



UPDATE

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LET'S NOT EXAGGERATE

This UPDATE is a little different. Instead of giving you lots of good tips and ideas, this one is going to give you some food for thought.

Some elected officer has given us the job of Public Affairs. OK, we are supposed to promote (sell) the USCGAUX and it's purposes. It says so in the oath we take. That is just fine with us, because we are all "gung-ho" anyway. We are proud of our organization and what it does and stands for. So, where's the problem?

The problem is, we sometimes try too hard. We want everyone to see us and know us at our very best. So, we tend to EXAGGERATE. The VE guy wants to give a VSC sticker to every boat they do. Yet, it is the number of exams that count. The OP folks like to judge themselves by how many assists they have rather than the number of patrols they do.

Likewise, we in PA want to see increases in participation shown up there in bright lights on the big AUX Score Board. So we fall back to the old adage, "Let the buyer beware" and advertise "FREE" Public Education, even though they have to pay money. We encourage folks to join us and tell them they won't have much to do and it won't cost them anything. NOT SO. We tend to exaggerate what we do and how important we are.

The list goes on, but rather than me going on, I want to share something I got via e-mail. I usually tinker with these things. I am not going to with this.

Opting for Integrity in Public Affairs & Publications

An Editorial

By Bonnie Morris Schiesswohl SO-PA/SO-PB (DIST and DIV not submitted)

Baseball great, Yogi Berra has made this statement famous. "When you get to the fork in the road—take it!" A homely bit of advice he apparently still uses. But, according to Berra, his phrase was not intended as sage wisdom. Instead, these are words of direction he gives to guests heading up the road to his home for the first time. And either fork gets you there! But most 'forks' won't lead you to the same destination.

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Opting for Integrity in Public Affairs & Publications

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Eventually, every Public Affairs or Publications officer reaches a 'fork in the road' where the decision between being forthright or being illusory must be made.

USCGAUX Public Affairs and Publications officers are obligated to be conscious of *why* being truthful matters. We need to be aware that not all of the talented, experienced people who have the will and potential to make significant contributions as Team Coast Guard members, have expansive budgets, nor boats. Given the financial diversity among new recruits, will you paint a too-rosy "freebies" picture?

Will you tactfully let that potential member know that an Auxiliarist cannot do *much* without an investment in uniform parts and devices? If you choose to promote "free training" as a means of drawing in new members, will you be clear that there are service obligations to actually *share and apply* what is learned?

It is the way we look at issues like these, which broadly determines the way we will present them in our promotional copy.

We Public Affairs folks can be vulnerable; we can easily slip into image marketing, 'the truth be darned!' A half-truth (is this an oxymoron?) can be strongly misleading. And the necessity to backpedal later to adjust a mitigated story line can be exhaustive. Why not save your energy for better use. Say "no" to half-truths. Become the boundary holder. Develop appealing, positive presentation materials that do not exaggerate or make promises that cannot be fulfilled. In the long run, this may influence membership retention. Realistic expectations are not so easily disappointed.

How a press release or a PA story is written is up to you. *You* are the Public Affairs or Publications officer. And, you are, to your ever lovin' personal advantage, a volunteer. You are not held hostage to a paycheck or promise of promotion. You have no need to mislead or misrepresent. Nor do you have reason to.

The Coast Guard is full of heroes. So is the Auxiliary. Look around you. Seek them out. There's an abundance of good things and good people to publicize. When you come to that fork in the road, maintain the path of integrity. The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary deserves it. The public deserves it. And so do you?

Let me hear from you. What would you like to share with all of us? This publication is only as good as you make it. Send ideas, comments, and criticisms to Nick: dsopad7@ucnsb.net