

A Day in the life of Public Communications

The Northwest Region's reputation is based on our fine financial performance and our dedication to service/quality. It's also impacted by the media, who play an important role in shaping public perceptions of First Interstate. A small and relatively new department is working to enhance those perceptions; its name is Public Communications.

The department was created in 1994 as part of the region's Bank Relations group. From its offices in downtown Portland, Public Communications serves as the primary link between the news media and First Interstate in the Northwest Region.

Public Communications manages a variety of projects, including publicizing new branches, publishing the annual Report to Customers, writing and distributing quarterly earnings press releases, coaching executives through television interviews and handling media inquiries on a wide range of issues.

Here's a snapshot of a day in the life of this busy department:

9:07 a.m. The phone rings on the desk of Public Communications Manager Susan Thomas. A Tacoma newspaper reporter wants the bank's response to a national magazine article that claimed some banks were "fee-frenzied." Corporate Communications in Los Angeles had anticipated this issue, researched it, and provided the Public Communications Department in each region with key points to communicate in interviews. Susan uses this background to explain that the magazine survey only included 10 percent of the country's banks and points out other inconsistencies in the article.

10:03 a.m. Susan, a former television news director, meets with other bank executives and Oregon Symphony staff members to discuss how to maximize the exposure the bank will receive from its sponsorship of the symphony's float in Portland's annual Rose Festival parade. Also attending is Public Communications Officer Tom Unger, a former newspaper reporter who recently transferred from the California Region's Employee Communications Department. Tom later supplies details on the sponsorship to the Employee Communications Department for use in *First Report*.



12:39 p.m. While she's eating lunch, Susan's beeper goes off. A newspaper reporter in Anchorage has a question about the bank's quarterly earnings before his 2 p.m. deadline. Susan promises to get him the information by then.

1:15 p.m. After lunch, Tom works on a press release about a new business sales manager hired in Caldwell, Idaho. After the release is completed and approved, Administrative Assistant Julie McMorris mails it to the local media. Meanwhile, Susan faxes the requested earnings press release to the Anchorage newspaper. She then contacts other reporters to generate media interest in a \$5,000 grant the bank is making to an Hispanic Business College Fund.

2:30 p.m. Following standard procedure, Security calls Susan to inform her that a branch in Washington has just been robbed, that there are no injuries, and that the branch remains open. As with the majority of robberies, there are no media inquiries about this incident.

4:10 p.m. An Idaho daily newspaper reporter calls to ask if First Interstate offers electronic banking services. Tom researches the topic, sends a two-page memo of background information to the reporter and arranges phone interviews for the reporter with Corporate Electronic Products executives.

5:15 p.m. (Tom and Susan meet to review the day's events. They compile a list of the media calls they received that day and fax it to the Public Communications Departments in the other three regions. The departments share this information daily to track issues the media are covering across the territory.

If you receive an inquiry from the media or know of any potentially newsworthy activities, please call Susan Thomas at 503/220-2846 or Tom Unger at 503/225-2051. They are available 24 hours a day by pager.