

The Publicity Club of New York presents  
"Beyond The Headlines - News Programs That Make You Think"

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**CBS NEWS SUNDAY MORNING**

Hi, I'm very pleased to be going first. I'm with CNS Sunday Morning, as you know, and if you're not familiar it's a morning news and arts magazine somewhat like NPR on TV, I would say. We have an incredibly loyal and, happily, sizable audience and they give us all kinds of permission to do stories that are kind of what people don't expect. I did a story last year on the resurgence of the photo booth. We interviewed people who collected photographs from flea markets around the country. There's a lot of interesting things out there. Basically what we like to think is that there's no story that we *won't* do, although there are so let's discuss that.

Just to go over the general structure of the show, loosely modeled after a Sunday newspaper. We have a cover story which explores an issue of today in detail. Recently we had one called "Madame President" about whether or not the country was ready for a female president, a piece on benefit cutbacks, intelligent design, that sort of thing. And then we do the heart of our show which is the features. We do a lot of profiles on artists, musicians, political figures, last Sunday we did one on Kris Kristofferson, recently we did Billy Crystal, Neil Diamond, Maureen Dowd, Gloria Steinem, Carlos Santana, across the board. And what I'd like to stress about those is that we need access. I have a lot of people who say, "Colin Farrell will talk to you for 5 minutes and you can't walk with him around the room and we won't give you any footage, but it'll be great." And that sort of thing is what we shy away from because we're not going to show a clip and go, "He's got a new movie. Goodbye," we really need to go and get as much, we want to make the piece as rich as possible. Our audience has become accustomed to it and we like to give our audience what they want. So we like to go, if possible, to the homes of celebrities, have them take us to sites and places that are meaningful to them, you know if they have a gig singing on a Wednesday night at a small smoky bar, that sort of thing. With Neil Diamond we went back to the club and met the club owner who gave him his break in the business and that was their first reunion in, I don't know, decades and it was really something special.

We also do short pieces like "Almanacs" and that sort of thing and that's what the Daylight Savings Time piece was, it was like, "Where the hell did this notion come from?" just a quick little explainer, sort of light little piece. And as Lisa mentioned, we do commentaries both right and left. Occasionally we do theme shows and series, we do single-subject shows, say on food or travel, that sort of thing.

One other thing I should mention: we get a lot of calls, "we'd love to have Charles Osgood interview so-and-so on set about this recent survey." If you watch the show, and we'll talk about this in a moment, we don't have live guests.

We do short documentary-style pieces. Our news block is, of course, live. We address the breaking issues of the day and what's going on and we update everyone, but then we go to our taped pieces so we don't usually have live guests unless someone has just died or we need a quick expert or consultant. So if you have stuff like that I would call the Early Show.

In terms of what we look for and what we don't, I'd say #1 is: know the show. Watch the show. As I said, we got constant emails and calls and faxes about having a live guest on, it's just not something we do, generally. And when someone calls me, I have to admit that I know you haven't watched the show and maybe that takes away from what you're about to tell me.

In terms of the profiles and stuff, I would say you should really know your own client, there are so many times I've been told, "Oh yeah, this celebrity or this newsmaker will give the correspondent a tour of their home, they'll have tea," and then we find out he's an intensely private person and he's never let his wife into the house or into the tea room and we're certainly not getting in there and that's certainly disappointing. Basically, just clear stuff ahead of time, if you're pitching a biography or a career profile be sure that your client is willing to give a little, provide childhood photos, give tapes of previous appearances, home video, something to make it a fully realized piece.

In terms of journalistic ethics, we can't stage events. I've had situations where someone will bring someone in, "Tell them to do something, go hug your mom!" while the camera's rolling and that sort of thing. We're not going to roll, and if we catch that, we can't use it because you directed it. And a lot of times I'm asked to give a list of questions ahead of time, that's just not something we can't do. It's against our CBS News standards, most news standards. We can tell you why we want to speak to your client, what the story is about and we *should* tell you those things, but we can't give you specific questions. Along those lines, don't make promises you can't keep. As I said, it's a big problem especially on the celebrity profiles and that sort of thing. And you know, there are problems. If it turns out, "He really doesn't want to go so much into that," or whatever, just let us know. Let us know early. We understand that everyone has sensitivities and sometimes we can work around it, sometimes we can't. If someone says, "I'm only gonna talk about the movie and I won't talk about anything else," that's something we can't work around. But if they say, "I'm currently in a divorce," or a situation that's messy, we can honor that in some way. We might still ask a question but they don't have to answer anything. It's not just a promotional opportunity, is what I want to stress.

When it comes to an honest relationship between the PR person and the journalist, for example, in the matter of exclusivity, if you know a story you pitched to me is running the day before or at the same time on another network, I need to know that. That is incredibly disappointing when I find out that if I have a story going on Sunday and I find out Friday I see it on GOOD MORNING AMERICA, my jaw drops. And if my boss sees it, his jaw drops. And also it's duplicitous and that's the sort of thing you want to avoid.

In terms of the best and worst kinds of pitches, obviously those that come from those who are clearly familiar with the show, they're brief, they're easy to

read, there are bullet points. So many times I get long, long, seven-page emails and I don't even read seven-page emails from my friends. I don't have time. I don't know you, I'm sure you're great but... If I can encourage you to play producer, think of the whole story, not just your client's element. I would say, help us envision the entire piece, not just your client's part. Be flexible, work with us. I might say, "Think of another element and come back." It involves research to get this stuff done on our part for sure and on yours. Also remember that we're a national network newscast or newsmagazine or arts magazine, we are not going to run specifically local stories just because we're in New York. There's a lot of great stuff in New York, it's very tempting to run a lot of New York stories but we can't because we have to satisfy an entire country.

And lastly I would just say that worse ways to pitch are vague voicemails, "I'm so-and-so from da-da-da, I'd love to talk to you." The truth is, I'm just super busy. I've got a story on that week, I have 10 emails, I'm not going to call back and say, "So what is it you'd like?" My manners dictate that I do that but I just don't have the time. And these random mailings just aren't effective, like when you get 12 books and you feel bad, I want to return it to them and it sits in my office... I'm not going to read 12 books. If your client has written one great book and you think there's something that would appeal to our show, send me an email, call with a back up and give me a little time to look at it, but just send one. Send the best example.

As for lead time, it really depends, there are so many breaking stories. If it's a feature, if we're doing a celebrity profile or a profile on a newsmaker we need a couple of weeks. I would say try to get it to us a month in advance. I've turned things around in two weeks, like 10 minute profiles. But then there are some stories, especially our little pieces like our "Almanacs" and our "Passages", the Daylight Savings thing, even our photo booth story. I went out to LA, we shot at several different clubs, I talked to some people, I talked to an artist, went to a flea market, we did that in three days. Now that's not ideal, it certainly wasn't ideal for me, but if it's something that's time-prescient and has to be done that week and it just came on the scene, tell us. Let us decide that we're not going to have time to do it.

Thanks.