Eliminate the Unnatural: Wading Through Press Release Quotes

What’s the least important element in a press release — less important than even the dateline or the boilerplate?

Quotes, according to Ann Wylie of WylieComm.com. In the latest edition of PRSA’s Public Relations Tactics, Wylie writes that results from a 2014 study by Greentarget show that one in four reporters surveyed:

- Never use quotes from releases – 13 percent.
- Rarely use quotes from releases – 31 percent.
- Use quotes from releases only when they’re on deadline and can’t get an interview – 28 percent.

So what’s their beef with the quotes? Fifty percent of the respondents complained that the language doesn’t sound natural, while 34 percent say the quotes aren’t substantive enough.

Here are Wylie’s recommendations for getting the “wah wah” out of your release quotes:

- **Keep quotes short.** While PR quotes measure in the triple digits in word count, journalists use much shorter quotes. In fact, the average length of a quote in a recent issue of The New York Times (not including attribution) was between 19 and 20 words, according to a 2015 Wylie Communications analysis. The most common length: seven words.
- **Make them personable.** Write quotes that sound human, not like a computer spit them out.
- **Make them creative.** Quotes should sound like more than just the most basic parts of human speech. Make your executive seem eloquent — even interesting.

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Coming Up:
Join ALSPRA for a free workshop!

As school communicators, you work hard to do your research, planning, implementation, and evaluation. You justify your ROI on a daily basis, carefully proofread your news releases and online content, and promote your school’s work to the four corners. Then, a reporter calls.

Maybe it’s to get a story about an event you are planning. Maybe it’s to get your comment on a crisis situation.

Whether it’s good news or bad, are you prepared to work with the media to get your story told?

The Alabama School Public Relations Association (ALSPRA) will offer a free workshop from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, December 4, 2015, at the Tuscaloosa Career & Technology Academy, 2800 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Presenter J. Suzanne Horsley, Ph.D. (UNC-Chapel Hill), is an associate professor in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at The University of Alabama. Her research focuses on crisis and disaster communication, primarily in the public and nonprofit sectors. She teaches undergraduate public relations courses and a doctoral seminar in qualitative research methods.

RSVP by November 27.
Professional Development Course:
Community and Stakeholder Relationships

ALSPRA is also pleased to offer an ACLD-approved PLU on Standard 5: Community and Stakeholder Relationships! The purpose of this professional study is to assist participants in creating a strategic communication plan.

In an age of increased scrutiny of public schools, educational professionals must do more to build the case for public education by communicating the strengths, challenges, and decision-making rationale to their respective communities. Not all school systems in the state of Alabama have a dedicated public relations practitioner on staff to assist in this role. However, all school systems could benefit from an enhanced understanding of strategies and tactics to communicate with community and stakeholder groups.

Whether you’re a school or district administrator or a teacher with administrative certifications, tailor a plan to your school or district initiative starting December 4!

Interesting? Visit HERE. Search PLUACLD421 to learn more and register by November 28.

By Lesley Bruinton, APR

A Facebook or Twitter post not connected to strategy means you’re missing an opportunity. That said, why are you even on social media? What do you want to accomplish? How does the image you project online square with what’s happening IRL? And who’s even listening?

Social media gives your district’s mission an opportunity to play out online. These are answers you should know when crafting your district’s social media strategy:

Know Your Audience. Amazing new fans who can’t help you meet your goals is an exercise in futility, especially when they live hundreds of miles away.

Understand (And Reinforce) Your Brand. If your district has made a case for changing the way school is “done,” then showcase those innovations! This is your moment to tell your district’s story...over and over again!

Set Goals. Need new partners to help you reach your goals? Post to highlight existing partnerships and encourage new ones. Your social network may connect you with opportunities you never knew existed.

Protect Your Credibility. You may be headed for a #brandfail when your community doesn’t believe the claim of your district having a great _______, especially when everyone (and the data) knows it’s not. A social audience is a savvy one and will be all too happy to correct the record for you.

Celebrate! Remind your network of what you were trying to do and how you accomplished it. When you build a strong social network, your publics will share in your celebrations and share them — after all, that’s what social media is for!

As a public relations practitioner, you have a unique opportunity to guide your organization into a social media strategy that relies on more than just likes. If that’s all that’s motivating you, you’re missing out and that’s definitely a thumbs down.

- Lesley Bruinton, APR, is the Public Relations Coordinator for the Tuscaloosa City School System and the President of the Alabama School Public Relations Association (ALSPRA). This article originally appeared on the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) Social School PR Blog.

The Alabama School Public Relations Association (ALSPRA) is honoring one of its own with a memorial award. This award is so named for Mitch Edwards, APR, an accredited public relations practitioner, past member of the organization and regional leader in the field of public relations until his death in 2014. Edwards sought and championed continued education of practitioners.

The Mitch Edwards, APR Memorial Award reimburses any eligible and active member who passes the APR computer-based examination $250.

Accreditation in Public Relations is a voluntary certification program for public relations professionals. The purpose is to unify and advance the public relations profession by identifying those who have demonstrated broad knowledge, experience and professional judgment in the field.

The designation Accredited in Public Relations (APR) signifies a high professional level of experience and competence. The Accreditation program is administered by the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB), a consortium of eight leading public relations organizations, including: the National School Public Relations Association, of which ALSPRA is a state chapter.

Learn about the APR process HERE.