

July 1988

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman

RE: Media Attitudes About Executives

The May/June 1988 issue of *Executive Action* summarized the preconceptions executives have about the media. Reporters also have strongly-held attitudes about business people. The list of their preconceptions surprisingly parallels the biases executives voice about the media.

Reporters say that business people:

- Don't trust the media
- Don't permit free access
- Expect reporters to really know how businesses operate
- Don't know what news is
- Are hostile to reporters and their questions
- Are arrogant and self-serving
- Don't care about people very much
- Don't know that reporters don't write headlines or have complete control of the length or content of their stories
- Don't understand that newsroom culture has little use for reporters whose copy flatters the people about whom they write
- Don't want to accept the fact that embarrassment and conflict are almost always newsworthy.
- Don't agree that, though possibly unfair, the media has complete power to set the agenda and define what news is
- Refuse to understand that if the reporter thinks there is trouble, there is trouble.

While these attitudes are probably not a great shock to business people, they do offer several important lessons. As business spokespersons, we must expect that reporters are looking for news, not public relations stories; that reporters have limited power over their stories; and that reporters will not necessarily understand how companies are run or what business goals and objectives are. Understanding the news media will neither change our messages nor our purpose, but it will make us more successful in accomplishing our communications objectives.

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