

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH MEDIA: TELLING YOUR ENERGY STORY

When a city is reaching out to media to tell its energy story, it's a good idea to be prepared and informed on the process. Trade articles, local newspaper stories, and local blog coverage are great tools to drive greater awareness to your initiatives and can be used strategically to target specific community members and interests in the city at-large.

Reporters are busy and will expect you are ready with information they can digest quickly and easily.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ENERGY STORY?

A good energy story is specific, and clearly states a change, progress, and the benefits of an improvement, policy, program, or achievement.

There is usually a timely hook to the story tied in with local community happenings or larger industry issues. The stories often feature strong visuals and a human element, and are not overly technical. This means a good energy story is compelling in the fact that it is a showcase how energy helps people and a community by better serving the interest of businesses and residents alike.

Be specific. Know your energy savings numbers and how they were generated, understand why and how the project came to be, and what its impact is. Pull out your energy bills and get a sense of what the baseline improvements are, and if possible, measure how improvements impacted the energy savings over time. Cost savings and payback period details add more context to the energy savings digits.

Be prepared. Figure out who is best to tell the story, whether it is a building tenant or a participant in a challenge program, such as a building owner. A corporate or public official also can serve as the storyteller. The best person is the person who knows the story from the beginning to end, who participated intimately, and who can explain the broader benefits and impacts of why energy efficiency in buildings matters.

Be timely. Often timing can be everything when working with media. Getting an energy story placed comes down to knowing when to align with local and industry issues and being patient for the right time to contact a reporter with your idea. Reporters work on tight deadlines and giving advanced notice can be another option when pitching your story.



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THINKING BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL ARTICLE

When most people think of media engagement, they think of a newspaper article or a television spot on the local evening news. While these are prominent coverage options, there are many ways in which media and trade outlets (typically business-to-business companies that have a more-focused audience than the general public) can help amplify news and stories, including:

- **OpEd**
An OpEd (short for Opinion Editorial) is a commentary piece submitted to a newspaper or magazine that reflects the opinion of the author.
- **Advertisements**
Paid advertisements can be useful tools to place content such as recognizing the winners of a challenge program or offering congratulations of another accomplishment, if you have the budget to do so.
- **Blogs**
Many media outlets are moving to digital-first content plans, which means they need online content daily. In addition, many companies and organizations also have blogs where they are able to amplify news or tell additional related stories.
- **Social media posts**
In addition to using city-owned social media channels, many media organizations also often seek quick content pieces (ideally 1 photo, 1 caption, and 1 call to action for readers).
- **Videos**
When reaching broad audiences, videos are highly effective by offering compelling stories and testimonies. Digital content can really help promote or market your effort.

HOW TO CONTACT THE MEDIA

- Reporters can be contacted by email, phone, and, increasingly, social media accounts.
- Usually a quick email is most effective along with a quick follow-up by phone.
- Keep it short and to the point, focusing on why your pitch is of value to them and their readers.
- Be respectful of their time and limit your follow-up.