

Yoda and Mr. Clean on TV and in a Digital Universe

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Faculty are often called upon to play multiple roles within our educational universe. At the beginning of the day, we don the garb of the clinician and preceptor, and later, we may put on the laboratory coat of the researcher. The next day, we may be scheduled to teach a course and a laboratory, serve on an institutional committee, and hold office hours. In the middle of the week, we may go to a private practice where we integrate all the latest science into the art of optometry during our direct patient care experiences. The week may not be over yet, because on the next day, we may see one or more students with a wide variety of problems that require our person management skills and psychology degree (by life experience) to calm a distraught second year student.

But wait! There's more! On the next day, we fly out to Missoula, Montana, to give an invited lecture for the state association's annual meeting. The following week we're scheduled to participate in the American Academy of Optometry meeting, presenting a poster, and soon after that, we are taking the College of Optometrist in Vision Development Fellowship examination. We finally return to our respective academ-

ic institutions and realize the research manuscript we haven't started to write yet is supposed to be submitted for peer review today!

Our lives are busy and complicated but certainly worth the living. Making significant contributions to science, clinical practice, and our college community is all in a day's work for the academic. Our institutions frequently rely on us to be content experts. If you haven't been asked, forced, or cajoled into being interviewed by the ubiquitous media, you will. Fear not, this article will help prepare you.

The role of faculty and the media

We recently asked Dr. Elizabeth Hoppe, Founding Dean of the College of Optometry at the Western University of Health Sciences, her opinion of the role of faculty and the media, and why faculty should get involved with the media. According to Dr. Hoppe: "Media access has changed dramatically with new venues on websites, blogs, and social networking sites. Video clips are shared around the world, sometimes with unpredictable results. Media participation and interaction by faculty has the potential to positively affect the

public's perception of the institution and can have significant and far-reaching impact. Faculty who interact with the media can increase student recruitment, faculty recruitment, research collaborations, fundraising, improve patient care delivery, and boost referrals for specialty care."

How to prepare for a media interaction

Jennifer Sopko, Director of Communications and Media at the Illinois College of Optometry (ICO), has these tips for interacting with the media:

- **Know what is expected.** How will the interview be used? Will it be live or taped? Will you or the institution be the focus or is the interview to be included in a larger story?
- **What's your point?** Decide before the interview what your main point is and try to convey that throughout the interview.
- **Remember the audience.** When answering questions, think about the family sitting on the couch. Talk to the audience, not to the reporter.

Dr. Goodfellow is an associate professor and Dr. Maino is a professor at the Illinois College of Optometry. They invite your feedback about this and all ASCOTech columns and your suggestions for future columns. Are you a media content expert? Tell us what you are doing. We want to hear about it. E-mail dmaino@ico.edu or ggoodfel@ico.edu. Please visit <http://www.MainosMemos.blogspot.com>.

- **Keep it simple.** Try to avoid using industry jargon or technical language. Deliver your message in a way that the general public can understand.
- **It's OK not to know.** If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to look into it or refer the reporter to another source. Try to avoid "no comment" or giving a deliberately vague answer.
- **Be yourself.** Relax and be conversational.
- **Credibility is everything!**

Toni Bristol, a public relations and marketing expert at Expansion Consultants, Inc., agrees with Ms. Sopko and adds these points:

- **Flag your key message.** Tell the reporter what your main points are by prefacing your statements with, "The most important thing for your viewers to know is ..."
- **Dress appropriately.** Strive for a professional, somewhat conservative look. For on-camera interviews, wear colors that light up your eyes. Avoid distracting clothing. Don't wear heavy makeup or jewelry that will catch the light. If you wear eyeglasses, your lenses should have an AR coating, and your frames should not block your eyes from the camera (Figure 1).

How do your colleagues prepare

American Optometric Association Board of Trustees member, media spokesperson and one of *Vision Monday's* 50 Most Influential Woman, Dr. Andrea Thau recommends that you have no more than three main points and that you repeat them at least three times. She also recommends that you always mention optometry, doctor of optometry, and whomever placed the media piece or the organization you represent (ASCO, AOA, COVD, AAO, etc.). In addition, she says, do not assume you will be asked the question you want, but be ready to respond to their questions by weaving in your message.

ICO faculty member and public access television talk show host, Dr. Janice Jurkus agrees. To be prepared, she says, be sure to know the topic you'll be expected to discuss and always be honest. She also suggests that you speak in short, declarative sentences using "sound bites," avoid run-on sentences, and don't say "ahhhh" too much. Finally, she says, "If you are being photographed or appearing on TV, look either at the interviewer or at the camera. Do not look down or around the room." ICO's Dr. Valerie Kattouf adds, "Keep your responses brief and avoid 'doctor' language while coming across in a natural, unscripted, and conversational manner."

Who, what, when, where, how and why?

Any good 1950s movie about newspaper reporters always emphasized that, as a reporter, you needed to know who, what, when, where, how, and why, and then verify the facts even if you were quoting your mom. We can use these key words as guidance for our interactions with the media.

- *Who.* Today the "who" of potential media that need our content expert skills is endless. Not only do we have television, radio, and newspapers, but we now have social digital media, such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, and SOVOTO. We have digital encyclopedias written by readers and blogs that attract national and international followings. One of modern day's digital conundrums is not that we have limited information, but that we have access to way too much information without appropriate filters in place.

Radio and television interviews often are live, which means your message goes out to the target audience immediately. You only get one shot to convey your points in a clear way. Newspaper and magazine interviews, however, are generally a little less formal, which gives you more opportunity to think about your words and to rephrase as necessary to deliver your message. The one drawback with this medium is that your words can often be misinterpreted by the writer who assembles the final story. I (GG) have had my comments taken out of context on occasion, and it is considered professionally unacceptable to ask to edit the final manuscript before it is published; however, some authors will extend the courtesy of reviewing the manuscript for any errors prior to publishing.

- *What.* What can you, as a faculty member, contribute to this somewhat riotous cacophony of frenzied media output? Quite a bit, actually. If your institution's public information team does not come to you, you should go to them. Start with what you know and then take a look at the current "hot" media topic. Perform a Google search or set up a Google and/or PubMed alert to stay informed about topics being discussed in

Figure 1
When interacting with the media, always dress professionally and conservatively.



the realm of cyber media and to receive the latest published research. If any topics fit your content expert résumé, then present your idea to your public information people, explaining how your knowledge can benefit the institution and its many constituents. Even if your institution's public information staff does not understand the importance of your topic, or if your topic does not fit into their established timetable, do not give up. Consider contacting your public information people about once every quarter with an idea. This will demonstrate that you want to help and you have a genuine interest in how the media perceive the institution.

- *When.* Periodically throughout the year, various media, especially television and radio, designate a week or two to count their viewers and listeners. You may want to time your message to occur just before or during a "sweeps week." Also, consider timing your news releases, blog messages, Facebook page updates, and other media outreach efforts to coincide with special events, such as the Olympics to talk about sports vision, or the release of the next 3D blockbuster movie, an opportunity to discuss binocular vision problems that can interfere with enjoying this

new technology (Figure 2).

- *Where.* It often makes little difference if your institution is in a big city or a small college town. Content is king when it comes to the new media. Your message can just as easily go national from Big Rapids, Michigan, as it can from New York City.

- *How.* Drs. Hoppe, Jurkus, Kattouf, and Thau, as well as Ms. Sopko and Ms. Bristol have provided some great tips on the "how." We suggest you approach the media and the public from the standpoint of, "If I wanted to impress my mom, how would I do it?" or "I want to discuss this topic in such a way that my mom could understand it easily." If you do this, the message you want to get across will be heard and understood by the vast majority of those whom you are trying to reach.

- *Why.* Why should you become involved with the media? Dr. Hoppe notes, "Faculty members who represent their institutions well in the media will increase their value to the institution." When you interact successfully with the media, you also feel a sense of accomplishment and a renewed belief that what you do matters to others. It provides an opportunity for you to

give back to the profession in a positive manner.

Yoda and Mr. Clean?

If you've read this far, you must be wondering about the title of this article. One of my west coast colleagues often refers to me (DM) as Yoda (of Star Wars fame). I would like to think he calls me this because of my extensive knowledge base, sage advice, and air of quiet authority. However, from time to time when looking in the mirror, I notice that I am assuming a physical form similar to that of my Jedi friend (i.e., short, round, and fuzzies growing about my head).

As you can imagine, I have the perfect face for radio! If you have a similar physiognomy, plan on your public relations career to be in radio, print, and digital media ... or just get on TV anyway. We all know that on TV we look heavier, and with HDTV, every facial nook and cranny shows up (Figure 3). The bright side is that when people see me in real life, they tell me how much younger and thinner I appear! On the other hand, my clean cut, handsome but follicly challenged coauthor has a face for all media (Figure 4)!

Figure 2
Timing is everything for Dr. Dominick Maino who discusses binocular vision dysfunction related to the release of Avatar with ABC-TV Health Beat producer Christine Tressel.



Figure 3
Dr. Valerie Kattouf experiences a true "close up" as she demonstrates the cover test while the camera looks on.



Finally, as Dr. Arol Augsburger, President of the Illinois College of Optometry, notes, "Talking to the media is no different from interacting in many social or business settings. We all must manage our messages, whether we are talking to reporters or not. We are all marketing our messages daily. In every conversation we have, we either market ourselves well or badly, but we are marketing!"

Now that you know the who, what, when, where, how and why of it all, it's time to get busy. Talk to your public information people. Start a blog and a Facebook page. Tell your story.

Figure 4
Dr. Geoffrey Goodfellow discusses the new Illinois Children's Vision Law on the ABC-7 news.



WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE DOING

In the Media

AOATV 3D Movie Vision Syndrome

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NUYtkIUCCs>

WLS TV Healthbeat Report: The 3-D Dilemma

<http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/health&id=7298893>

AOA News

<http://www.slideshare.net/DMAINO/maino-aoa-news-3-2210>

Facebook

Michigan College of Optometry on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Big-Rapids-MI/Michigan-College-of-Optometry/316876455569?v=wall>

Southern College of Optometry on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Memphis-TN/Southern-College-of-Optometry/300445971137>

New England College of Optometry on Library Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Boston-MA/New-England-College-of-Optometry-Library/25189318659>

Illinois College of Optometry on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Chicago-IL/Illinois-College-of-Optometry/400752138798>

Blogs

News From the AOA

<http://newsfromaoa.org/>

National Network of Libraries of Medicine

<http://nnlm.gov/gmr/blog/2009/07/06/jerry-dujsik-retires-from-illinois-college-of-optometry/>

University of Missouri–St. Louis Blog

<http://blogs.umsl.edu/news/category/college-of-optometry/>

MainosMemos

<http://www.MainosMemos.blogspot.com>

YouTube

SUNY PSA

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrgcFH9cZ44>

Southern California College of Optometry

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=southern+california+college+of+optometry&aq=f

Illinois College of Optometry on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Illinois+college+of+optometry&aq=f