

ANNE KLEIN COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

The News Story That Never Was One in a Series of Award-Winning Solutions

The Challenge:

Prevent an exposé from airing on the CBS-TV “60 Minutes” program about suspected profiteering, misuse of grant funds and conflicts of interest surrounding a university hospital researcher.

Results:

- Through the efforts of Anne Klein Communications Group, CBS researchers and producers became educated enough about the situation to realize they didn’t have a story, and it never aired.
- The targeted university’s reputation remains solid.
- AKCG received a Pepperpot award from the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA for Excellence in Crisis Communications.

Background: *(Due to a confidentiality agreement, we cannot divulge this client’s name.)*

CBS originally approached the university with questions about a promising anti-cancer drug being studied. Initially, the university was thrilled with national media attention for its research program. However, it became evident that CBS was pursuing a different angle. The network focused on a private company where a university researcher was chairman and a major stockholder, and which held exclusive rights to market the drug commercially upon FDA approval. CBS was drawing faulty conclusions from “facts” that appeared damaging out of context. Unless the record was set straight, the CBS story would do untold damage to the university’s reputation. AKCG was called in to address a potentially devastating crisis.

The Campaign:

After quickly assessing the situation, AKCG persuaded the university to take a two-pronged approach; first, provide CBS with extensive and detailed factual information to educate their researchers and demonstrate that what CBS viewed as possible improprieties were in fact entirely proper; therefore, preventing the issue from becoming a story and airing at all. Second, using the same information, prepare strategies and materials to refute the story if CBS did air it.

The agency reviewed voluminous research material assembled by the client and created a Fact and Question outline that organized every known fact and identified information still needed. From this outline the agency wrote a response to CBS and created a press kit for public response if the story were to air.

AKCG recognized a major part of the problem was an apparent misunderstanding by CBS of the process by which new drugs were developed and approved. The team gathered facts from the drug industry and sent two letters to CBS, responding with both broad background and specific detail to the questions the network had posed for the story.

To learn more about how Anne Klein Communications Group can help you respond to intense news media scrutiny, please call and ask for Anne Klein or Chris Lukach.