

TIPS FOR EDITORIAL BOARD MEETINGS

1. **SCHEDULING AN EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING** -- This is the easy part. Contact the editorial page editor and tell him or her you have an issue of great importance you think people should be aware about, and you would like to meet the editorial board to discuss it and get the information out to the readers.
2. **BE PREPARED** – Editorial board meetings are designed to generate favorable editorial comments about a particular issue – your issue. Your ability to clearly articulate the background and significance of your issue or program is critical, and that means being prepared. If you don't know all of the details and background on the issue, make sure you bring a staff person or local expert who does.
3. **REMEMBER – YOU ARE TRYING TO 'SELL' YOUR IDEAS** – Some communications professionals like to think of editorial board meetings as opportunities to persuade skeptical, out-spoken, and highly influential potential customers.
4. **BE ENTHUSIASTIC** – Your commitment to the issue or program will be demonstrated to the editorial board by, among other things, your personal demeanor. If you're excited about the program, they'll read it by your body language, your tone of voice, and the lively interaction among the presenters.
5. **BE HONEST** – If you are unsure of information, say so, but promise to provide the needed statistic, background or detail immediately after the meeting (but be sure you deliver.) Also, if there are possible problems or unresolved issues with your program and the editorial board wants to know how you plan to deal with it – admit it. Tell them what kinds of information you are gathering to help you make your decision, and when you expect a final decision. But don't try to just gloss over their question. They'll forgive you for anything but dishonesty.

6. **FOCUS ON YOUR GOAL** – During a particularly grueling editorial board meeting, presenters sometimes lose sight of why they're there. Their immediate goal becomes to "GET OUT OF THIS PLACE." Editorial writers are paid to be skeptical and to see behind the public relations gimmicks. Sometimes they're friendly, often they're not. Your goal should be either to get a favorable editorial written about your issue or to diffuse a potentially negative perspective they may have about your issue. Give them the information and the background they need.

If the meeting becomes a battle of wits – and the board seems stacked against your issue – Don't get hostile or call them biased. Stay focused on presenting your side of the argument and telling them how you made your decision to support the program or issue.

7. **STICK TO THE ISSUE** – Don't get sidetracked talking about unrelated issues. Most editorial board meetings are designed to generate editorials on ONE topic. Most editorials deal with one and only one issue. So a laundry list of everything you've accomplished or plan to do may be useful background for the board, but it's unlikely it's going to generate editorials.
8. **ASK FOR THEIR SUPPORT** – Don't forget to close strongly. Summarize what you've told them and then ask them for their help in educating the public on your program or issue.