

Getting the Message Out

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Two Broad Ways of Thinking About Climate and Health

- ▶ Dealing directly with people who are are living through sea level rise, violent weather, disease and other maladies.
- ▶ Dealing with people who can amplify your message.

I'm going to focus on people who can amplify your message

- ▶ Big time, national and regional news organizations.
- ▶ They love climate and health.
- ▶ They are always looking for something new to talk about.

Tips on how to get news organizations to work for you

- ▶ Journalists and mass audiences look for something new. Often, things you take for granted are new to the rest of the world.
- ▶ Figure out what in your research, breaks new ground, advances thinking
- ▶ Try to boil down your work to one or two short sentences. Hard, but not impossible.

Examples of what works:

- ▶ We've got a new method of restoring coral reefs.
- ▶ We found a new way to manage sea level rise.

How to make it happen

- ▶ Talk with the communication people in your school.
- ▶ But they need your help.
- ▶ They need you to shape your ideas so that they appeal to non-experts. It's not easy to do. You are better at it than most staff people.
- ▶ Go direct to journalists. I like going direct to all kinds of people. Google will help you find them. Look on LinkedIn and on Twitter.

What not to do

- ▶ Don't approach journalists with a lot of background. Hit them with the big idea first.
- ▶ They'll ask for background once you get them interested.

More what not to do:

- ▶ Don't suggest a story to The New York Times similar to the one you just read in The Times. They've already done that one. They need something new.
- ▶ Don't get frustrated. The journalists are dealing with mass audiences with short attention spans.
- ▶ You are usually dealing with other experts who need to read what you write. General audiences are way more fickle.

Collaborate with the School of Communication

- ▶ Put one of our people on your research project.
- ▶ I've been on several.
- ▶ Researchers generally, I've found, don't like the way journalists write and vice versa.
- ▶ But our people are good at thinking through projects and getting attention for the work.
- ▶ They raise questions that sometimes don't occur to experts.

With news organizations and regular people, simplicity is the key.

- Tell your story in plain English
- Don't use technical, scientific language unless someone asks for it
- Don't use acronyms.
- Don't use jargon
- Use short sentences when you speak and when you write.

If you want to really know how to do it

- ▶ Just watch Mayor Cava.
- ▶ She has the right right tone, the right sensibility.
- ▶ She gives short clear answers with big meaning.
- ▶ She doesn't get ruffled.
- ▶ She went up to the collapsed building in Surfside last summer and in all the right and good ways she took over communication of a very sad, very serious situation.
- ▶ She knows how to communicate. #