

# Media Relations: *The Bonner Communications Series*

by Allan Bonner (ISBN: 1-894921-00-3)

Review by Cindy Miller, AMM Communications Coordinator

The media, and how it operates, can often seem like a real mystery. This mystery can turn into fear when you find yourself having to deal with them. The first book in The Bonner Communications Series, *Media Relations*, attempts to take the mystery out of working with the media and to help you and the organization you work for, to prepare for the media and what it is they want.

Communications guru, **Allan Bonner**, centres his book around the SOCKO technique – Strategic Overriding Communications and Knowledge Objective. To summarize, Bonner defines SOCKOs as a way to “help you identify your objective and then stay focused on them.” (page 21)

The first part of the book focuses on background information about the internal workings of media outlets, understanding how the media operates, how stories are constructed and the role your organization

can play in the stories. “Reporters and editors are more likely to use clips of people who know that they’re talking about and can explain issues briefly than those who don’t and can’t. They make choices and you can affect their choice.” (p. 49)

Bonner then takes this knowledge of the media and gives it practical application by providing the steps and tools needed to work with the media such as media kits, news releases, fact sheets, and backgrounders. A very helpful “do’s and don’ts” section is an excellent tool for those who may not have the advantage of a media relations person on staff.

The book then moves into a how-to of interviews, whether it is television, radio, print, new conferences, or scrums. “How you respond [to an interview] will have a direct bearing on whether your media release gets tossed in the waste basket, is filed for future

reference or used as the basis for a feature article on you.” (p. 69)

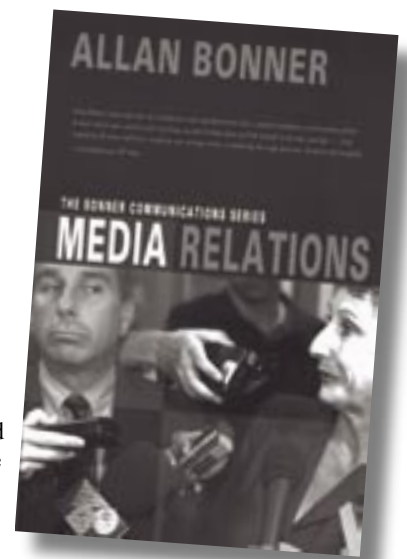
The book then proceeds into the all-important, yet often not thought about, section on how to answer a question. “Do your homework. Anticipate questions,” Bonner advises. “Have answers or reasons for not having answers.” (p. 91)

The How-To section of the book gets into the meat and potatoes of organizing news people. This section even includes diagrams! Bonner discusses how to organize a news conference, how to set-up your news conference room, what to wear, how to mingle, and when to shut it down. He also talks about setting up a media work centre if you find that you have become the focal point of prolonged media coverage (such as during an emergency).

The last section of the book, and probably the most important, is aptly named “When Things Go Wrong.” Bonner provides several solutions to when things in the media do not go as planned. “The solution isn’t to ignore it and hope it will go away. It won’t. Become engaged in the process of shaping your own public image.” (p. 129)

This short, yet concise book offers very valuable appendices. First, it gives you some examples of SOCKOs to help you understand the concepts that were discussed in the book. The second appendix lists some news/media terms and their definitions. Always wanted to know what a stringer is? Well, you will find out in this section. The third appendix is probably the most helpful. It offers 18 various charts and worksheets including a media advisory template, questions to rehearse with your spokesperson, and other checklists for putting together a news conference – very practical, very useful.

Littered with useful anecdotes to help illustrate real-life situations, along with easy-to-read and easy-to-understand language, Allan Bonner has produced a must-have book to anyone that has ever or will ever deal with the media. Preparation is half the battle and this book will provide you with everything you need. ●



**Diamond Software**

**1/3 S**

**bw**

**#2**