

Meetings, Speeches Press Conferences

Foundations of Journalism
Emerson College
Fall 2012

Meetings, Speeches, Pressers

- Require the reporter to not only cover the event, but discern the news.
- News judgment is key.
 - Reporters have to find the important/newsworthy pieces of information among what might be hours of boring/useless discussion and debate.
- Major sources of news.
- Largely scheduled in advance.
- Considered hard news because you are covering an event.

Meetings

- When/how most organizations take care of business.
 - Government
 - Businesses (public corporations)
 - Public services
 - Other organizations
- Exercise news judgment beforehand
 - What should be included?
 - What's important to look for?
 - If multiple meetings, which should I attend?
 - Call before “What am I going to miss?”
 - Call after “What did I miss?”

Meetings

- Preparation
 - What will be discussed? What would constitute news?
 - Get information beforehand
 - Interview/calls
 - Agenda
 - Do your research
 - Being prepared beforehand
 - Documents
 - Clips
 - Interviews
 - Context/Background for your story

Meetings

- Keep a tight focus
 - Journalists are not keeping detailed minutes.
 - Focus on the key point(s) and report only those.
 - No label ledes!
 - Make sure that you get enough information on your key point to write/produce a story around it.
 - A lot of vague disjointed info = vague disjointed story
 - Use your news judgment

Meetings

- Reporting, not just recording
 - You should pay attention to what is being discussed at the meeting, but you should also do active reporting.
 - Talking to people in attendance (before, during breaks, after)
 - Key players
 - Audience
 - Attempt to follow up with key people not in attendance

Meetings

- Pay Attention to the Audience
 - Audience size
 - Audience reaction
 - Audience feedback/input/open mic
 - Potentially good source of quotes for your piece
 - Also future story ideas

Meetings

- What's Next
 - When would the action take place?
 - Next steps
 - How long to enact?
 - If tabled, when will the vote be?
 - Next steps
 - What additional information do you need for context/background?

Meetings

- Tips
 - Do your homework.
 - Know what you're walking into cover.
 - Write before the meeting.
 - Many meetings end late/up against deadline. Have some of your background pre-written to save you time at the end.
 - Come prepared for a long night.
 - Meetings can run long. Unless cleared with your editor, plan to stay for the entire thing.
 - Pay attention.
 - Meetings can be boring, but something significant could happen/come up. You don't want to miss it.
 - Get it right, even on deadline.
 - Double check names, titles, details. Deadline isn't an excuse to get things wrong.

- Writing and Reporting the News

Speeches and Press Conferences

- Speeches
 - People want to sell themselves, their organizations or their ideas.
 - May or may not have questions at the end (usually do not, but may have media availability.)
 - One person speaking.
- Press conferences
 - Announcement to pass on or are facing media's questions.
 - May be multiple people.
 - Opening statement, but largely focused around taking questions.
- In both cases, speakers are looking to control a message. Reporters need to remember this point.

Speeches and Press Conferences

- Preparation is key.
(Do you sense a theme? Interviews, covering events, meetings, speeches, press conferences - good journalists are always prepared.)
- Not just covering what a person says - but what is news worthy.
 - Is it the remarks?
 - Is it answer to a question after the speech?
 - Is it the event that necessitated a press conference?
 - Do not just buy into what a person wants you to repeat.

Speeches and Press Conferences

- As with meetings, information will not likely be structured in the inverted pyramid. You have to determine what is key.
- Notes should not be a transcript.
- If possible, see if you can try to set up a brief post-event one-on-one in advance.

Speeches

- Depending on the circumstances, advance copies of a speech may be available in advance.
 - Usually NOT for circulation/publication.
 - Make sure you still follow the speech in case of changes/going off script.
 - Confirm quote with the final version.
- Other times, a source can give you an idea of what to expect from a speech beforehand.

Press Conferences

- You will often have to ask questions in front of people.
 - Sometimes a lot of people
 - Not just the speaker, but your peers, an audience, etc.
- You might get nervous, but you **CANNOT** let this prevent you from asking necessary questions.
 - Find a way to get over those nerves.
 - Preparation is a good way.
 - Well thought out, articulate questions.
 - Concise, clear and to the point.

Follow Up

- Contact other parties involved/mentioned for comment.
- Verify facts.
- Get additional information for background and context.
- You will almost ALWAYS have to do more reporting than just showing up at the event, sitting and listening.

Writing

- Don't clutter your lede.
 - Most newsworthy element(s) only.
- DO NOT USE A LABEL LEDE.
 - News is almost ALWAYS what was said, not the event itself
- News judgment
 - What is usually most important off a speech or press conference is who spoke and what (newsworthy) point the person made.
 - Where the speech was given, attendance goes lower
 - You still needed lede support.

Additional

- Know the issues going in.
- Prepare.
- Write early when possible
- Pay attention to the audience.
- Come early, stay late.
- Look for key actions.