

Exploring Media Relations with Bethany Drysdale and Bob Conrad

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SPEAKERS

Bob Conrad, Kathie Taylor, Bethany Drysdale

Kathie Taylor 00:00

Hello, and welcome to Better PR. Today we are chatting with Bethany Drysdale, who is the Media and Communications Manager for Washoe County, Nevada. And we are also talking with Bob Conrad PhD, or should I say Dr. Bob Conrad, co-founder, publisher and editor of This Is Reno. Hello, hello, thank you for being here with me today.

Bethany Drysdale 00:24

Very happy to be here.

Bob Conrad 00:26

Thank you for having me.

Kathie Taylor 00:28

Yeah, of course, this is a really cool topic, media relations. And we have an Ultimate PR Pro, on the one hand, and we have the ultimate news Pro, on the other hand, so I think it's getting to be a fantastic discussion. But there's something I want to talk about first, before we start some fun facts that came up in my pre-episode research was that Bethany, you started in news and went to public relations. And Bob, you started in public relations and went to the news. And you both studied psychology, so I have to know, how do you use psychology in your work?

Bethany Drysdale 01:06

Oh, that's a good one. Dr. Conrad, I'll let you start with that.

Bob Conrad 01:12

I don't have a hard and fast answer for that other than then it just generally sort of informs. You know, how you relate to people. And you know, what you think might make a good news story for our particular audience? So I guess I mean, I'm sure on some level I use to quote your question use

psychology. It's not a Cognizant effort on my part to do that. But it has helped me listen better to people. And it's improved my interviewing skills, probably in those two areas.

Bethany Drysdale 01:56

I wonder, I minored in psychology and journalism and psychology, just because it's interesting, just because it was something interesting to learn. But I wonder if wanting to know the why and wanting to know the story behind and what informs behavior. You know, that's probably a similar interest in journalists and people who go into the news as in psychology, so maybe that's the connection there.

Kathie Taylor 02:21

Maybe so I just thought that was really interesting. I minored in communications, and some of my favorite classes were in intergenerational communication, and some of those other areas where you really have to think through putting yourself where people are, when you meet them in the street, or when you meet them in the interview are where are they today? And how are they today? And how are we going to kind of bridge whatever gap we might have between us. And so I think that's a fantastic segue to talk about this. I was really excited. Bethany to see congratulations that you are an in communicator, the yearby. This is Reno. And it got me to think, wow, that's interesting, because I follow This is Reno on social media. I read the stories, I read the comments. I'm always like most PR pros taking the pulse of the community. And Bob, I've noticed sometimes that you're not always happy with us public relations practitioners. And so I'm dying to know, even though I can't imagine anyone better to win this award or this recognition than Bethany. What made you do this? What drove your desire to name her as the Communicator of the Year?

Bob Conrad 03:39

Yeah, so I guess stepping back, you know, when I was working in the PR field as primarily a public information officer or marketing communications director, you know, I've always valued good PR and good journalism. And I don't see a lot of either back in I want to say maybe oh, six to maybe about oh, 2008 to about 2011. I was running a blog that was sort of analytical and critical of both journalism and public relations. So I guess my expectations for both good PR and good journalism have not changed over the years. But of course, as you mentioned, I am in the new seat now. So for me, what makes good PR is really fundamental. It's are you A: answering questions, and B: are you actually relating to the public? What I see a lot of is relating to your clients, more so than the people who may be beneficiaries or audiences that may engage with those clients or those brands. So I think in fundamental PR what is missing a lot is basics, basic stuff out. I see a lot of really poor PR practices in the community that we serve. Just very strange things. And then just things that add up. I mean, just baffling stuff. So, what, why, Bethany? I mean, I've Beth and I, we've known each other for many, many, probably almost two decades, I would think. So, we've known each other. But a year ago, we offered that same recognition at Washoe County, and you know that that recognition is not to say, hey, this guy's my buddy, and we're giving them kudos, or Bethany's case, you know, she's my friend, we're giving our kudos. It's really just to recognize who has been helpful to This is Reno as a news outlet, consistently, for the period of a year. And Bethany rose to the top this year. I believe, Bethany, you were new last year, so you wouldn't have made the cut in 2021. When we recognize Scott, and I think Scott had been on the gig for at least about a year, and we gave him similar recognition. He was very prompt, to respond to us, answering our questions, or put us in touch with subject matter experts. And

those things just they seem so fundamental. But for us, it's very welcomed when it happens regularly. So I would say in the case of Washoe County, we've never really had too many issues in the past, but having a direct line to Bethany and have her respond to us like, Hey, I don't know the answer to that. But I'm going to get that to you as soon as I can. You'd be surprised how often that does not occur. So, I hope that answered your question.

Kathie Taylor 06:54

Yeah, totally. And Bethany, how did it feel? Did you know it was coming?

Bethany Drysdale 06:59

No, Bob tagged me in a Facebook post. And that's how I saw it. But, you know, I tell people this all the time, I have to give kudos to leadership here because I think a lot of poor public relations might be stepping out of my lane here. But I think it can be attributed to just fear of a bad story, fear of saying the wrong thing. And I'm really empowered here. And I think Scott, I would say the same in the Health Division. We're empowered to work with reporters, we're told by our leadership, hey, we always answer your questions. I don't, I only worked here for two and a half years, our county manager has been here about three years. So I don't know if that predated him or not, but I know that from the top down here, we're encouraged to respond and just answer and we have nothing to hide. So why hide anything? And I think working with people that I've known for a long time helps too because I can call Bob and say, Hey, you asked this thing, but, you know, what are you looking for? Or, you know, sorry, I can't there's you know, I don't have the whole answer, or I can't say this whole thing yet, but hold on a week, and we're gonna put out an announcement or whatever. And I feel like that two-way conversation can be missed sometimes, when you're not empowered by your leadership to have those two-way conversations.

Kathie Taylor 08:32

Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

Bob Conrad 08:34

Yeah, I would agree with that I see a lot of in this community, sort of an expectation that it's a one-sided dialogue from the PR person down to the news media. And from when I got my APR, I remember they really stressed to metrical communications, which is you and I having a conversation, not you giving me information expecting to publish it unfiltered and unfettered. So again, this is really basic stuff, in my opinion, from a media relations standpoint, but it seems to be something that is also lacking in some kind of gross ways.

Kathie Taylor 09:17

You mentioned and I'm really curious to know because as a PR practitioner, I don't want to do the wrong things. Or the things that might alienate the media. Because it's a partnership, right? It should be. You mentioned necessarily.

Bob Conrad 09:31

We partner people, the people in government love to say that and I go, I'm sitting here going. We don't have an MOU. We don't you're not paying me. We don't have a partnership. I need information. I'm

trying to communicate with our you know, have our readers get up to date information. And sometimes government is the place to get that out. But I don't call that a partnership personally.

Bethany Drysdale 10:03

And I want to add to that too, because there have been times that Bob's pushed back on me, like, that's me, that's not what I asked you for, this is what I actually asked you for. And it's good. And I think, maybe not having a thin skin. I mean, it's okay, if he kind of calls me out on some BS here and there. I mean, that's his job. And I know, that's his job. And he also knows what my job is. So I think maybe understanding each other's roles, and I understand he's going to get the story, and sometimes the county's not going to look great, you know, government doesn't always do what people want the government to do. So that's okay. And I, again, it's because I'm not afraid here, I'm not afraid I'm gonna get fired, or I'm not afraid that I'm gonna get reprimanded if a story is less than flattering, because maybe what we've done was less than flattering, maybe it was a hard choice to make. And, you know, people don't agree with choices that are made. So going back to kind of what Bob said, and what you said, it's, it's not necessarily partnership all the time, he's got a job to do, and I have a job to do. So it's, it's just kind of understanding, I think, where the other person's coming from.

Kathie Taylor 11:13

I think that's a good point. And maybe instead of partnership, that's a poor choice of words, maybe we go back to the basics of public relations, which is relationships. And, Bob, I know you asked tough questions, and I do. But you should write that your job is to ask those questions so that the community understands what's going on and maybe our BS meters or are going off the charts on these days? I don't know. But so the question I have for you is, what are things that you've noticed you have talked about questionable PR practices, though, as a PR practitioner? I want to know, what is that so I don't do it.

Bob Conrad 11:59

So, I think one example is just not responding. I get that a lot at the City of Reno in order to get a response, they force you to call a media line, which then that voice, it's a voicemail, that you have to leave a voicemail, that voicemail then gets spit out to who knows how many people? And supposedly at the end of that somebody's gonna call me. I won't, I don't use that media line, because I find that very offensive. That a whatever potential story I'm working on, made out now get broadcast to who knows how many people maybe a dozen or more, I really don't know. So to me, that. And then the second reason is that's just a systemic barrier. You know, I, it seems to me that, at least when I was a PIO, if somebody were to ask me a question, a lot of times, if not, most of the time, I wouldn't have the answer, but I would go find the person. And if I could distill what they told me into the answer, that's great. Other times, I would just connect the reporter to that person for an interview. And I don't see that happening a lot. I see a lot of, as I mentioned, before, people just putting out information and expecting me to go, Oh, that's amazing. I'm going to report that which the TV news does all the time. And I think that that's a bar that that to some people is what constitutes journalism. And to my mind, that is pretty antithetical to journalism. So I don't know I kind of went off track there, but I'll shut up. Now, unless you have more you want to hear?

Kathie Taylor 13:44

Oh, no, I think we do want to hear more. If we think about our audience for this podcast, it's public relations professionals, and in the people that I know, that are in my circle, we want to do the right things. We want to have that relationship. And, and it kind of goes to another question I have for you, Bethany. You went from inviting reporters in and taking them on tours and things when you were with tourism, and I know there was a lot more involved in your job than that. But you went from that to jumping into government communications in the middle of a pandemic. And so I have to say, What the heck, how different was that? And how did that change your relationship with media?

Bethany Drysdale 14:34

It was really interesting because in tourism, it was very much like a selling type of PR, we were selling a product and the product was traveling to Nevada. It was pitching stories. It was you know, it's not a press releases, it was always outreach on in what I do now, it's really more reactive and not that we're not proactive by it, it's responding to inquiries, it's responding to whatever the story is, whatever it happens to be going on, you know, storms, one after another, that could create flooding. That's not something that I'm gonna go out and pitch to anybody, that's something that I'm gonna have to react to and respond to. So, it's a totally different type of public information. I think it's more public information than public relations. Those, at least in my mind, that those are kind of two different types of communications. And this is definitely more public information. It was interesting, because in working in tourism, the local market wasn't really my market. Local media live here, they are not going to come travel here, they live here. So, I realized that I actually didn't know even after 15 years of being in that role, I actually really didn't know, local media that well. And I think just in two and a half years, I've gotten to know the local market much, much better, working more with Bob than I than I ever did when I was at the state. So, it's different types of stories. It's different types of journalists, you know, travel writers are a totally different beast than, than the Bob Conrad's of the world and the local news for sure.

Kathie Taylor 16:19

That's interesting. So, Bob, as a PR professional yourself, you were in public information for many years. And you teach communications now for? Is it Cabiner? Or it's the? No, I have to tell you what the acronym is, I'm going to ask you to do it.

Bob Conrad 16:39

It's the University of Nevada College of Agriculture. I teach a brand-new program called agriculture communications. So, it's literally just getting off the ground. And it's basically kind of like journalism, but focused on environmental and agricultural issues.

Kathie Taylor 17:00

I'm curious how you how you combine the two teaching communicators, as well as following up on stories and determining, like you said earlier, what is a good news story? And how does that? How does that all work in your world? Because I feel like there's it's not friction or tension, but it's a little bit of a push me pull you kind of a thing?

Bob Conrad 17:27

Yeah, back when I was doing my PR blog, I called it an uncomfortable dance between PR and news, folks. So, it's, you know, we have to deal with one another. But it's not always pleasant. But it's not

always bad either. And that's how I kind of viewed it as a PR person. And it's still kind of how I view it on the news side. So, I'm not sure I understood your question, how do I combine both efforts of teaching and being a practitioner in journalism?

Kathie Taylor 17:58

Yeah, I'm really curious. I think it's because your background is in public information. And then you launched. This is Reno. And now you are one of those people who are keeping us in check as public information communicators. And so, as you teach communicators, how does your work as a news person inform that teaching?

Bob Conrad 18:24

I would say greatly, I mean, it's funny, I went back and looked at an old PowerPoint that I did, probably 10 or 12 years ago, for a lecture that I did on Wednesday, a couple days ago. And I used a lot of the same material. It was how to read a news release, and how to think about it in terms of social media, as well as SEO and some of the practices. And I use that virtually the same information for my students on how to write a basic news story, which is, you know, literary class number two. And along with that, I said, How do we determine what is news? Well, that's always a subject. Here's the secret to journalism that nobody wants to admit it's highly subjective.

Bethany Drysdale 19:08

Oh, no, no, you didn't?

Bob Conrad 19:11

Yes, I did. It is, it's very subjective. And so, determining what is news, for example, is one of those things. You know, who gets to decide what is news? We can have that conversation too. But it's something that I hope to transmit or translate to my students and hopefully, as you know, producing news on a daily basis, we put out stuff that is relevant to people as well.

Kathie Taylor 19:39

Okay, so I'll bite. How do we determine and who determines what is news?

Bob Conrad 19:45

Well, the government doesn't get to, broadly speaking. And we went through this most recently in Maricopa County, Arizona. This is Reno signed on to an amicus brief in a case where the Gateway Pundit, which in my opinion, is pretty trashy. Journalism had been, I guess, kind of aggressively trying to get into the election and county press conferences and things like that for the most recent election. And the county denied them access because they essentially determined that the Gateway Pundit, which is pretty right wing is not a legit news source. Well, coming from doing my own news source where I've been told basically the same by people in government or political figures, I took great offense to that. I don't think it should be the government to decide that. And that's pretty clear. In the First Amendment, as well as the associated case history of the news business that's occurred over the last however many hundreds 100 or so years. So, the government shouldn't be the one to decide. I think, really, at the end of the day, it's the marketplace. You know, we publish a lot of stories, some of which go crazy, some of which go nowhere. So, on any given day, I can't really tell you the exact

science to that. For us, because our website is called this is Reno, it obviously has to relate to Reno, we do regional and statewide coverage through the APA in Nevada current. So that's a little bit different. But as far as the stuff that we cover, it's going to be really, we have very specific beats that we follow. And anything outside of that I have to really treat cautiously. So that's your, a lot of press releases, if it's not coming from Washoe County, or the City of Reno, or the school district, which are sort of the three big entities that we cover, then what you may be pitching us may not go too far, you know, and I get a lot of that with like, a new business launched or so and so got promoted, or, Hey, these events come into town, we want you to do an advanced interview for that. And I usually just hit delete on those. So, we have very specific and defined beats that are on our about page. And anything outside of that we have to be pretty cautious about just in terms of time and resources, not because we don't like you. It's just the nature of what we do and how much I can afford people afford to pay people to write about.

Kathie Taylor 22:28

Now that makes sense. So it's kind of like knowing your audience, right? We know that, if that's where you are covered. And we know, I feel like that's a media relations kind of thing for public relations practitioners is to understand not only our audience that we're trying to reach, but the media sources that we're trying to communicate through.

Bob Conrad 22:50

Yeah, and I shouldn't have to send an email to Las Vegas PR firms saying please take me off your list. You know, for all their Las Vegas news.

Kathie Taylor 23:02

What do you mean, it's not this is Las Vegas?

Bob Conrad 23:06

Like literally, I do that almost three times a week?

Kathie Taylor 23:11

Well, I have to ask you, Bob, you have worked with me in the past, we did some great stories on families with children on the autism spectrum. And a particular school that was really trying to survive, for lack of a better term. And for some of the families were able to tell their stories on your site. We did some promotional work around that with you as well. But I'm curious to know, based on this conversation, it was a private school. What was it that made you want to say yeah, I want to work with you on these stories?

Bob Conrad 23:47

I can't remember what did we do actual stories. Or was that all paid content?

Kathie Taylor 23:53

It was paid content. But I'm curious to know had I pitched you those stories without the paid content? Was that something that you might have picked up?

Bob Conrad 24:02

Possibly, I'll just give you a little bit of a hint. If it's not something I would personally do, then I run it by my boss, who was Kristin Hackbarth. And she sort of is the ultimate yes or no person. And sometimes we'll kick it over to one of our freelancers. And if they go and not feeling it, it's not gonna happen. That's just the reality. And that happened this week, we got a pitch for a new business that is doing great work. It's a great business, but it's just not really, I sent it over to one of our writers, and she wrote back and said not feeling it, too. There we go. Sorry.

Kathie Taylor 24:46

That's interesting from a local news source. And Bethany, maybe you can chime in on this too, but as a PR practitioner, looking for ways to leverage local news sources. Especially since we're in Carson City, it's darn near impossible to get anything in Reno media. So I'm curious, what kind of tips do you have for practitioners like me who really want to get my story out, but really have a hard time getting any attention paid to them?

Bob Conrad 25:24

Is that for me or for Bethany?

Kathie Taylor 25:26

Or it's for you primarily. And then Bethany, you're in a really cool situation, because you're one of those places that if you issue a story, he's going to pick up on it most likely, right? Because you're the one that's putting that out there. So, when you're looking to put out news? How do you decide where you're going to put it, where you're going to place it?

Bethany Drysdale 25:55

Well, I know you're asking him first. But I'll jump in on the second part of that. Local media, I mean, that's going to be our audience. But we really have been going kind of into more specialized audiences, we were really lacking in Spanish language outreach. And so we're learning right now, that that's a whole media market that we have not really been in touch with. And really, to the detriment of residents and us, I mean, we should have been reaching that huge segment of the population. So learning that market, and then actually, I was talking to some students this morning, I'm working with them on a project that you and Arne talking about, forget what I want to yell to the masses, what? Who needs to hear it? And how are they going to hear it? So if I want to pitch something to a, I don't know, I need a certain zip code in Washoe County to see this. Well, maybe it's gonna be a Facebook group. But I know that that zip code is part of what we actually we joined some Facebook groups. And sorry, Bob, I'm not trying to cut out traditional news. But we have really great interaction just through these Facebook groups. And they're not nice to us. We're not, you know, some happy fuzzy member of these groups, they, but it's where they are. That's where they're talking about us. And so that's where we'll go for some of us. It's, and I read their comments. And that kind of informs what news I need to be putting out there. All the storms and the potential flooding and lemon Valley, which wasn't bad, don't freak out. It actually was not gonna flood.

Bob Conrad 27:41

We did report by the way, yes. So we did sort of a compilation of what we were getting from the city and the county and put it into one piece about that, because there was a lot of that sort of citizen driven fear mongering that didn't really hold water.

Bethany Drysdale 28:00

Where's the drama behind you? So, and then, like with the Spanish language, you know, it does me no good to try to reach Spanish readers with the RGJ. Even though people love to see an article in the RGJ, great, but that's not necessarily where we're going to reach our audience. And I think that's where having buy-in from the higher-ups matters, too. And that's where my direct supervisor, Nancy Lewin, Hagen, is a former reporter. She's from the news. So here's a plug for hiring those new, people that are now looking for PR jobs. Because they get it they get the audience, they get, you know, I used to say this, actually, when I was in tourism, too, we would love to see a big New York Times story about Nevada. But if we're actually trying to get people from Sacramento to come to Nevada, then what good is the New York Times it's only to, you know, inflate people's egos, like we got a New York Times story. You have to go where your audiences and I think studying that audience being a part of the Facebook groups that love to bash you, you just got to take it and listen to what they're saying. And then put the news in front of the audience, whether it's a big readership or a little readership or maybe something you would rather not consider actual news. Bob and I have talked about this a little bit and I go back and forth on some outlets that I wouldn't necessarily consider news, but they're writing about us. So maybe they are.

Bob Conrad 29:31

In the US tough and I don't envy that position. You know, but back when I was doing this I dealt with a lot of at the time, we didn't really call them influencers but you sort of pitch people like that for certain things, or nontraditional sources like blogs or you don't really see a lot of blogs anymore, but back then you saw a lot of blogs or just people who were out doing stuff. It did not always hit, and that's fine, but at least they knew we were trying to get a message out to them.

Bethany Drysdale 30:07

I think blogs are kind of where that understanding your audience, maybe that came from. You know, if you wanted to reach a group of young moms, you'd reach out to the mommy bloggers, you know, and that's where people started realizing, oh, hey, there are these what niche or micro microsites micro audiences? I don't know the term. But I think maybe that grew out of blogs, and now we're realizing, okay, you know, a big traditional news story is great, but are the people we're trying to reach actually reading that source?

Bob Conrad 30:41

And, Kathie, I'd like to actually add, going back to your question, we do offer paid content, and it's not to line our pockets, it's more to capture the cost of putting that news release out there. Considering our time and effort that goes into that. So, we offer \$150. And yeah, the price has changed over the years, but we offer the ability to put your press release on This Is Reno. And believe it or not, some of those go crazy, like they get in the top trending stories, even though it's labeled as sponsored by law, we have to do that, other media don't always do that like they should. But we offer that as an option because we realize we have to turn most people away when it comes to pitches.

Kathie Taylor 31:28

Yeah, we have. And we have used that service. And it's fantastic. The stories I mentioned before, we got wonderful return on investment for those stories, because it placed it right in the audience that we wanted. And in that particular campaign, Bethany, to your point, we use the Reno Moms blog as well, to reach those folks. So, but it was intensive research that went into that particular campaign. And I think that's a piece that we kind of touched on earlier. We went through the entire Washoe County School District demographics reports to try to figure out where children with IEPs you know, where are they concentrated? Because they are concentrated in certain pockets here and there? And which schools do they attend? And how do we want to reach those people, and who are the people we want to reach because a lot of children that we were trying to reach are raised by their grandparents, not just their parents. So intensive research went into our placement in your publication, as well as in the Reno Mom's blog. And so, I think that goes back to your basic media relations. The thing that we talked about is not only knowing your audience, but knowing the publications that you're reaching out to, and what they specialize in, and what they want to talk about and what they're interested in, or what maybe their beats are what they cover.

Bob Conrad 32:52

Yeah, we cover education in Washoe County, pretty intensively, almost weekly. I can't think of another media outlet in town that has covered just about every single school board meeting in the last four years, probably same with Washoe County meetings. Astonishingly, the meeting on Wednesday at Washoe County has generated for us three different stories. That's how committed we are to covering our local governments and boards. And that's not abnormal. Occasionally, we'll have a city council meeting that'll generate two or more stories.

Bethany Drysdale 33:31

So totally off topic, but can be edited out if you need to. I think you know, especially those school board meetings, they can go so long, and so into late into the night, and traditional newspapers may not have the staff for that. TV news, they've got a schedule, you know their news around when they air. And so, I wonder if things get lost because they can't commit resources to actual in-depth stories. And that's why I like working with Bob. I like working with them, like Mark Robison with the RGJ has a history of covering us and so I'm not having to go back to the basics for everything. It's really refreshing to work with people who can commit the time, the insights and the institutional knowledge on certain topics and actually cover things correctly. Because sometimes stories are bigger, not in length, but a bigger idea than just what you're going to get from a quick pitch or a press release.

Kathie Taylor 34:39

Thank you. That's I'm not going to edit that because that was great. From it was for me. Yeah. From a small rural community, like where I come from what I try to do with my clients and stuff we depend mightily on local media sources and outlets and we have developed beautiful relationships with those people. It's where we, where we struggle is moving into the larger markets to talk about the larger stories.

Bob Conrad 35:12

There's very few in my opinion in Nevada, very few hardcore journalism outlets left. It's really sad to see, frankly, dinner that independence in Nevada current, some of the local parson. Now, some people might say This Is Reno but it's been very sad to watch the downsizing of these newsrooms, and then all the stories that aren't being covered, like I was astonished in 2017. When I started covering the Trina Olson story at the Washoe County School District, I was astonished when I was told that pitch that to the RGJ. And that didn't bite, it ended up being a frickin crazy story that blew a whole bunch of stuff out of the water. And think about that happening probably on a weekly basis in this market. It's really sad. And I would count myself in that group of media that does not have the resources to do justice to a lot of stories like that. I could easily be working on 10 investigative pieces right now.

Kathie Taylor 36:21

Easily with that in mind. How do we tell those stories? How do we make sure that they get out there in a way that is objective and transparent as much as we can be? How do we get those stories out there?

Bob Conrad 36:41

Content marketing, that's the way to go. You got to do your own podcasts, your own videos. You know, and I hope that people will, if it's a government entity doing it, and some like, you know, Bethany's team, they do a great job. But I hope they also people recognize they're only getting part of the story, part of the issue. I kind of, because I see a lot of that happening. And I'm a big advocate of doing that, because there are few legit media sources out there anymore that can cover those things. Definitely, you got to be doing that. But then, for me, as a journalist, if you're doing that, then I'm probably not going to be covering it. I'm going to be covering the stuff that's not being told. Which makes me look like an asshole all the time. But is what it is.

Kathie Taylor 37:29

There you go asking the hard questions again. Well, are there any parting thoughts you'd like to give us Bob, as PR practitioners? As far as media relations that we haven't covered?

Bob Conrad 37:45

You know, I guess, know your media sources beat and know what they cover and maybe be extra kind. I mean, I'm not saying I need that, but I get a lot of just really nasty stuff, just unnecessarily. For what, in my opinion, is me or our writers or orders just trying to do their jobs? You know, just asking simple questions to some PR folks is like a great offense. And I just think that's crazy. I mean, it's like if you're offended by basic questions, you're probably in the wrong business.

Kathie Taylor 38:27

Probably true. Bethany. What about you any magic sauce that you want to share with us for working with the media?

Bethany Drysdale 38:34

Well, I kind of want to say ditto, I want to say it's kind of the same. Be kind, you know, we're just trying to do our job and I hate having to write a canned response to things but sometimes I have to, sometimes for legal reasons, I can't say certain things and I have to just give you know, well VAs office is reviewing and will issue more information when we can I mean it, it's no fun, but sometimes we have

to do that. And I think the relationships are really big. Just understand that the reporter is trying to do their job as well and it's okay to ask questions. It's okay to push back and it's okay to say you know, I would love to help you but I can't or it's okay to every once a while mess up, and it's okay to tell your higher-ups. I'm not gonna go correct them on that thing you didn't like just because you didn't like it. It'll serve us better in the long run if we let that slide. And we just move on to the next thing.

Bob Conrad 39:37

I actually do like factual corrections. If we have an error, we're pretty quick to fix those but a difference of opinion. It's not a factual error, which I get a lot. You know, I've had people tell me Oh, your story is full of errors and tell me what they are and they won't. But when we do get that I typically will make a correction. And, because mistakes happen, especially when you're really short-staffed.

Kathie Taylor 40:06

Well, thank you both. This has been illuminating. I really appreciate your time today and again, Bethany, congratulations on being the Communicator of the Year. Bob, thank you for covering the local beat. It's something that we desperately need.

Bob Conrad 40:21

Thank you so much. Thank you. It's great to work with you both by the way.