



SANFORD
UNDERGROUND
RESEARCH
FACILITY

Communicating the SD S&T plan & managing the media

*Adapted from "The Ultimate Media Interview Checklist," from Udemy
and Elena Verlee, creator of PR in Your Pajamas.*

Sources: <http://www.statisticbrain.com/fear-of-public-speaking-statistics> and
http://www.orau.gov/cdcynergy/erc/content/activeinformation/resources/Covello_bridging.pdf

Courtesy of SDSU Marketing and Communications Dept.



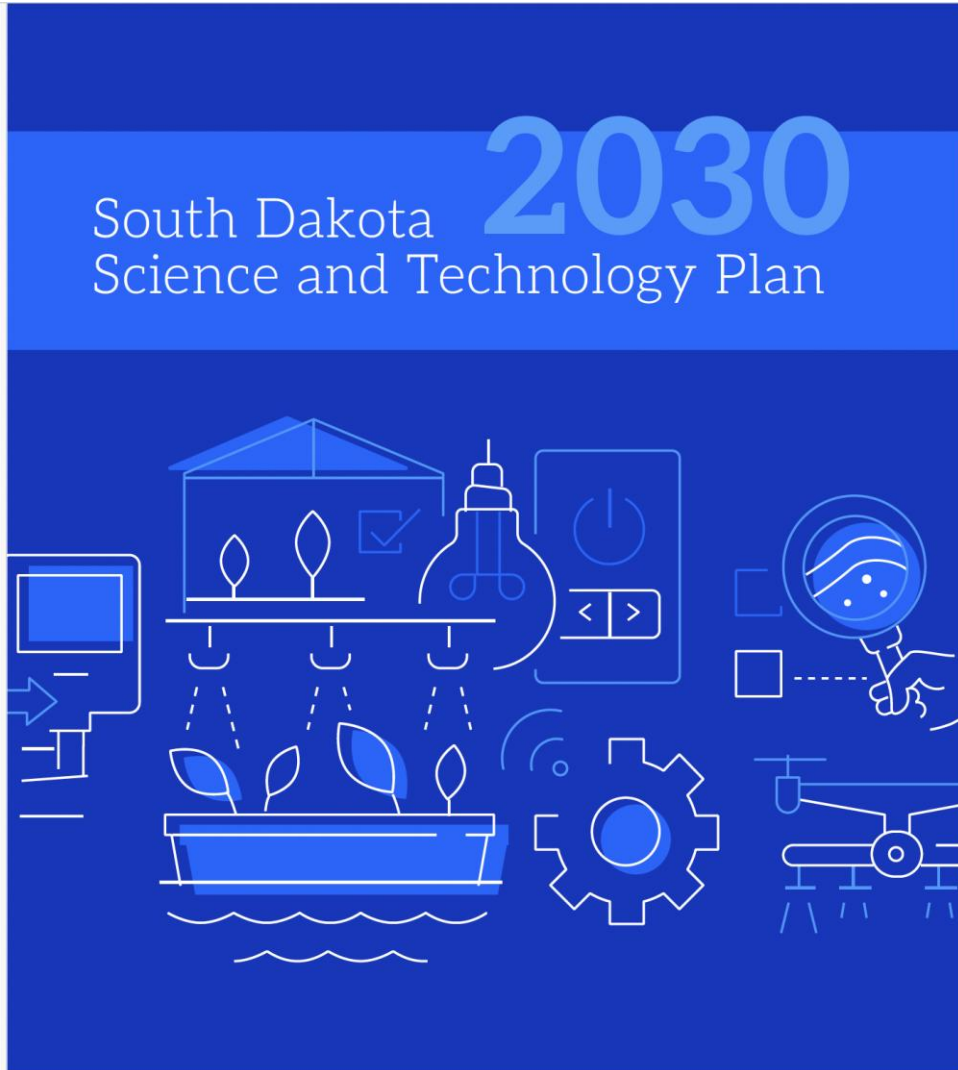
Mike Ray

Media Relations Manager

Over 30 years in journalism and communications

- South Dakota Mines geology graduate
- 24 years as a public radio journalist.
- 7 years in communications with South Dakota Mines
- Grew up in the Black Hills
- I'm passionate advocate for SURF

Strategic Communication Thinking



- 1.) This is a genuine plan
 - a. Focuses on our strengths
 - b. It's up to us to articulate this plan
 - c. We need to create a movement
- 2.) Think about making the case for STEM education and research
 - a. Answer the “why” question
 - b. Develop unified messaging
- 3.) How to wag the dog

2.) Make the case for STEM research—show the ROI



ARTICLE

Geothermal research at America's Underground Lab can bolster U.S. energy independence in the digital age

The deepest laboratory in the United States provides a unique test bed for the study of enhanced geothermal systems.

MAY 08, 2025



ARTICLE

SURF completes Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade with team of South Dakota contractors

SURF recently completed a major upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant, ensuring many more years of clean water in local streams.

OCTOBER 13, 2025



ARTICLE

The future of quantum might just be underground

Quantum sensors and quantum computers may benefit from a reduction in cosmic-ray muons offered in places like the Sanford Underground Research Facility (SURF) in Lead, SD.

JUNE 10, 2025





Why should I care?

Why does research at SURF on dark matter, neutrinos, extremophiles, or geothermal energy matter?

- How do you answer these questions for your research?

Three reasons



Reason 1

The story of the microwave!!



The Arc of STEM Innovation

Theory and
the Language
of the Universe

$$E=mc^2$$

Experimentation
and Research



Engineering
and Design



Technology
Integration and
Improvement





Ada Lovelace

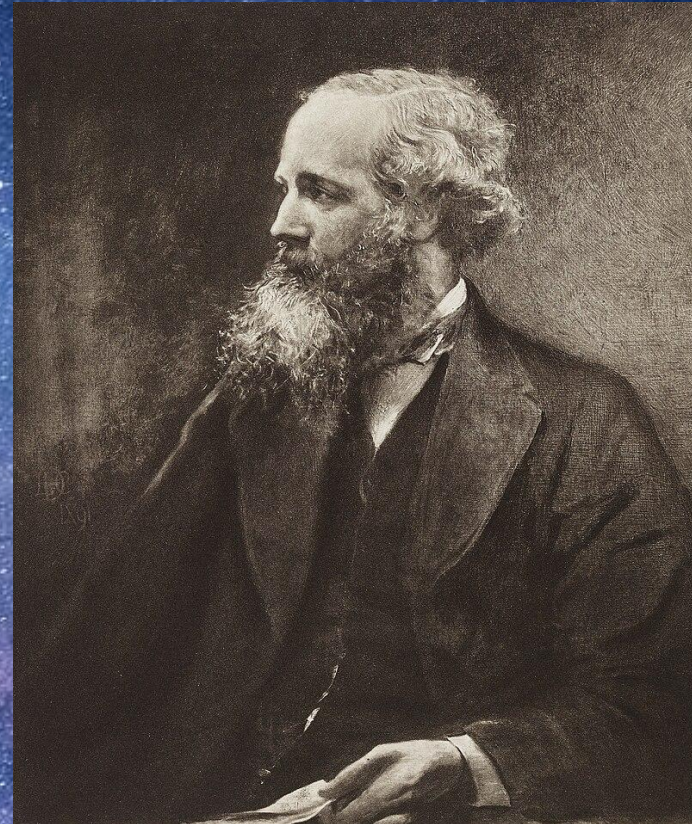
The first computer programmer

**Writing Programs in
the 1840's!!**

**Math is the
language of computers**



The applications might be beyond our dreams



Reason 2

Sputnik

The Russians beat us to space in 1957 and kicked off the Space Race.

We won the Space Race -- with a whole lot of American ingenuity and resources

Today we are in a new version of the Space Race – and its underground

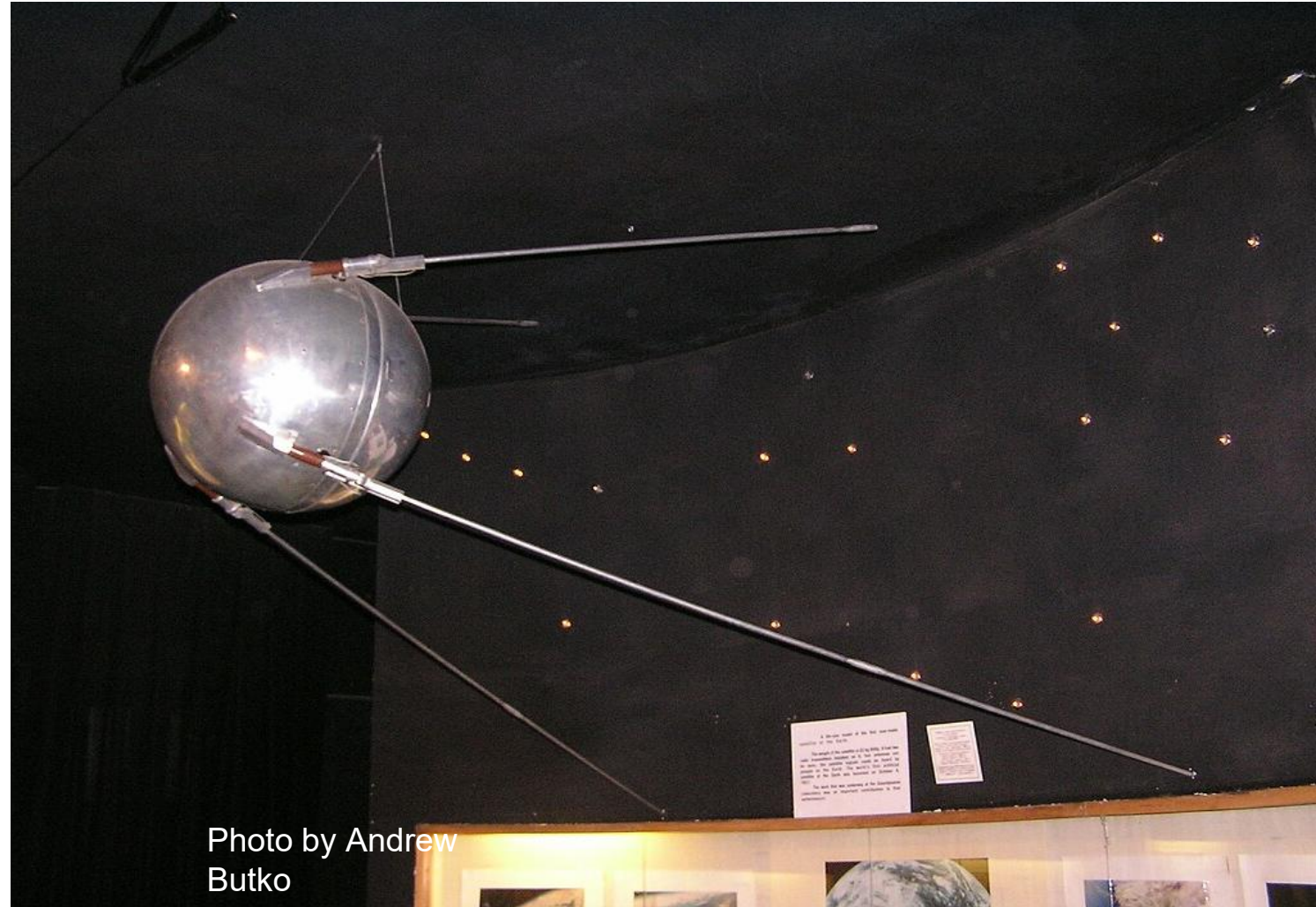


Photo by Andrew Butko



Reason 3



Areas of Economic Impact

In South Dakota and around the world

- Research is industry
- Supporting the world-class science at America's Underground Lab is a large undertaking
- The results of a \$2.2-billion impact and 1200 jobs on the South Dakota economy yields significant income for businesses across the state.
- 17 X ROI to date and climbing



It's up to us to communicate the value of this plan

and work with industry

Strategy

The strategy consists of five key initiatives:

1. Advance technology commercialization and the growth of innovation-based companies in South Dakota.
2. Increase research and commercialization activity at higher education institutions by improving system-level operational effectiveness.
3. Develop a South Dakota “grow our own” STEM talent initiative to expand the workforce pipeline.
4. Launch a 10-year \$50 million state initiative to invest in university-industry research commercialization, faculty, and the STEM talent pipeline.
5. Develop a plan to leverage federal investment to build public-private research and commercialization partnerships in high-priority opportunity areas:
 - cybersecurity and data analytics
 - deep underground science and engineering
 - bioprocessing and precision agriculture
 - clinical research, health care, and computational science
 - critical minerals, environmental science, and water

Managing the Media



1.) Know your audience

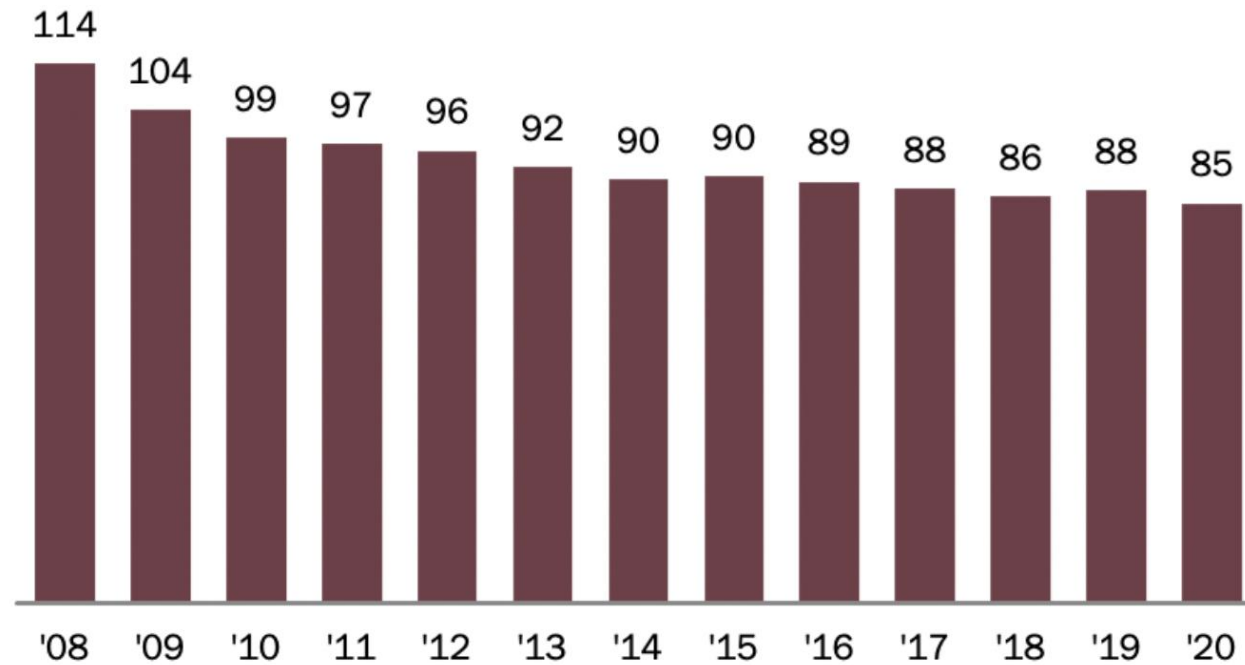
2.) Set the hook

3.) Wag the dog

U.S. Newsroom Employment

Newsroom employment in the United States declined 26% between 2008 and 2020

Number of U.S. newsroom employees in news industries, in thousands

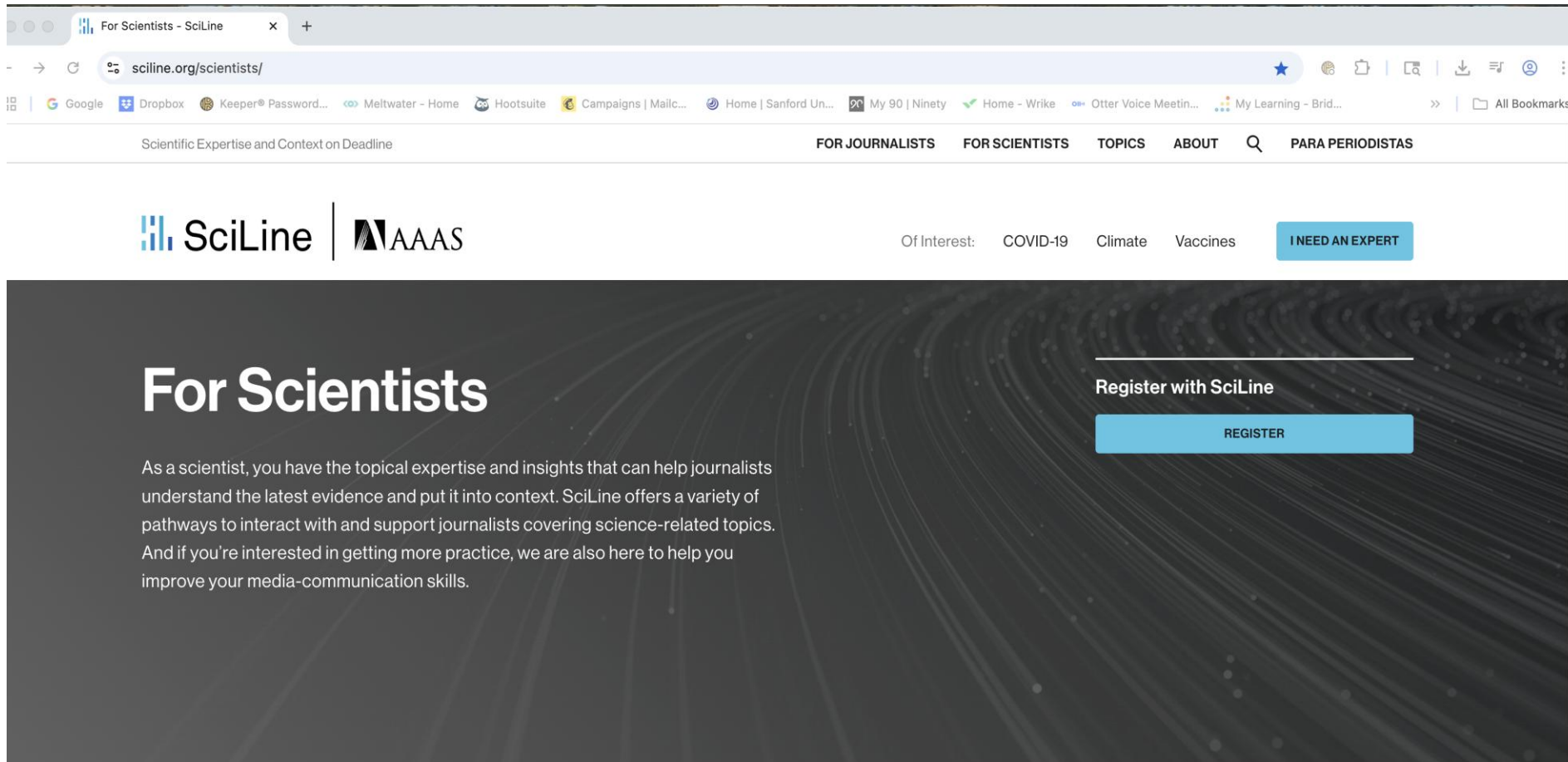


Data & figure from Pew Research Center

Setting the Hook

Check out AAAS SciLine website and extensive resources for scientists

<https://www.sciline.org/scientists/>



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying [sciline.org/scientists/](https://www.sciline.org/scientists/). The browser's address bar and tabs are visible at the top. The website's header features the SciLine and AAAS logos on the left, and navigation links for "FOR JOURNALISTS", "FOR SCIENTISTS", "TOPICS", "ABOUT", and "PARA PERIODISTAS" on the right. Below the navigation links, there is a section titled "Of Interest:" with links for "COVID-19", "Climate", and "Vaccines", followed by a blue button labeled "I NEED AN EXPERT". The main content area has a dark background with a pattern of white dots and lines. On the left, the heading "For Scientists" is displayed in large white text. Below it, a paragraph reads: "As a scientist, you have the topical expertise and insights that can help journalists understand the latest evidence and put it into context. SciLine offers a variety of pathways to interact with and support journalists covering science-related topics. And if you're interested in getting more practice, we are also here to help you improve your media-communication skills." On the right, there is a white box with the text "Register with SciLine" and a blue button labeled "REGISTER".

Scientific Expertise and Context on Deadline

FOR JOURNALISTS FOR SCIENTISTS TOPICS ABOUT PARA PERIODISTAS

SciLine | AAAS

Of Interest: COVID-19 Climate Vaccines I NEED AN EXPERT










For Scientists


As a scientist, you have the topical expertise and insights that can help journalists understand the latest evidence and put it into context. SciLine offers a variety of pathways to interact with and support journalists covering science-related topics. And if you're interested in getting more practice, we are also here to help you improve your media-communication skills.


Register with SciLine


REGISTER

You are the media




















Sanford Underground Research Facility

9.4K followers • 142 following



 Professional dashboard

 Edit

 Advertise

Wag the dog

Science and journalism have a lot in common

- Journalists must publish or perish
- Journalists want to be accurate
- Journalists want to be first









Some things set the two apart

- Journalists publish on a very different time scale
- Nuance matters less to journalists
- Many (but not all) media exist to sell advertising

Media will move forward with or without you

- Be ready to try and convince the reporter whether the story is to is not worth covering
- Be ready to help the reporter switch focus to the better part of the story
- Respond quickly: Reporters need fast turn-around times. They write in less than half a day. Be sensitive to their deadlines.
- If you need to turn down an interview: Recommend a trusted colleague or send them to another expert or field of study
- Set boundaries: If you are only free for 15 minutes at 2 p.m., let them know. Or if you are getting on a plane and can only comment via email – say so.

Before the Interview

1 Clarify the topic 	2 Is the interview: on-camera, in-person or by phone? 
3 Are you the right spokesperson? 	4 Research your company and competitor news. 
5 Get familiar with key trends. 	6 Develop FAQs and answer “What do you do?” in a way your grandmother could understand. 
7 Prepare for tough questions. 	8 Confirm location, time and date – Don't miss the interview! 

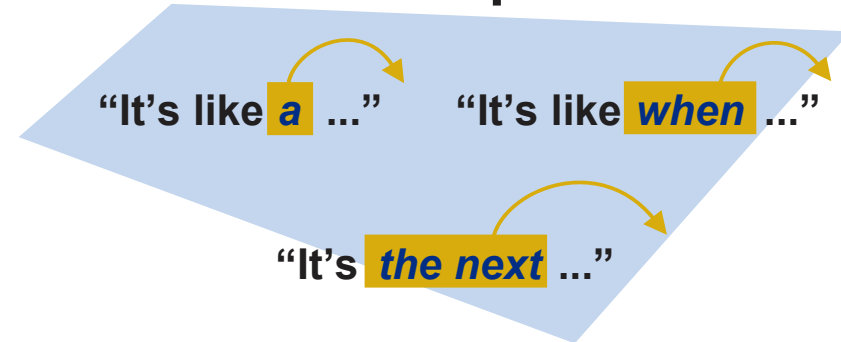
Know Your Key Messages

10 Identify 3 to 5



key messages

11 Use analogies whenever possible



12 Have statistics at hand

Size of the overall market you're in.



Slice of the market you're going after.



Target audience demographics



What influences your target audience.



Trends or give color to your story.



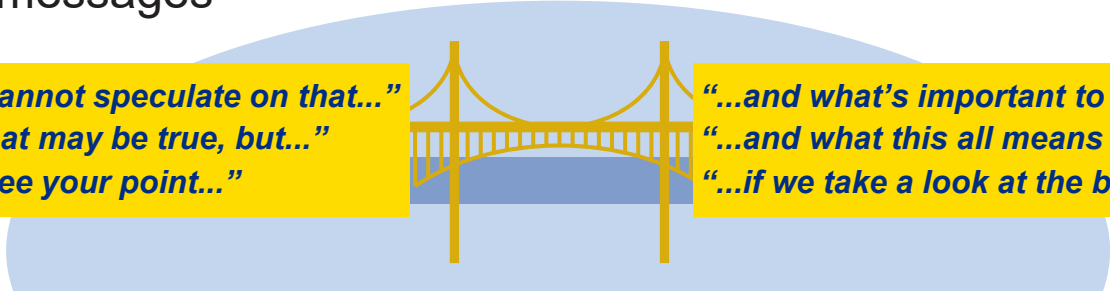
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Practice, practice, practice!



During the Interview

- 15 Eliminate distractions:** Turn off phones, remove change from pockets
- 16 Embrace silence:** Deliver your answer to each question, then stop talking
- 17 Body language:** Speak slowly, smile more, make eye contact
If it's an on-camera interview
Look at the reporter.
- 18 Short is sweet:** Don't talk for more than a minute—ideally less—without a break
- 19 If you cannot answer a question,** use a bridging statement to get back to your messages
- 20 You may not be quoted in the end:**
You may have still driven the direction of the story



"I cannot speculate on that..."
"That may be true, but..."
"I see your point..."

"...and what's important to know is..."
"...and what this all means is..."
"...if we take a look at the bigger picture..."

During the Interview

Control the interview:

- **Talk about what you know and share your passion.** Don't let an interviewer lead you outside your area of expertise.
- **Don't speculate:** Stick with facts.
- **Finish your answers.** Don't let an interviewer interrupt you.
- **Don't offer personal opinions.** Remember, you represent your organization.
- **If you don't know the answer, say so.** You can offer to get back to an interviewer with additional information later.
- **Don't respond to questions based on unknown sources.**
- **Don't ever respond with "No comment."** That can imply you are evading an issue or have something to hide.
- **Don't discuss people or organizations other than your own.** Return to or repeat your messages to regain control.
- **Do not lose your temper, attempt to argue or get into a fight with anyone in the media.**
YOU CANNOT WIN.

After the Interview



Send a thank you note

with any clarifications

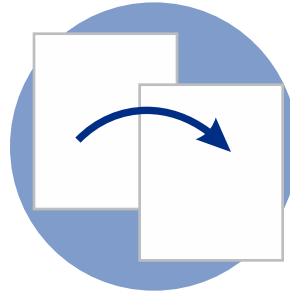
"This may not have come across today..."

"I may have missed telling you about..."

"It might be of interest that..."



Get a copy of the published article (or video, podcast, etc.)



Never complain.

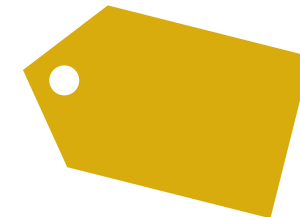
Things change or get cut as the story takes shape.



Ask for corrections to any factual errors or misinformation



Share it on social media and tag/thank the interviewer.





For questions or guidance:
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SANFORD UNDERGROUND RESEARCH FACILITY

The Institute at SURF

Neutrino Day

SURF Visitor Center