marked with the agency's brand or logo?

At the end of this process you will have worked out two things: the key message you want to present and the way you want to present it. How your spokesperson conducts the adversarial interview is absolutely critical. The journalist will be looking to present the organisation in a particular, negative way. To get the truth across to the audience, the spokesperson needs to stick to the key message.

The spokesperson must answer every question in a way that presents the agency's key message and the appropriate image. The message is the content of the answers, but just as important is the way the answers are presented.



NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service marine specialist Geoff Ross responding by phone in relation to a marine mammal incident

Source: Lucy Morrell

It is not easy giving much the same answer to a dozen or more questions, but it has to be done. If you do not want to see it on the news tonight, do not say it now. This is not a conversation; it is a business transaction.

A useful approach is to address the question and then bridge to your key message—for example:

- ‘That is an important question, but my concern here today is ...’
- ‘I can see why people would ask about that, but my message to them today is ...’
- ‘Yes that is part of the picture, but I would suggest the key point is ...’
- ‘Wouldn’t it be great if things were that straightforward, but it is actually much more complicated ...’.

While the approach outlined above can help the agency deal with adversarial media bent on mischief, it is very important to acknowledge when you or your agency has made a mistake. While it is often difficult to admit to mistakes, the temptation to deny or be evasive must be avoided. It will frequently make the situation with regard to media coverage much worse. More often than not it will prolong the public discourse on your agency’s

shortcomings. It will result in greater scrutiny of where the fault lies and the added embarrassment that you have attempted to avoid accepting blame for your mistake.

This ultimately damages your reputation, creates distrust with the community and erodes your credibility. When approached by the media in a circumstance where your agency or organisation has faltered, it is best to concede that mistakes were made, and as quickly as you can. It is then vital to provide a statement looking to the future—pointing out what the agency is doing to make sure the mistake is not repeated and, ideally, finishing with a call to action by the community. The damage to reputation can be limited and the debate closed although adversarial groups will frequently attempt to keep this debate alive after which it is often wise to avoid further provocation.

Where your agency or organisation is featured in a negative print story, there will be high radio interest the next day. You can use this to your advantage by having your spokesperson contact all the local radio newsrooms early the next morning to provide radio with the real facts.

Case studies 15.1 and 15.2 illustrate how you might respond to two other difficult media situations.

Communication planning

While the media plays a very important role in communicating key messages about protected areas, as has been said at the beginning of this chapter, it is really part of a bigger communication process that involves thoughtful planning. More often than not media engagement will be a final, albeit critical, step in a staged process of communicating with stakeholders. This is because there is always much to be done communicating the most important messages to the most influential people before the media informs the wider world. To do otherwise is disrespectful to your stakeholders and risks damaging your relationship with them.

The very best communication is credible and trusted. Direct communication methods such as a phone call, or even a personal letter or face-to-face meetings, help build trust and credibility in ways that media reportage cannot. But this process takes careful planning.

There are any number of ways you can communicate more directly with an audience and in ways that build trust and credibility, and you are only limited by your imagination in how you do this. It is certainly best to adopt the motto ‘whatever works’ to guide you. In other words, think of the message you want to convey and use

Case Study 15.1 A parent's worst nightmare

A ten-year-old child tragically fell to his death from a lookout in a national park managed by an agency. Although the area was fenced, few of the agency's lookouts had childproof fencing. The child managed to get past the fencing and lost his footing.

That afternoon, with emotions running very high in the community and the agency, several television outlets requested interviews on the subject. The agency suspected they were aiming to show that the fencing was inadequate and to depict the agency as uncaring.

The temptation for the agency spokesperson was to strenuously defend the adequacy of the fencing by pointing out how more than a million people visit the site each year and there had never been any incidents like this before.

The danger with this approach is that the agency could be so caught up in defending its safety record that it would look callous and disrespectful. It was agreed that the key message would be:

- the incident was a tragic freak accident
- our hearts go out to the parents
- there will be a full investigation.

Also vital was that the spokesperson was empathetic and respectful in this terrible situation.

The interviews turned out to be adversarial, with allegations that the fencing was inadequate and the site poorly managed. The spokesperson maintained an appropriate demeanour throughout, respectful of the parents' shocking loss.

Although the story received a mention in the news that night, none of the networks presented the agency in a bad light and none used footage of the agency spokesperson—a reasonable result from a situation that was harrowing for the parents, the agency staff and the spokesperson.

Case Study 15.2 Some decisions are not worth the media damage

Picture this situation. A conservation agency media officer takes a call from a ranger about a proposed feral deer cull: 'We're going to feed the deer a sedative mixed with food,' says the ranger. 'When they go to sleep we'll shoot them, then take the carcasses to the garbage tip.'

The media officer asks if the drive to the tip will be through any settlements. 'Ah, yes,' says the ranger, 'we have to go through Springfield' (a town of 5000 people).

'Look, I just need to check this with the regional manager,' says the media officer. 'We'll get back to you this morning and thanks very much for letting us know.'

The media officer runs to the regional manager's office, apologises for interrupting an important meeting and paints a picture of a truck full of dead feral deer rumbling down the main street of Springfield. The manager rings the area supervisor and nicely points out how the public outrage that will come from the culling program will likely outweigh the conservation benefits. He notes how much the media frenzy that might attend the operation will likely impact on their minister's popularity, and that both the agency's budget and their jobs might be impacted should field operations keep generating problems for the minister.

The cull was changed in a major way to ensure the local community was aware of it and that inappropriate images were not broadcast. The important point here is that media work in an agency is a two-way street. Media professionals have the role of helping to maximise public support for the agency's actions, but they also help agency managers

realise when a proposed course of action constitutes corporate suicide, and when the community or political costs far outweigh the conservation gains.

Media professionals can exert significant influence over other organisations through their contact with their professional colleagues in other agencies. Another department may be taking decisions that are damaging to conservation and therefore unpopular with the general community. Simply alerting the media professionals in that department may be all it takes to have them use their influence to prevent the negative outcome.

At the end of the day, the political process in a democracy means that an agency or organisation only thrives when it has public support.

A significant risk to such support is taking decisions that run counter to community expectations. Conservation agencies will always need to take unpopular decisions, but they need to manage this. The last thing they need is poorly managed unpopular decisions that undermine conservation benefits.



Street theatre with a protected area conservation message, in a community adjacent to the Great Himalayan National Park, India

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

whatever tool at your disposal, no matter how outlandish, which you think will achieve your ultimate goal—to push key messages and information that will help achieve conservation management objectives for your protected area. From staging of street theatre to video production, to guided walks and the more conventional face-to-face meeting, if you think it is the best way to communicate and build trust and credibility then it probably is and ought to be tried. Always remember ‘whatever works’. Think outside the box.

Writing a communication plan

There is no standard template (nor should there be) for a communication plan better than common sense. We are by nature a highly sophisticated, communicative species. We are capable of the most extraordinary and complex forms of communication, social media being just the latest example of how exceptional we have become in communicating with each other.

‘Communication’ is what we are good at but when you are asked to write down and plan to communicate with a small or even a broad audience, there is an endless array of methods—but the plan is far less complicated than you might expect. In the world of public relations and mass media communications, the idea of developing a ‘communication plan or strategy’ might at first seem

daunting for the inexperienced but it is something we achieve daily and learn to do at the earliest age and refine throughout our years. It involves the principles of common sense and ‘whatever works’.

A communication strategy can be a 100-page document involving incredible detail or it can be one page long or it can be just in your head. A word on language: like everything else related to communicating messages, if you make things complicated, longwinded and full of jargon and bureaucratese then it is going to be hard for people to understand the message. Keep the language simple and engaging. A complicated plan is always a challenge so do not make things harder than they need to be.

The following simple template suggests the important elements to consider in preparing a communication plan for managing an issue or event. You could also call it an issues management plan. But the structure can just as easily be applied to most communications issues with a bit of tweaking. Do not treat this as a precise formula. Some bits might not be relevant to your issue.

Define the issue

What exactly is the issue? Sometimes this can be more complex than you think, but it is worth pausing to consider this and starting with a question like ‘what is the problem?’ Define the issue in a single sentence. Be sure you are actually addressing the right issue.

Issue owner

Ultimately, who in your agency has final responsibility for this plan? Who is responsible for it being implemented properly? It might be a couple of names or just one. Whose professional reputation is on the line if it all goes wrong? This is necessary to define to ensure that those actually responsible for getting the job done have their name attached to the plan and the outcome.

Context (background)

So what is going on? What is the background to this issue or event? What is so important, and why, that you need a ‘plan’ to communicate? Within this you might like to talk about the ‘nasties’ that necessitated the plan being drafted as well as the benefits of what is being proposed.

Organisational position (optional)

Where does what is being proposed fit into the overall objectives of the organisation? This is usually captured in a single sentence or two. It is a statement from the organisation. It is a view on why this is important and why it should be done. There is no need to make it longwinded but it helps to make a clear statement about the organisation’s position on the ‘issue’.

Action team

You do not ever want to be implementing some of these big plans on your own so the plan needs broader ownership. You also need the imprimatur of management so it pays to get them all on board from the beginning in helping develop a plan. Sometimes there is a team involved and they need to be identified and the plan agreed to so they are locked in and cannot get out of their responsibility after the first meeting. It really helps to share the work and the responsibility. Putting their names in a list titled ‘action team’ right at the start means that eyes are upon them and expectations that they will ‘deliver’ have begun. You will not be alone.

Stakeholders

Who are you dealing with? List them and maybe group them.

Stakeholder analysis

Where are the stakeholders coming from? Who are the ‘make its’ and ‘break its’ and why? And by this we mean who are the people with the capacity to have the greatest positive or negative influence on the issue or event? What are they saying about your organisation? It will pay to look closely at the motivations of each of the stakeholders involved. This can be as detailed as you need it to be, but at times it helps to refine how you will communicate slightly different messages.

Objectives

This is arguably one of the most important elements of a communication plan. Your objectives need to be clearly considered and well thought through. What are you trying to achieve with this plan? In the more complex plans you will need to refer back to these time and again to ensure your actions are actually going to help deliver your objectives. It will be your objectives against which you will eventually measure the success of your plan after implementation. Often there will be about three objectives, maybe even four or five, but at times there might be only one.

Key messages

Given your objectives, what is the message? The key messages are the ‘mantra’ that appears basically the same in everything you do. It is the same well-crafted ‘simple’ message or statement that will be repeated in media releases, letters, social media posts and news grabs. For more detailed plans, you might even road test the key messages among a pilot group to see if they actually ‘get’ what you are trying to say. The key message is at the heart of what you are trying to convey so it needs to be very clear and easily understood.

Actions

Considering the objectives, what actions are you going to take to help you achieve those objectives? This is the real business part of the plan and provides the broad outline of how each action fits together. There may be many parts to this depending on how complex your plan is going to be.

Timing

Absolutely critical to the success of the plan is timing. Your actions will need to occur at quite specific moments and those moments need to be clearly identified at the very beginning. All the dominoes in the plan need to fall at precisely the right moment and in the right order and this can be the most important aspect of the plan. So it can pay to be explicit in the plan about timing and the

need for everyone to synchronise their watches. Usually (but not always) you will have the timings explicitly stated in the task spreadsheet mentioned below, but you might like to make a special reference to ‘timings’ if it is necessary and helpful to the plan.

Terminologies

Make sure everyone is using the same terminologies and there are not two ways of saying the same thing, which can bring the best-laid plan completely undone. Agree on the description of names for things and places. Reduce jargon to something everyone is happy with. Too often people get stuck on this point when it should be simple. In some situations it might even pay to have a glossary as an appendix.

Task list

This is usually a spreadsheet that identifies who does what, when and how, and maybe includes estimates of costs.

Support materials

What things will you need: maps, brochures, Facebook page, scripts, photos, video, websites, social media tools and letters, PowerPoint presentation? What support materials will you employ to achieve your objectives?

Monitoring

This can be challenging but it is necessary to keep track of whether your key messages are resonating with people in a way that achieves your communication objectives. Have you, through your actions and key messages, managed to achieve the behaviour or attitudinal change your objectives identified? If not, what changes or modifications might you need to make to achieve your objectives? Monitoring is also something you do so you can tune in to whether the key messages need tweaking. There are a number of paid social media tools as well as Google Analytics and Facebook statistics that can help you measure success or otherwise.

Evaluate

This is underestimated but important, especially for large plans. It can be a get-together for a debriefing or a round of emails or even just time to stop to have a think about whether the plan worked. In other words, did the plan meet the objectives? Go back to objectives as the starting point for your evaluation. In staged communication plans this is a good opportunity to regroup and tweak for the next stage. This is the final step in what is called ‘adaptive management’: plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, adjust and then repeat the cycle (see Chapters 8 and 13).

An example of an effective communication plan is given in Case Study 15.3.

Media management at major incidents

Protected areas around the world encompass a vast array of landscapes and seascapes, often covering large expanses within which incidents, either natural or human-made, can and do occur, presenting protected area managers at all levels with major challenges managing impacts on people as well as the natural environment. Floods, storms, bushfires, earthquakes, tornadoes, cyclones and chemical spills are among the many catastrophes that can occur, leaving destruction and devastation that may destroy or significantly alter the natural environment and leave countless people in danger. In large events, the response, in all likelihood, will involve the cooperation of multiple agencies, while in smaller-scale incidents the protected area managers may be left alone to contend with the complex and difficult challenges that such events can cause (see Chapter 26).

In each case media management can play a critical role in alleviating and forecasting dangers to people and impacts on the environment. In the first instance, the protection of life and property is and should always be the number-one priority and to that end good media management will play a vital role as the media, both traditional and social, is key to providing information rapidly and in real time. Bushfires, for example, are always frightening events but under extreme conditions they can be utterly terrifying, even for veteran firefighters. Managing public information in this environment is about providing concise, honest, accurate and timely information that can help individuals and communities overcome their fears and allow them to make good decisions in the midst of chaos. Public information during an emergency should neither panic people nor make them complacent, but should seek to achieve a balance that creates vigilance and compels individuals to make preparations. Critical in an emergency is providing honest information, and if certain key details and facts are unknown it is important to say, ‘here’s what we know for sure at this time’, rather than pretend or omit.

In the midst of chaos people need detailed information in real time, not summaries that vaguely describe what might be happening. Choosing the mode of delivering information will also prove critical, and while the media will play a major role, it is certainly not the only medium to use in a crisis. In today’s digital world social media

Case Study 15.3 Wilderness assessment communication plan

In 1999, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) was presented with a difficult and complex communications dilemma after a prominent conservation organisation used the State's wilderness legislation to nominate 17 large areas of private and public land for 'wilderness assessment' in the south-east of the State. The areas nominated were primarily national park but the nominations also included areas of private lands and State forests that were managed mainly for timber production. Once an area was assessed as having wilderness values as described in the *Wilderness Act*, these areas could be declared wilderness and managed accordingly.

Once the areas were declared wilderness, only self-reliant recreational activities were permitted. In other words, only bushwalking was legally permitted. All other forms of recreation were prohibited: vehicles, horseriding, even bicycle riding (at the time) were prohibited activities within declared wilderness. The primary difficulty presented to the NPWS by the nomination was that several hundred private landholders had parts of their lands 'nominated' for assessment to determine whether the areas qualified under the legislation as true wilderness. Importantly, while private land could be nominated, it could not eventually be declared wilderness without the written consent of the landholder. The primary concern was that the traditional critics of the NPWS would likely attempt to scare private landholders whose properties had been nominated for assessment, by claiming the assessment process was an attempt by the Government to confiscate their lands once they had been assessed as having wilderness values, even though this was impossible without landholder consent.

To limit the possibility of this occurring, the NPWS developed a detailed and comprehensive communication plan aimed primarily at allaying the concerns of private landholders before news of the wilderness assessment process was announced to the broader public. This meant communicating with those landholders with detailed information that explained the process clearly, emphasising that even if their lands were assessed as having wilderness values, they could not be declared wilderness without their consent and that they could in fact just ignore the process altogether if they wished. The first step in the process of developing a communication plan around the wilderness assessment was deciding to communicate first and foremost with those most affected by what had been proposed: the landholders themselves. A small 'action team' was formed to discuss and consider communication options and a detailed communication plan was developed in close consultation with the NPWS field managers who would largely be responsible for implementing the plan. Clear objectives were identified, key messages developed along with a media strategy, talking points for interviews, maps, fact sheets, letters to landholders, PowerPoint presentations and a detailed task list to identify who did what and when.

The cornerstone of the plan was a decision that NPWS field managers would contact each and every affected private landholder by telephone within a few days to explain just what was happening, that they had nothing to be concerned about, that their properties could not be declared wilderness without their consent and to offer

further face-to-face briefings in the field if the landholder wanted. Critical to the plan's success was reaching all the landholders with a clear message before others, who might want to derail the wilderness assessment, had time to muster a media campaign that could seriously undermine the wilderness assessment and damage relations with NPWS neighbours whose properties were being assessed. There were approximately 350 landholders who needed to be contacted over a handful of days. A team of some 30 NPWS officers was fully briefed and given a script to follow when calling landholders to ensure the message was consistent. Once the landholders had been fully briefed, another list of important stakeholders with a keen interest in the wilderness assessment and who had the capacity and influence to have a major negative or positive impact on public debate was identified well beforehand and also briefed, but only after the landholder briefings were complete. When all briefings were complete, within a week, a media release was finally issued explaining the wilderness assessment process.

When finally news of the assessment reached the media, everyone who had an interest in the process or may be affected by it in some way was already well informed and, most importantly, landholders whose properties fell within the nomination understood clearly that their properties could not be declared wilderness without their consent. Throughout the assessment process, which lasted several months, not a single media story critical of the NPWS or the process was aired or published and this is because the key messages were delivered clearly to the people who mattered most: the landholders. The main reason this communication plan was so successful is that the people most affected by the wilderness assessment process, the landholders, had been told directly, before anyone else, what was happening and how it would and would not affect them. They did not wake up one morning and read a slightly skewed or potentially critical story in a newspaper.

A debriefing on the entire process was held, with all staff involved attending and it was universally accepted that the direct approach, while novel at the time, was critical to the success of the plan. Interestingly, all staff who were involved in the telephone briefing process noted that the response of landholders who had been contacted was at once surprised but also very appreciative of the attention and communication.

is proving more important and more effective than ever in helping people to make lifesaving decisions in a fast-moving and fluid emergency situation.

Typically, an individual or small team of people will manage public information and media during a regional crisis, but under catastrophic conditions where there has been considerable devastation over a wide area team numbers can balloon, as more and more hands are needed to meet the increasing demand for information. The need to properly resource public information cannot be emphasised enough. Inadequate resourcing for public information can prove disastrous in a crisis.

The challenges facing a public information unit will be many and varied. Media coverage cannot be relied upon to deliver timely, accurate information all the time so contingencies must be planned for. Increasingly in the developed world, new social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are being relied upon to quickly deliver information directly from the emergency management agencies to the affected public.

It is important to emphasise that what the public wants is detailed and honest information related to their specific set of circumstances and they want it in real time. For example, the public in a bushfire situation will not be interested in knowing where the fire has been. They want to know where it is going, how fast and when it might arrive on their doorstep so that the lifesaving decision on whether to leave or stay with a home can be made well in advance. All channels of communication should be used simultaneously to ensure that every opportunity to communicate critical messages is realised. This means using traditional media and in this situation radio will be the most important medium because it can be broadcast instantly. Similarly, social media platforms Twitter and Facebook are very helpful, but increasingly emergency agencies are developing new smart phone and tablet applications that can be readily downloaded to provide the user with access to detailed, real-time information. The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) in Australia, for example, has deployed an app called 'Fires Near Me', which provides information people in fire-affected areas need to know.

When the dust has settled and the emergency has passed, it is critical to undertake a detailed evaluation of the public information effort to determine what worked and what did not, thereby allowing for improvements in delivery of information at the next emergency incident.

An example of effective communication and media management at a major incident is given in Case Study 15.4.

Conclusion

For any manager of protected areas, engaging with the media should be part of a broader integrated management strategy. You want a community which understands why protected areas are important and that your management objectives are ultimately of benefit to the environment and in turn the broader community. Engagement with the media will not achieve all of this but it will play a critical role and cannot be ignored.

Engaging with the media cannot be done tentatively or half-heartedly. You must engage confidently, with clear objectives in mind. It is also strongly recommended that you always consider what alternative means of communication might achieve your management objectives before you engage the media because once you start talking to the media on a given subject, there is no going back.

Media engagement should be part of a broader communication strategy that looks at ways of getting information directly to the people and communities most affected by your agency. There is plenty of work to be done communicating with people before you start communicating with the media, which is often the last step in a communication plan.

Social media must be included in your communication strategy and considered separately from the traditional understanding of 'the media' before you can employ an integrated approach to media and social media as complementary capabilities. Social media is an information revolution that has just begun. It moves very quickly in all directions, so develop a strong social media strategy, systems and processes that underlie a nimble and responsive execution of tactics.

Social media is occupying the space and function of traditional media in many ways, consuming what we now describe as print, radio and television to become a single communication form known as 'content' that is print, audio and visuals. Take full advantage of the benefits of social media as an affordable way to communicate with the world, engage directly with stakeholders and build an audience in ways not possible when relying solely on traditional media.

For those who manage our protected areas, stepping into media relations and broader communication may seem a daunting task, and perhaps not one they anticipated when they dedicated themselves to their work. Where resources permit, it is best to hire a professional or invest in training a keen member of your team so that media and communication are a pleasure and a challenge,

Case Study 15.4 Public information and media management for a major fire event

In January 2003, under appalling weather conditions, lightning ignited 45 separate bushfires across the 675 000-hectare Kosciuszko National Park in southern New South Wales, Australia, as well as hundreds of other fires across New South Wales and the State of Victoria to the south. Firefighting authorities were faced with an unprecedented demand for information from the multitude of small communities, townships and landholders surrounding the park.

A public information unit (PIU) was soon established as part of the main incident management team structure put in place to manage the fire. At its peak, 16 people were employed within the team. The primary objective of the PIU was to ensure that local communities took the appropriate preparations and considered all contingencies in the event they came under attack from wildfire.

The challenges facing the PIU were many and varied. National media attention did not focus on the fires in Kosciuszko National Park, but rather fires closer to major urban centres where much larger numbers of people and homes were under threat, so the communities adjacent to Kosciuszko National Park did not initially fully recognise the gravity of the situation and hence did not completely appreciate the need to prepare against the threat of fire.

While the media remains the traditional tool for getting critical information out quickly, it has obvious limitations. Stories are often rewritten, reinterpreted and homogenised in order to streamline the product. Control over broadcast times and frequency is also limited. In response, the PIU adopted additional means to ensure everyone in the community had access to detailed information.

The cornerstone of the PIU's information campaign was the *Fire Facts Summary*, a document that contained facts on the fires, their status, the firefighting strategies employed, weather forecasts, road closures, emergency service updates, information about livestock management, health warnings and any other details that would assist the local communities. A map, updated daily to provide a visual aid in understanding the progress of the fires, accompanied this. Importantly, these were delivered by both fax and email to a constantly evolving list of stakeholders. Today of course much of this would be delivered via a range of social media channels directly to smart phones and tablets, but the principle, with regard to the quality and nature of the information as well as the target audience, remains the same.

The summary and map, which were updated twice daily during the peak of the emergency, were posted on a number of websites. Emails allowed information to be directed specifically at a very large but targeted audience. They contained detail that the media could not convey with the same frequency or to such a specific audience and they were easily forwarded on to others. This allowed up-to-date information to be distributed, virtually instantaneously, to a large number of people with specific interest in the emergency. Estimates put the number of people receiving the summary at somewhere between 10 000 and 40 000 people daily, and it could easily have been more.

Each day hardcopies of the *Fire Facts Summary* and map were enlarged and put on display in 75 prominent locations throughout the region, including post offices, general stores and pubs. The PIU also delivered a total of 21 000 newsletters to outlying communities, held 18 public meetings

for 3000 people, conducted regular briefings with key local stakeholders and kept up a constant flow of community service announcements on local radio. Interviews with the media were constant throughout the day and night.

Another effective means of providing the public with information was via a heavily advertised, 24-hour public information telephone service. The operators worked from the *Fire Facts Summary* and map and were updated as developments occurred. More than 20 000 callers used this service during the peak of the crisis.

PIU field liaison officers were sent to outlying areas under threat, while other unit staff telephoned several hundred landholders on properties adjacent to the park to ascertain each property owner's vulnerability and ability to defend their property. In many instances, the PIU was able to allay immediate fears, offer advice and assess the relative risk to different people.

In the aftermath of the Kosciuszko bushfires, a detailed analysis of the PIU's performance and outputs found that the community was overwhelmingly satisfied with the way in which public information had been provided during the fires. The *Fire Facts Summary* proved to be the most popular information tool while email, websites and the 24-hour public information line and radio were popular means of accessing information.

The PIU ensured the community was well informed about how to be prepared for the threat of fire. This was achieved through a multifaceted approach to information management that was able to make the most of internet technology at the time.

This event took place in a period before apps and the highly advanced nature of the internet today. If it were to occur again tomorrow there would be a range of additional social media tools that would be deployed, but what this case illustrates is the need to find a broad range of communication channels to ensure as many people as possible can be reached with information quickly and to ensure that the team managing public information has all the resources possible to complete the task at their disposal.



The 2003 Australian Alps fires burning in Kosciuszko National Park

Source: Michelle Watson

not a cause for panic or a nuisance. Once you have one skilled person who can interact with a journalist or run a social media campaign, they will empower more and more in your ranks to feel comfortable and see the value of telling your stories.

As protected land managers, you speak for the flora, fauna and land features that have no voice. Tell their stories well and you will increase their value among your community and your leaders.



Media at the opening ceremony of the 2008 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Spain. Live broadcasts of such globally significant events ensure that messages of the IUCN Congress are transmitted instantly to audiences around the world, thus benefiting far more than just those with the opportunity to be present.

Source: Graeme L. Worboys



Using media to communicate a message in a spectacular way at the 2014 Sydney IUCN World Parks Congress, with IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre and IUCN WCPA Chairperson Ernesto Enkerlin conversing live with a submerged diver at the live coral aquarium exhibit, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Headquarters, Townsville, Queensland. The conversation reinforced key messages about the importance of the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the need to protect it from all threats.

Source: Graeme L. Worboys

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