



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Communicating with Elected Officials

Active Living Research Annual
Conference

February 18, 2009

Prepared by

Burness Communications



Why Should You Play the Game? Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Don't let research sit on a shelf.

Understand the immense value of your experience.

Policymakers sometimes do not benefit from good information because they often do not hear from researchers or understand the language they are using.

Real opportunity to impact policy at fed/state/local/agency level.





Why Should You Play the Game?

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

President Obama focus

Economic Stimulus Bill

New Authorization of Transportation Bill

No Child Left Behind

Climate Change

Health Reform

**Appropriations (Interior, Transportation, Labor, HHS,
Education)**





**Translate work into language that
is accessible – and therefore
actionable – by government
policymakers**



The Cliffs Notes

Understand the basics

What happens/when?



When does your legislature meet?

What Committees does your policymaker sit on?

Differences between local/state/fed and their roles.

Find Champions



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Think about parts of your work that will motivate key policymakers.

Sympathetic & enthusiastic policymaker
Well placed ally

NEED BOTH



Know Your Policymaker



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Know Your Policymaker



Know Your Policymaker



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Know Your Policymaker



Just Say No to Jargon

Be able to describe your work in three main points in clear concise language.



We must preserve the diversity of genetic resources to ensure global food security. Ultimately, we have an opportunity to safeguard germplasm in accessions for the world.

The Doomsday Vault will be a seed bank—a library—to preserve the world's seeds in the event of any calamity—war, nuclear attack, drought, tsunami, or any other disaster.

Doomsday Seed Vault

Introduce Yourself

Describe Work

Bring Research Alive With a Story

Know What You Want and Ask For It.

Follow Up

Introduce yourself and explain who you are – include geographic references and try to link into their interests.



Don't dumb your issue down – learn how to be succinct. Goal isn't to make staff experts in one day – it is to pique their interest.

**One Pager
Story Bank
Policy Brief**



Make Your Research Come Alive



Personal story to put a human face on the issue or problem.

Ideally focus on a person or family living in the area served by the policymaker.

Emotionally connect policymakers to your work and help them understand how your program improves the lives of their constituents.

Good story can transform a polite listener to an engaged champion of your work.

AMBER Alert

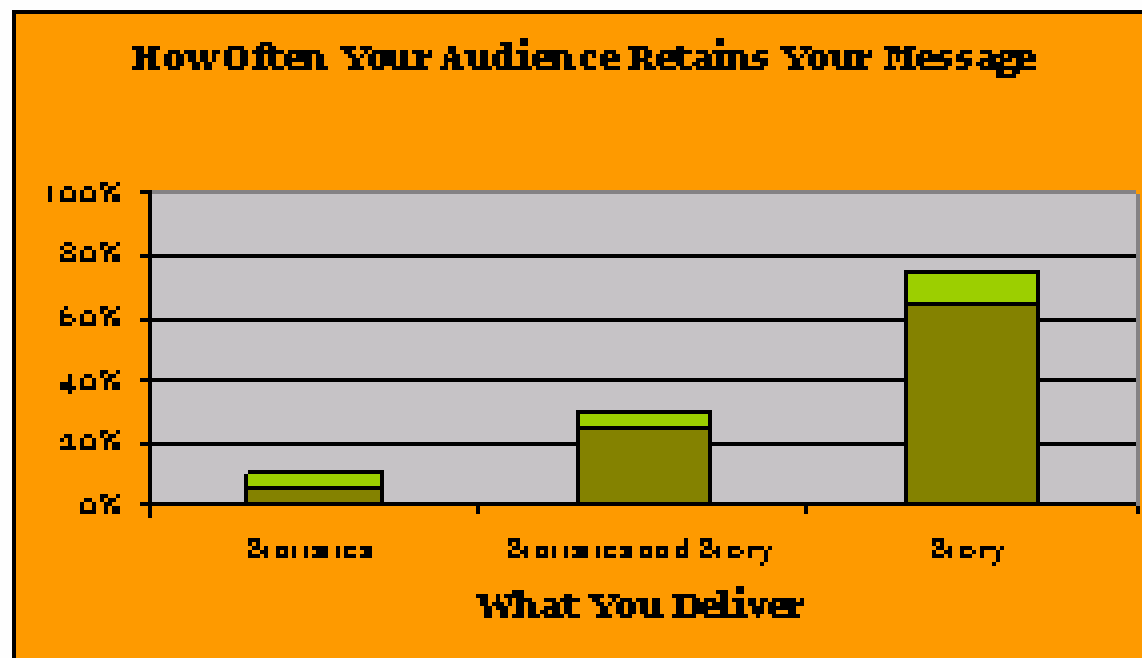
America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response



The Power of Storytelling

Why Tell Stories?

Studies show that stories resonate and stay with audiences significantly more than statistics



Source: Jay Conger, Kravis Leadership Institute, Cleveland-Marshall College

Know What You Want & Ask For It



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Policymakers and their staff want to help.

A good ask is: actionable, linked to their interests, advances your work, timely (30 to 60 days)



If you wait for them to call you, nothing may ever happen. The onus is on you.

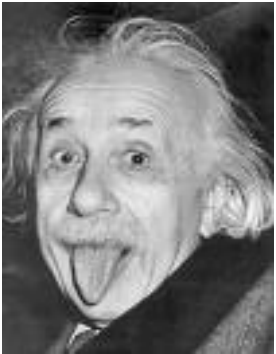
Polite persistence plays.

Contact Name and timeframe.

Respond to policymakers questions (!)



Be Yourself. Be Memorable.



Don't put on a stiff, "professional" personality for your encounter with someone you want to influence.

You are your best salesperson.

Show passion. Be real.

Be memorable.

