



“PR 101: Creating a Media and Public Relations Plan for Your School”

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About the Presenters

Gary Larson

Gary founded Larson Communications in 2007 after spending six years leading the California charter school movement's efforts to raise public awareness and support with the California Charter Schools Association. Gary helped the charter school community tell its story through the news media and educated the public about the benefits of charter schools. During his tenure, support for charter schools increased dramatically and enrollment doubled. Gary spearheaded numerous media campaigns covered by every major news outlet in the state as well as national outlets including *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *Good Morning America* and *USA Today*. Gary now helps charter schools and support organizations across the nation in messaging, positioning and telling their positive charter school stories to the public.

Stephanie Grisham

Stephanie joined the Larson Communications team after more than two years as Director of Communications for the Arizona Charter Schools Association (ACSA). She successfully turned the tide with the AZ news media from being openly hostile towards charter schools to now providing consistent, positive coverage. Handling statewide press for over 500 AZ charters, Stephanie excelled at crisis communications, providing strategic counsel to diffuse several negative stories. Stephanie successfully positioned two lawsuits filed against the state that called into question Arizona's student funding system. She is also an expert in social media, using it to drive positive media coverage and keep on top of the opposition in order to quell negative stories. She also trains charter schools and various education organizations so they can better promote their programs, drive enrollment, recruit staff and communicate key messages.



Public Relations 101

Utilize the media to raise the visibility of your organization, as well as share your message with the general public.

Creating a Communications Plan:

1. Understand the importance of the news media
2. Develop key messages
3. Know your vulnerabilities
4. Select your spokesperson
5. Identify the types of media sources
6. Incorporating Social Media into your communications plan
7. Reach out and work with reporters & the media



Public Relations 101

Why is the News Media so Important?

1. The public does not fully understand charter schools' value.
2. Some that have a vested interest in the status quo will work against charters.
3. As a school, the independent, 'earned media' is the most efficient way for you to get your message out.
4. It is critical to be able to communicate the value of charter schools to the public.



Public Relations 101

Why is the News Media so Important?

Bottom line: Public Opinion Drives Public Policy

The news media informs the public. The more knowledgeable the public, the better for your school or organization. The public most often gets their information from the media. You tell your story to the media. You influence public opinion.

How to do this: Create a Plan of Action

1. Seize the initiative
2. Tell your story first
3. Tell your story your way
4. Always tell the truth
5. Get all the facts out about your program's successes

"A government can be no better than the public opinion that sustains it."

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt



Public Relations 101

"A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has the chance to get its pants on."

- Winston Churchill

Follow these public relations basics so that you define yourself to your audiences before you are defined:

- 1. Audiences:** Identify and know your different audiences
- 2. Messages:** Nail down a credible and relevant series of messages and deliver them over and over again
- 3. Spokesperson:** Select a spokesperson that is best capable of delivering your messages
- 4. Channels:** Deliver those messages creatively and credibly to a wide range of media channels
- 5. Vulnerabilities:** Know the vulnerabilities of charter schools and 'pre-but' them



Public Relations 101 – Audience

1. Know your audiences

- Legislators, school boards and community groups can all positively or negatively impact the movement's success.
- Teachers can be targeted for recruitment and parents and students for enrollment.
- Philanthropic audiences can drive support that can assist with growth, expansion.
- Community group audiences can donate, volunteer.
- Being proactive and strategic will influence public awareness.



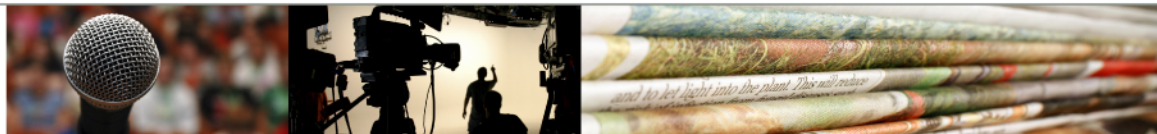
Public Relations 101 – Messages

2. Know Your Messages:

Effective Communications Begins with the Development of your Key Messages

Consistent Messaging = Desired Perceptions

- Keep it simple!
- Make your messages credible, relevant and resonant; repeat them. Be responsive to opportunities.
- Simple messages, consistently and frequently conveyed, will establish awareness of the value of your school.
- Think long term, not three months.



Public Relations 101 – Messages

Key Charter School Messages:

- 1. Charter schools are public schools.**
- 2. Charter schools allow teachers to innovate.**
- 3. Charter schools give parents choices.**
- 4. Charter schools introduce accountability.**
- 5. Charter schools are closing the achievement gap.**



Public Relations 101 – Messages

The “cocktail speech” - Refine your pitch.

- Simplicity matters.
- Can you consistently work in your ‘mission?’
- Remember that you will most effectively make your point when you can get your ‘catch phrase’ boiled down to 10 seconds or less.
- Come up with a simple definition that answers, “what is a charter school?”



Public Relations 101 – Messages

A Simple Charter School Definition:

"Charter schools are independent public schools that are allowed to be more innovative and are held accountable for improved student achievement."



Public Relations 101 – Spokesperson

3. Select your school's spokesperson

One key spokesperson should deal with the news media

Spokesperson Qualities/Duties:

- Articulate, intelligent, charismatic and within the inner-circle of where major decisions are made.
- Disciplined and discerning, knows when to say just enough, but not too much.
- Strong oral and writing skills.
- Point person that the news media can contact for quotes, comments, school facts and responses.



Public Relations 101 – Channels

4. Know Your Channels

1. Newspapers

- ✓ Dailies
- ✓ Weeklies
- ✓ Community Weeklies

2. Magazines

3. Special Interest Publications

4. Television

- ✓ Traditional news outlets
- ✓ Cable access

5. Radio

- ✓ News radio
- ✓ Talk radio

6. Internet

- ✓ Key bloggers
- ✓ Education blogs

Once you know your audience, your message, what vulnerabilities you may need to 'pre-but' with your messaging, who will be speaking, and the media channel to utilize.... You are ready to reach out!



Public Relations 101 – Channels

Channels: Become your own media outlet

1. Develop your own communication
 - Target supporters with direct information
 - Send press releases directly to supporters
 - Send placed media on to school stakeholders
 - Use constant contact or icontact
2. Allow students to participate
 - Create video news releases
3. Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Youtube



Social Media 101

"Social Media isn't a Fad, it is a Fundamental Shift in the Way We Communicate."

Social Media Landscape



Social Media 101 – Facts & Stats

- One of Eight Couples who Married in 2009 Met Via Social Networking.
- **YouTube** is the second largest search engine in the world – 100,000,000+ videos.
- In the Last 5 Years, Unique Readers of **Online** Newspapers Are up 30 Million.
- More Videos Were Uploaded to **YouTube** in the Last **2 MONTHS** than if ABC, NBC and CBS had been Airing New Content 24/7/365 since 1948 (the year ABC was launched).
- President Obama Leveraged Online Social Networks (**Facebook and Twitter**) to Raise \$55 Million in 29 Days for his Presidential Campaign.



Social Media 101 – Facebook

FACTS & STATS



Years to Reach 50 Million Users:

Radio: 38 Years

TV: 13 Years

Internet: 4 Years

iPod: 3 Years

Facebook Added 100 Million Users in Less Than 9 Months.

- More than 400 Million Users in 2010 – 50% Log On **EVERY DAY.**
- More than 1.5 Million pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photos, etc.) are shared on **Facebook** Daily.
- If **Facebook** were a country, it would be the world's 4th largest – behind China, India and the U.S.



Social Media 101 – Facebook

Getting Started: Why Use Facebook?

- 1. Meet Your Peers.** Facebook is not just for college kids anymore. Members are typically older and more mature than on other sites.
- 2. Find Business Contacts.** With more than **400 million active users**, not only are your friends on Facebook, so are potential students, teachers, politicians. media...and your competitors. You need to be on too.
- 3. Instant Gate Opener.** People are open to connecting. You can easily begin a dialog with people who are otherwise unreachable.
- 4. Build Relationships.** By engaging with your audience or “fans”, you can better adapt your messaging and services to meet their needs.



Social Media 101 – Facebook

Getting Started: Why Use Facebook? (Continued)

- 5. Raise Visibility.** By consistently showing up, posting relevant information, and being a thought leader, you can increase visibility and credibility as an expert in your area.
- 6. Get Rapid Top Google Placement.** Create a page for your business and "push" information to your "fans." Pages (for business) and Profiles (for personal) are indexed for optimal search engine positioning.
- 7. Place Targeted Ads.** With Facebook Ads, you can test out targeted advertising for minimal cost.
- 8. No Cost Marketing.** Aside from paid ads, Facebook is totally free to use and with regular activity you get more traffic, and potentially more students, teachers, but most importantly...your voice.



Social Media 101 – Facebook

How Can You Use Facebook?

- **Announcements.** Keep in touch with parents, students, the media and get messages out to them instantly.
- **Job Openings.**
- **Share News/Photos.** You can promote some of your school's programs, victories, exciting news, events, curriculum.
 - Be sure to have photo releases before featuring students
- **Contests.** Two charter schools in Denver recently leveraged social media to get votes for President Obama to speak at their graduation.
- **Stay Informed.** By "Friending" other schools, associations, legislators, media, your organization can stay on top of what is happening on a local and national level.

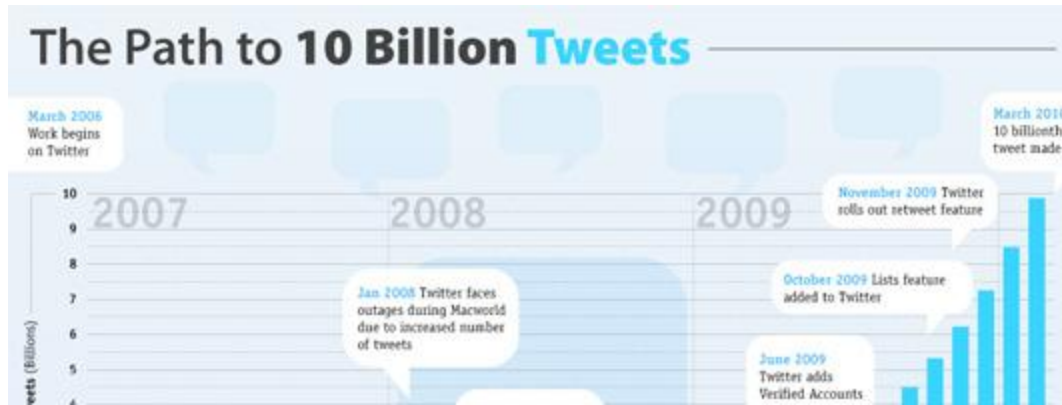


Social Media 101 – Twitter

TWITTER FACTS & STATS



- In March 2010, **Twitter** Recorded its 10 Billionth Tweet.



- Ashton Kutcher and Ellen DeGeneres have more **Twitter** Followers than the Entire Population of Ireland, Norway, and Panama.
- 80% of **Twitter** Usage is on Mobile Devices – People Update Anywhere, Anytime.
- Dell Claims to Have Earned Over \$3 Million via **Twitter** Posts since 2007.



Social Media 101 – Twitter

Getting Started: Why Use Twitter?

- 1. Communicating with Employees/Parents/Media.** Be cognizant of who is following you and then talk to them in less than 140 characters.
- 2. Information Seeking and Sharing.** You can answer and ask questions of other industry professionals.
- 3. Viral Marketing.** Through Twitter you can market your work, products, services, etc.
- 4. Public Relations.** Since Twitter works at the speed of typing 140 characters, you can have an aggressive PR strategy that gets ahead of everyone...the competition, media, leaks. Leverage Twitter to command and direct the communication.



Social Media 101 – Twitter

How Can YOU Use Twitter?

- 1. Instant Real Time Communication.** Depending on your needs, you can send messages instantly to parents, students, teachers, the media. This gives schools the opportunity to be in front of whatever message they intend to spread.
- 2. Ask Questions.** You can ask a question to people in education and receive responses/suggestions/feedback from a worldwide audience.
- 3. ReTweets.** Anything you say can be “retweeted” giving your message the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of people instantly.



Social Media 101 – Etiquette

Social Media Etiquette

- **Add Value to the Site** - What will earn you great connections with others is if you add value to the community. This means submitting content that people will care about and not just promoting your brand.
- **Give More than You Receive** - If you want to receive attention from others online, you have to be willing to give first.
- **Listen to Others** - Your first reaction whenever someone disagrees online is probably telling them how wrong they are. Instead of constantly fighting back, take the time to listen to what they're really saying.
- **Be Accountable for Your Actions** - Because of the anonymity the Internet allows, there is little to no accountability online. Some people say and do whatever they please without facing any repercussions. Don't be that person.



Social Media 101 – Resources

Helpful Links:

- **Social Media Revolution:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIFYPQjYhv8>

- **Social Media Etiquette:**

<http://www.techipedia.com/2008/social-media-etiquette-handbook/>

- **Getting Started on Facebook:**

http://www.ehow.com/how_4581117_started-facebook.html

- **Getting Started on Twitter:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YGp4cWdndc>



Public Relations 101

Develop Story Ideas

Reporters are interested in:

1. What are you first at?
2. What are you best at?
3. What are you unique at?
4. What are you 'most' at?
5. Credibility, the organization and the pitch.

Point is: What about your story defies conventional thinking? (i.e. "man bites dog!")



Public Relations 101

Drafting a Press Release

- The best way of getting your story out to the news media is through a press release.
- Don't get creative with language.
- Focus on the facts: **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY** and of course **HOW**.
- Focus on your "hook" to gain their interest.
- Remember, reporters come across dozens, hundreds of releases per day.



Public Relations 101

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Month ##, 2010

CONTACT: John Spokesperson
XYZ Charter School
(###) ###-####

COMPELLING TITLE HERE ALWAYS CENTERED AND IN ALL CAPS

Subtitle with supporting fact here always centered and italic

City, CA – The first paragraph should contain your concise, unique hook and a brief recap of the data it is based on. This paragraph contains the most important facts about your story – (two sentences max).

Include supporting points that go into more detail about the newsworthiness of your announcement. Include data here, or brief factual statistics that make your announcement even more compelling.

“Include a relevant quote from your spokesperson” said John Spokesperson, title of XYZ Charter School. “Quotes are formatted as their own paragraph and don’t forget to include the speaker’s name and title.”

Include any awards, or honors that your school has achieved in the past. (2-3 sentences). For example, CA distinguished schools, Certified Charter School in the Association’s Certified Charter Schools Program.

Include information about the school’s academic program (WASC accreditation, etc) and its focus. For example, special arts programs or a technology focus.

About XYZ Charter School

Conclude your press release with a “Boilerplate” definition of your school or organization. Follow up with the symbol below indicating you are done.

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Public Relations 101

For Immediate Release
October 1, 2008

Contact: Gary Larson
(415) 722-0127

ICEF PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNVEILS PLAN TO PRODUCE 2,000 ANNUAL COLLEGE GRADS FROM SOUTH LOS ANGELES

ICEF "Education Corridor" Will Enroll 1 in 4 Students with Goal of Creating Vibrant, Sustainable Middle Class

Los Angeles, CA – In an unprecedented reform plan for South Los Angeles, ICEF Public Schools — a network of 13 high-performing public schools that serves the predominately African-American community of South Los Angeles — has announced its plan today to dramatically scale up its **"Education Corridor"** — the 45-square-mile region bound by the four major South Los Angeles freeways — through the creation of 22 new public charter schools.

ICEF Public Schools will expand from 13 to 35 public charter schools in four years. When fully enrolled, ICEF Public Schools will enroll one in four public school students in South Los Angeles, more than half of the community's high school students, and will help produce 2,000 college graduates each year.

"With fewer than one in 10 ninth-graders receiving a college degree, our lack of prepared youth is preventing us from creating a sustainable middle class," said Michael D. Piscal, founder of ICEF Public Schools. "Our 'Education Corridor' will create as many high-performing public schools as it takes to prepare enough of our youth to compete and succeed at the top 100 colleges and universities in our nation."



Public Relations 101

Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles charter school group has big plans for South L.A.

Inner City Education Foundation aims to expand from 13 campuses to 35 in eight years.

By Mitchell Landsberg

Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

October 1, 2008

On its face, it's an ambitious plan: Expand one of Southern California's biggest charter groups from 13 to 35 schools in eight years until it becomes, in effect, the second-largest district in South Los Angeles. But that's just the beginning.

Mike Piscal, the hard-charging founder of the [Inner City Education Foundation](#), has a far more audacious goal than that. As he sees it, the expansion plan he is announcing today will lead to nothing less than the transformation of South L.A. "into a stable, economically vibrant community."

"These students . . . are going to come back to the community and become the middle class and the leadership class," he said in an interview. "That's going to change everything! Where the Crips were born, where crack cocaine was invented and spread throughout the country, we're going to start spreading something good."

Piscal, whose [View Park Preparatory High School](#) in the Crenshaw area claims to graduate 100% of its seniors and send virtually all of them to college, plans to open seven more schools next year and continue until he has reached 35 in 2016, divided roughly equally among elementary, middle and high schools.

The schools will all be within a zone bordered by four freeways -- the 10, 110, 105 and 405 -- and will include some of the poorest and most crime-ridden neighborhoods in the nation. They will be in the Los Angeles Unified and the Inglewood school districts.



Public Relations 101 – Vulnerabilities

5) Know the five main charter school vulnerabilities

A) Draining money

- Privatization
- Perceived as outsiders
- Loss of students

B) Mixed student achievement

- Poor performance
- Charters are on par/behind

C) Unprepared teachers

- Poor working conditions/protection
- Unlicensed teachers
- High turnover/low retention
- Inexperienced

D) Creaming

- Cherry picking the best students
- Not serving special education kids
- Racial isolation in charters
- 'Weeding out' poor performers

E) No Accountability – 'scandals'

- Governance/conflict of interest
- Misspending of taxpayer money
- Can't pass the 'smell test'



Public Relations 101

Each Vulnerability Requires a Tactical Responses and a Strategic, Pre-buttal Message

Tactical – You must respond with a tight, compelling answer when hit with a criticism

Strategic – Develop a plan to refute these criticisms before you're hit with them, your 'pre-buttal' strategy

Let's Review

1. Draining money
2. Mixed student achievement
3. Unprepared teachers
4. Creaming
5. No accountability

"The battle over the future of charter schools will be won by whoever makes the more effective case: Either the status quo will convince the public that charters are bad for public education because they drain funds, or charters will convince the public that school districts are reforming because of them."



Reach out to the media – simple rules

- 1. My Golden Rule: Identify Local Reporters. Never get a phone call from a reporter you don't know!**
 - Subscribe to your major daily newspaper and community publications
 - Call your local media outlet and ask to be connected with the education reporter
 - Introduce yourself, ask reporters how they prefer to receive information
 - Follow education stories and become familiar with writing styles of the reporters
- 2. Reporters hear a lot from people who don't like charter schools**
 - This is why it is so important for you to get your message across
- 3. Always respect a reporter's time.**
 - Reporters are especially busy people
 - E-mail them first, give them a 'heads up' that you will be contacting them. Let them know what you will be contacting them about
 - When you call a reporter, always ask "Are you on deadline?" (this lets them know that you are showing respect for their busy day)
- 4. You will get far with reporters if you are there to help**
 - Be prepared to do research for them
 - Have your facts ready for them



Reach out to the media – simple rules

5. Always have a reason for contacting a reporter

- If you're nervous, take a deep breath and write down your purpose for calling them

6. Reporters are very nice people, with notoriously short attention spans

- Make sure you have a 'hook' and a 'catch phrase' to run by them
- Every good 'pitch' to a reporter should be refined to ten seconds or less
- They like e-mails, but they dislike documents
- If reporters give you time, be prepared with what you want to discuss

7. Build a relationship with the reporters who cover you

- Give a reporter the impression that you are following them
- If a reporter writes a good story, especially if it isn't teacher education related, let them know it. They will likely respond, and that's how relationships are built.

8. Remember, reporters are human

- As humans, we all make mistakes
- If a reporter messes up, let them know it. This is a chance to educate them, NOT beat them over the head about it.
- If they write a great story, let them know it. Reporters appreciate kudos for a good story.



Public Relations 101

"Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened."

- Winston Churchill

You now have what you need to carry out a positive media campaign – don't neglect this area! It takes a lot of work. Do not place P.R. on a low priority – make it a top priority.

For a copy of this presentation, visit www.larsonpr.com

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