



MEDIA

ICAN CAMPAIGNERS MEETING/GENEVA

Media: how to get them to write about us?

Journalism is going in a new direction. It's becoming faster and this change has some pro and cons for us. On the one hand journalists are hungry for news, on the other hand the amount of news items is increasing exponentially and our message can get lost.

To make sure our message is retained we need to become more aggressive but also more professional. 'Ban nuclear weapons' is not a news story. However we can transform it into a story if we know how media operates and what it wants to write about.

In this guide you will find some practical tips on how to craft the perfect pitch, how to create a message map, and some steps on how to communicate effectively with the media.

Why you should use a message map

A key step in effective media communications is to create clear and concise messages that address questions and concerns.

In addition to generating a large number of concerns, our goal of a treaty banning nuclear weapons will

also generate controversies, anxiety, fears, and frustration. We are in a phase of our campaign where we need to address all these concerns and our messages should be focused on how best to communicate with our target audiences. What they need to know or most want to know. One way of developing a clear sense of what we want to say is to brainstorm with a message-development team. Don't be scared by the sound of it. Bring together a group of campaigners and experts you can trust, who have different skills and are able to think outside the box. If you have a friend who works as a journalist or a journalist you can trust, bring him/her in. It will be a great resource to test messages.

A message map helps in the development of messages. But it also serves as a 'harbor in the storm'. At times journalists can become aggressive, question the validity of a ban, use old arguments to entangle you in an argumentative discussion leading to nowhere (eg: deterrence).

Here is when the message map that you have created when you were not 'under attack' or in advance of emergencies, provides you with clear arguments you can use on the spot.

The message map

CONCERN: NATO states will never join a ban

TARGET AUDIENCE The Guardian/ Disarmament blog

KEY MESSAGE #1

There is no element in the treaty that says that a ban is incompatible with the NATO alliance.

SUPPORTIVE STATEMENT

NATO's strategic concept explicitly recognizes the connection between nuclear disarmament and 'a safer world' and commits NATO to the goal of "creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons". All member states are committed to pursue such goal and should seek their elimination.

KEY MESSAGE #2

NATO states are bound by article VI of the NPT.

SUPPORTIVE STATEMENT

State Parties to the treaty (NPT) should work inside the NATO alliance to reduce and end the dependence on nuclear weapons, as stated in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan (Action 5, 7 and 8).

KEY MESSAGE #3

A treaty banning nuclear weapons will create the political pressure for them to respect the prohibition.

SUPPORTIVE STATEMENT

In countries like the Netherlands the parliament has already demanded that the government participates in negotiations on a ban.

The top section of this message map identifies the specific question or concern being addressed and the target audience. The next layer or the message map contains three key messages that can function individually or collectively as a response to a journalist question or concern.

The final section of the message map contains supporting information. The supporting information amplifies the key messages by providing key facts and details.

A message map provides different benefits. First before or during an interview it provides you with a reference for the spokespersons who must respond swiftly to questions on topics where timeliness and accuracy are critical and it minimizes the chance of ‘speaker’s regret’ at saying something inappropriate.

What’s next?

You have put together a message map. You have developed key messages and you have the supporting facts. Now what?

Among many these are two things that most likely happen to you: 1. Sell your story 2. Respond to a media request.

SELL YOUR STORY: THE PITCH

Newspaper editors and reporters are usually looking for story ideas where you can provide information on the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the story. Specifically:

WHO is the story about and who does it affect?

WHAT is happening and why it is newsworthy?

WHEN is the story occurring? Did it happen already or will it happen in the future?

WHERE is the story taking place? Is it national?

WHY does the story matter? Why should readers care? How does this story affect the community? The nation?

If you are not able to answer to these questions in a credible and convincing way, you simply don’t have a story to sell.

EVENTS

Campaigners all over the world used the 70th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to communicate the message: ban nuclear weapons! Be creative and you’ll find a lot of smaller, but still valuable occasions that can be linked to ICAN’s message. For instance:

- The UN day for the total abolition of nuclear weapons
- Movie openings (for example the new movie based on Eric Schlosser’s book)
- Your own events
- Historical dates

Perfecting a media pitch is one of the most difficult tasks. It’s always hard to understand what the reporter is looking for. To increase the chances of an answer you should do your homework. If you are pitching to specific reporters, read their stories and learn as much as you can about the news outlet where they work.

After you have sent a pitch, give them a call. Don’t just ask them if they received the pitch but use this opportunity to present yourself, ICAN, the idea of a ban. Prepare a message map about your story; be clear about the key elements of your story and the supporting statements.

If you have a big story it’s often a good idea to start with contacting one journalist and offering her/him an exclusive. Contacting only one journalist makes it possible to get big coverage.

To get nuclear weapons on the agenda in the public debate, it’s more valuable one front page on a big newspaper or a headline on the TV news than several small pieces. The opportunity to get our message into the headlines doesn’t come every day, so we must grab the chance when we have it.

SELL YOUR STORY: THE INTERVIEW

Some people get scared if somebody with a pencil and paper appears at their door for a quote or a story. The

first thing we recommend is ‘do it’ go ahead and talk to them. You are considered a main source of information.

Know what the topic is in advance, do your homework and understand how to reframe the issue in order to feature a ban on nuclear weapons.

If you think you are not the best person to answer their questions, pass it onto a colleague.

Answers should:

1. Define the concern

- Give a brief summary of the concern. Re-word the question or the concern making sure that the issue is correctly framed.

2. State key messages

OP-ED

To get an op-ed into a newspaper is of course valuable in itself, but it’s possible to get some added value too. If you’re presenting new information in an op-ed, the newspaper might want to do a story about it. Op-eds can also generate debates on TV or radio.

- Short, to the point answers are the best. (you don't want to be too lengthily).
- Avoid using jargon or acronyms. Simplify.

3. State supporting information

- Use up to 3 additional facts
- Use well thought maps, data visualization
- Use stories and analogies
- Use credible third parties

4. Repeat key messages

- Summarize or emphasize key messages in a final statement.

5. Follow-up

- Provide contact information for obtaining addition information, if appropriate.

Making Your Point: A Media Relations Checklist

1. Do you know whom you are talking to? Ask the reporter questions to determine who you're talking to and what he or she needs. Get the name, news outlet and phone number. Clarify what information the reporter wants from you.

2. Does the reporter need the information right away? Ask the reporter when his or her deadline is. Can you call back later, at a time that's more convenient for you? Can you buy yourself some time to compose your thoughts into talking points and anticipate questions? If you promise to call back, do so by the agreed upon time.

3. Are you knowledgeable enough to provide an expert opinion? If so, gather your thoughts and respond. If not, don't be afraid to say so – and point the reporter to an individual (preferably mobile number) who might be able to help. Always avoid speculation.

4. Have you clearly identified yourself? Does the reporter have your name, your title and your company or agency name?

5. Have you made your three key points? If you have time to prepare to respond, identify three main points you want to make and, during the interview, make sure you emphasize those points. It will help if you've prepared key points that are 20 seconds or less.

6. Can you provide anything in writing that will help the reporter understand your points? If possible, try following up with a brief email restating your main talking points or

7. Remember that ICAN is a resource so don't forget to contact us to guide you in working with the media.



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BAN NUCLEAR

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