



Stanford eCorner

Effective Strategies to Handle the Media

Steve Young, *Former NFL Quarterback*

May 22, 2007

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1770/Effective-Strategies-to-Handle-the-Media>

Young explains how he dealt with the ongoing presence of news reporters throughout his career. He realized that many of these reporters commuted for long hours, only to receive tidbits of information from the 49ers team. By stepping into their shoes, he figured out ways to work effectively together.



Transcript

I learned in the same way with my teammates that the media guy would write things that are tough. They would take things out of context. Think of the guys that come over to the team everyday, the beat writers. They had to come up with a story about the 49ers everyday. I'm in the middle of it all in the locker room. If I had to come up with a story everyday, it's impossible. There are not that many interesting things going on. There's not that much injury. There's nothing that's really newsworthy everyday, but I have to write a story. I was always getting pounded by them and I think they always expected me to come and complain.

"Hey, you're being unfair. You should think about it." I was basically just happy. "Hey, how are you doing, Ira? It's good to see you." He'd just ripped me that morning so he was waiting for and he wanted a tangle. "How are you doing? It's good to see you," because there's no win. There's no way to win. It's not like I'm going to go up to him and say "What you wrote is so crappy. You need to look at it this way." That's what they thrived on. Why even go? It's not like I was going to win him over by being nice. It's just that I didn't see a place to enter and be influential in what was happening. As I did that, I started to see that these guys that were coming out everyday to write stories, everyone thought of them as pariahs hanging around, trying to get some factoid and trying to use it again.

I was like "They're not going away. They're here everyday. They must be looking at us as spoiled rich athletes. How do they see what's going on every day?" It's the same kind of thing with the soft skill. Where are they coming from? I realized that I started thinking to myself, "These poor guys drive down from Napa through traffic, cross the bridge, and get down into Silicon Valley." Driving from Napa to Santa Clara everyday? You've got to be kidding me. They come all the way down here to have these guys tell you nothing. I finally realized that the best thing I can do is give them something. I could give them a little something, something they could write a story about. What a blessing that would be if I had driven all the way down from Napa, fought through traffic and had to write something if the quarterback of the team actually helped me out with this. It wasn't actually about me.

What happened? "You know what, we've got this new grass." The guy who was in charge of the grass - our groundskeeper - was the kind of guy who checked it and actually ate it to see if it was good. He would live in it. He was awesome. Rich was his name. I told him that he had put in this new turf one year on our practice field so that it was more hardy and wouldn't wear out and he wouldn't have to replant it in the Fall when it changed seasons. That day, he talked to Rich and had all the quotes and he had the story the next day. "49ers Cutting Edge of Agronomy" or whatever that is. Is that what it is? I don't know. I think it has something to do with animals. It wasn't like I was trying to have him say "Treat me more than fair."

When I make mistakes, don't pound me." That wasn't even where I was coming from. It was more like "Look, we're in this together. It's like a three-ring circus. My ring's over here and your ring's over there. We don't really intersect because you're doing something completely different, which is talking about things that aren't necessarily true. I'm over here living this life. We're in the same tent. We're in this together. Let's figure out ways to work together where we can make our time more productive. In the end, I believe you'll be fairer.

You'll do the same back."