

Don't be a "Time Bandit"

Scott White, a 26-year veteran of The Canadian Press (CP) advises the public relations community to not be a "time bandit" when it comes to interfacing with his extremely busy journalists.

White, Editor-in-Chief of Canada's national news agency that is co-operatively owned by the country's 100 or so daily newspapers, notes "the primary job for CP is to cover the day's spot news developments, preparing material for a national audience. So what might be appealing to the morning jocks of an FM radio station probably won't be of much interest to CP."

Following up new product stories, and pitching to multiple editors within CP not only aggravates these journalists unnecessarily, but actually steals valuable time from this news operation that runs on minute-to-minute deadlines 24/7. Hence, White's term "time bandit." "We receive literally hundreds of communications from PR professionals each day. Some of our editors, especially those in Business and Health-Lifestyles, can barely keep up with the flood of information. What is most maddening from an editor's perspective is a call about something that our organization would have absolutely no interest in covering, such as new product news."

Many of us in the media relations trenches know that getting one of our client's stories covered by The Canadian Press is often the 'holy grail' of our 'beat.' Pick-up by The Canadian Press and the 600 news media that subscribe to CP and its broadcast wing Broadcast News (BN) literally means at least 10-million impressions when all is said and done!

White's best advice to the 65 plus PR professionals gathered at a CPRS Toronto/Canadian Press panel at the Albany Club in Toronto is to "anticipate, anticipate, anticipate. We need to deal with PR people who not only react quickly when we need quick reaction, but actually anticipate that we'll need reaction before the event happens. This works when PR professionals know the day's scheduled news events and can offer up comment or information as quickly as possible."

Monitoring Canadian Press wire stories published by the daily newspapers and distributed in real time via CP Command News service will certainly help PR pros understand what CP is interested in and to know when clients can add to the steady flow of news from CP's Toronto headquarters and seven bureaus. For busy PR pros, receiving the CP news feed wirelessly is a very good way to stay on top of what interests CP and what news it carries, enabling practitioners to react quickly to news developments.

Knowing when to call and pitch is also very important. Former General News Director Mike Omelus, a 21 year veteran at BN, will take calls from PR pros he knows brings newsworthy information to the table the one or two times a year that they reach out to him. "PR is essential in helping the news media get the job done. It's an important

relationship. But knowing our needs, and those of other news organizations will help you understand what we and other outlets will consider newsworthy.”

The Canadian Press is affiliated with the largest news agency in the world, the Associated Press (AP). CP delivers real-time text, audio, photos, graphics and online services to newspapers, broadcasters, publishers, web sites, wireless carriers, cable companies, and even elevator screens and gas station pumps.

CP also offers several invaluable tools for PR pros, such as The Canadian Press Stylebook, Broadcast News NewsTalk, and Caps and Spelling – all crucial in helping PR write acceptable copy for news media consumption.

Commercial services that help fund the non-profit news side of CP include its Command News service for monitoring CP wire news in real time, and photography assignment and photo distribution services.

For more information, go to www.cp.org.