

Art of media interaction

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Why involve the media?

- Our objective is effective engagement in broadband policy and regulation
- Who should our priority audiences be?
 - Government policy makers
 - Within sector ministries
 - Finance and other ministries
 - Regulators
 - Politicians
 - Key stakeholders

How do you reach your priority audiences?

- In formal settings, such as public hearings or consultations
- Comments on white papers
- Face-to-face meetings
- At conferences attended by decision makers
- Informal interactions

Symbolic universe

- We all live in the physical world; we also live in a symbolic world, constituted by media, new and old
 - Present day government decision makers are mostly influenced by print media
 - Not evanescent
 - Can be clipped and passed around (in some cases, routine services)
 - Not reduced to sound bites
 - Online content lives for ever
 - TV is the most powerful in terms of numbers
 - Radio is the least important
 - New media becoming increasingly powerful

Attention is the scarcest and most valuable resource

- Becomes even more scarce as person becomes more powerful → Hard to get time/attention of the truly powerful decision makers
- How do they make decisions on who to pay attention to?
 - Ethos
 - Will contemporaneous media coverage help?

How do you communicate with media personnel (interlocutors)?

- Prime directive of effective communication: understand your audience (empathy)
- Apply this to media → understand the work processes and requirements of the different media you interact with
 - Not the same for daily print media v periodical print media
 - Different for TV v print
 - New media: are there interlocutors? In some cases, yes
- Focus here on media personnel
 - Differences between editors and reporters (and equivalents in electronic media)
- Think of how much “space” they can give you; what kinds of deadlines they are under; live or edited?



Different dynamics for interviews and op-eds . . .

How do you get on the “Rolodex”?

- Getting the first interaction is key; but the second interaction is the most vital
 - Be accessible
 - Return phone calls
 - Demonstrate empathetic understanding
- They have their own questions, sometimes driven by ideology
 - You want to get your point across, but unless you satisfy their demand they will not let you do it
- Journalists are trained to ask simplifying questions, e.g., what does this mean for the “common man”
 - Do not be irritated but try thinking the issue through beforehand

“Topic windows”

- Media have their own rhythm
 - Most of the time, you have to adjust to it
 - Anniversaries, government actions, big events abroad
 - How can you shape the agenda (not as an individual but as an organization)?

Focus

- You cannot get across too many messages at the same time
- If more than one message, try to connect them

Distortion by interlocutors

- Or by others . . . Case: “Al Gore invented the Internet”
 - “I'll be offering my vision when my campaign begins. And it will be comprehensive and sweeping. And I hope that it will be compelling enough to draw people toward it. I feel that it will be. But it will emerge from my dialogue with the American people. I've traveled to every part of this country during the last six years. **During my service in the United States Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet.** I took the initiative in moving forward a whole range of initiatives that have proven to be important to our country's economic growth and environmental protection, **improvements in our educational system.**”

There was talk of a potential run in the [2000 presidential race](#) by Gore as early as January 1998.^[51] Gore discussed the possibility of running during a March 9, 1999 interview with CNN's *Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer*. In response to [Wolf Blitzer's](#) question: "Why should Democrats, looking at the Democratic nomination process, support you instead of [Bill Bradley?](#)", Gore responded:

I'll be offering my vision when my campaign begins. And it will be comprehensive and sweeping. And I hope that it will be compelling enough to draw people toward it. I feel that it will be. But it will emerge from my dialogue with the American people. I've traveled to every part of this country during the last six years. During my service in the United States Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet. I took the initiative in moving forward a whole range of initiatives that have proven to be important to our country's economic growth and environmental protection, improvements in our educational system.^[52]

Following a 1999 CNN interview Gore became the subject of some controversy and ridicule when his expression *I took the initiative in creating the Internet*^[53] was widely quoted out of context, indeed often misquoted, by comedians and the popular media who took his expression to be a claim that he personally had *invented* the Internet.^[54] But Gore's actual words were widely reaffirmed by notable Internet pioneers, such as [Vint Cerf](#) and [Bob Kahn](#), who stated, "No one in public life has been more intellectually engaged in helping to create the climate for a thriving Internet than the Vice President."^[55]

Former UCLA professor of [information studies](#), [Philip E. Agre](#) and journalist [Eric Boehlert](#) argued that three articles in *Wired News* led to the creation of the widely spread [urban legend](#) that Gore claimed to have "invented the Internet," which followed this interview.^{[56][57][58]} [Jim Wilkinson](#), who at the time was working as congressman [Dick Arme](#)y's spokesman, also helped sell the idea that Gore claimed to have "invented the internet."^{[59][60][61]} Computer professionals and congressional colleagues argued against this characterization. Internet pioneers [Vint Cerf](#) and [Bob Kahn](#) stated that "we don't think, as some people have argued, that Gore intended to claim he 'invented' the Internet. Moreover, there is no question in our minds that while serving as Senator, Gore's initiatives had a significant and beneficial effect on the still-evolving Internet."^{[57][62]} Cerf would also later state: "Al Gore had seen what happened with the [National Interstate and Defense Highways Act](#) of 1956, which his father introduced as a military bill. It was very powerful. Housing went up, suburban boom happened, everybody became mobile. Al was attuned to the power of networking much more than any of his elective colleagues. His initiatives led directly to the commercialization of the Internet. So he really does deserve credit."^[63]

In a speech to the American Political Science Association, former Republican [Speaker of the United States House of Representatives](#) [Newt Gingrich](#) also stated: "In all fairness, it's something Gore had worked on a long time. Gore is not the Father of the Internet, but in all fairness, Gore is the person who, in the Congress, most systematically worked to make sure that we got to an Internet, and the truth is -- and I worked with him starting in 1978 when I got [to Congress], we were both part of a "futures group" -- the fact is, in the Clinton administration, the world we had talked about in the '80s began to actually happen."^[64] Finally, [Wolf Blitzer](#) (who conducted the original 1999 interview) stated in 2008 that: "I didn't ask him about the Internet. I asked him about the differences he had with [Bill Bradley](#) [...] Honestly, at the time, when he said it, it didn't dawn on me that this was going to have the impact that it wound up having, because it was distorted to a certain degree and people said they took what he said, which was a carefully phrased comment about taking the initiative and creating the Internet to—I invented the Internet. And that was the sort of shorthand, the way his enemies projected it and it wound up being a devastating setback to him and it hurt him, as I'm sure he acknowledges to this very day."^[65]

Gore, himself, would later poke fun at the controversy. In 2000, while on the *Late Show with David Letterman* he read *Letterman's Top 10 List* (which for this show was called, "Top Ten Rejected Gore - [Lieberman](#) Campaign Slogans") to the audience. Number nine on the list was: "Remember, America, I gave you the Internet, and I can take it away!"^[66] A few years later in 2005, when Gore was awarded the *Lifetime Achievement Award* "for three decades of contributions to the Internet" at the *Webby Awards*^{[67][68]} he joked in his acceptance speech (limited to five words according to *Webby Awards* rules): "Please don't recount this



Al Gore, Newt Gingrich, and

How does one reduce the chances of distortion?

- Why can't they check with you on the text?
 - Some magazine journalists may
- Your position should be: It's your fault, not their's
- Rehearse the key points (1-3) you want to communicate; get them into coherent sentences; repeat them if possible within the interview
 - But not always possible
- Tape and listen to yourself speak; speak in sound-bites; be ready for effects of editing