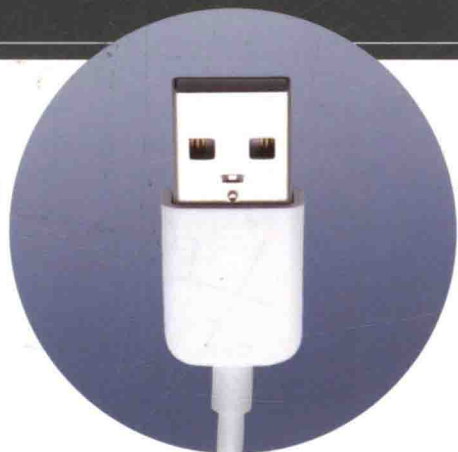


WILLIAM TYSON



PITCH PERFECT

**Communicating with Traditional and Social Media
for Scholars, Researchers, and Academic Leaders**



"In a time of growing scientific, technological and ethical complexity in all aspects of our lives, the need for researchers and the academic community to reach out to the public has never been more important. Bill Tyson has provided the tools for getting important information off the sidelines and into the national dialogue without compromising objectivity and scholarship." —**Thomas S. Litwin**, *Director, Clark Science Center, Smith College*

"Do you want media attention? Then read Bill Tyson's *Pitch Perfect*. Better than anything else I've read, Tyson teaches strategies for presenting yourself effectively to both old and new media. He shows you how and he helps you understand why." —**Douglas Bennett**, *President, Earlham College*

"As an academic publisher, I work with hundreds of scholars, encouraging them to communicate their research to the widest audience possible. With clear examples and telling anecdotes from across the academic disciplines, Tyson gives faculty a map for transcending their circle of peers and spreading the key points of their research to a larger public." —**Marlie Wasserman**, *Director, Rutgers University Press*

"This is a remarkable work, a how-to guide to effective media relations by a pro who has seen it all and done it all. It is a brisk, entertaining tour of a largely misunderstood world and a practical and pragmatic primer on how to flourish in it. Now, instead of talking to people about the precepts of media relations, I will simply hand them this book. It is so valuable I plan on buying many copies." —**Don Hale**, *Vice President for Public Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin*

"Bill Tyson's eminently readable and useful book is a must-read for those scholars, researchers, and academic leaders who recognize that strategic communications planning is not an option, but rather a critical aspect of their ongoing work." —**Joan Dassin**, *Executive Director, Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program*

"The book is a pitch-perfect and lucid presentation of how journalists look at stories and sources, and the whole process. It's the failure to understand that part of the equation that most often derails potentially effective efforts at communication between the academy and the media. With this book as a guide, that doesn't have to happen. Wonderful job." —**Richard Cooper**, *former Deputy Bureau Chief and News Editor of the Los Angeles Times Washington Bureau.*

Bill Tyson—who has been successfully advising scholars and academic leaders on media relations for over thirty years—shows you how to undertake early and thoughtful communications planning; understand the needs and workings of the media, both traditional and digital; and tell your story in a way that will capture your audience.

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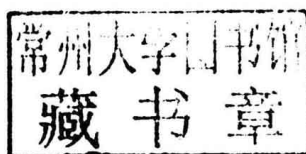
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Foreword by Robert Zemsky



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Praise for *Pitch Perfect*

“The book is terrific. It’s a very clear, very concrete guide to virtually every aspect of dealing with the news media, right down to blogs and Twitter. But what struck me as most unusual—and potentially most valuable—is its pitch-perfect and lucid presentation of how journalists look at stories and sources and the whole process. It’s failure to understand that part of the equation that most often derails potentially effective efforts at communication between the academy and the media. With this book as a guide, that doesn’t have to happen. Wonderful job.”

—*Richard Cooper, former Deputy Bureau Chief and News Editor of the Los Angeles Times Washington Bureau*

“As an academic publisher, I work with hundreds of scholars, encouraging them to communicate their research to the widest audience possible. Each of our authors stands to benefit greatly from Bill Tyson’s book, which explains to scholars how they can best share their findings without dumbing down their message. With clear examples and telling anecdotes from across the academic disciplines, Tyson gives faculty a map for transcending their circle of peers and spreading the key points of their research to a larger public.”

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—*Douglas Bennett, President, Earlham College*

“Reading this book is like sitting down to a long, pleasurable conversation with your own private media consultant. Chapter by chapter, you learn everything from the deceptively simple task of how to frame clear and compelling media messages to preparing for a media interview. Bill Tyson’s eminently readable and useful book is a must-read for those scholars, researchers, and academic leaders who recognize that strategic communications planning is not an option, but rather a critical aspect of their ongoing work.”

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—*Thomas S. Litwin, Ph.D. Director, Clark Science Center,
Smith College*

PITCH PERFECT

To Kris, Andy, Alec, Will, and Joe

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this book was a journey that I started alone, but as I soon realized, it was only for a moment. I quickly found it would be a road traveled with family, colleagues, and friends. It was their stories and my experiences with them that I would tell. Many of these people were present to help me in the writing of this book through their support, insight, feedback, and friendship.

Thank you, Kris, for your love, unwavering support, and beautiful smile after reading my first draft that told me I was on the way. Thanks to my sons, Andy, Alec, Will, and Joe, who never seemed to doubt that Dad should write a book. Their response to the publisher's call: "Cool."

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to my thoughts and discussing ideas with me about the content and direction for the book.

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To my parents.

I give my deep appreciation to all.

FOREWORD

She was as exasperated as I was angry. In those days, Ann Duffield headed University Relations for the University of Pennsylvania. Among the many cats she was expected to herd was an in-house weekly aimed at the university's professional and clerical staff. At Ann's suggestion, the paper's editor had approached me requesting an interview on coming trends in higher education. I agreed to the interview, the editor dutifully appeared, and wrote an article that did nothing to polish my image for either probity or prescience. I knew Ann well enough to remonstrate with her on the hatchet job I thought the story had done on me. The next day, Ann appeared in my office, recorder in hand, and played me the tape of my interview. What I heard was appalling—a wandering monologue that made little sense, frequently contradicted itself, and left the clear impression that I just liked to talk—about everything and everybody. Ann clicked off the recorder and said simply, “Boy, do you need help.”

The next year Ann was helping us establish the Pew Higher Education Roundtable, a collection of some 20-plus Pooh-Bahs whose quarterly gatherings were scheduled to provide the substance for a series of essays to be published as the first issues of *Policy Perspectives*. Ann was the principal designer of the publication as well as the person we had enlisted to help us encourage the media to be interested in what the Roundtable was saying. She

asked all the right questions. Are you really ready to talk to the media? Do you know what you want to say, and do you have the self-discipline to stay on message? And, having reminded me of my disastrous interview of the preceding year, Ann ended by asking, “Are you really ready to ask for help?”

And that is how I came to know and depend on Bill Tyson. In the mid-1980s, Ann had engaged Bill to provide counsel for Penn’s media coverage. Bill had just started his company with David Morrison—Morrison & Tyson Communications—and was just building his reputation as someone who understood how the media functioned, what it took to get noticed, and how not to simply assume others would be interested in what you have to say. As his business grew, Bill had the luxury to become kind of picky as to whom his clients were—he not only wanted them to behave, he wanted them to have something important to say. Part of what Bill helped Ann and me to do for the Pew Higher Education Roundtable was to get the right people to notice what we were doing. One of his first coups was to get us involved with the *Washington Post*, which we hoped would be interested in the inaugural issue of *Policy Perspectives*. In fact, the *Post* made our essay on college costs the subject of an editorial on the very day we were appearing before the assembled presidents of the Association of American Universities, where we argued for a greater focus on cost containment. (One of the lessons I took from that extraordinary piece of serendipity was that Bill also had an “in” with the lords of the dice, though he strenuously denies any connection whatsoever).

Bill’s promises to those of us he has worked with are always the same. “I can’t speak for you. I can’t promise that what you have to say will be of interest to the media. I have no say on how a story is placed. And, by the way, if you can write an op-ed that focuses on your important idea, you will make my task that much easier.”

Though he never promises, he can open doors if you are prepared to walk through them knowing what you are about, knowing what you have to say, and knowing why your message is important.

I have now benefited from Bill Tyson's counsel—and that is what he offers—for more than twenty years. Along the way, he has taught me a host of invaluable lessons that, in turn, have become the substance of the volume you are about to read. In important ways, *Pitch Perfect* is a much-needed primer telling faculty readers what they need to know if they want to make what they know and have discovered important to other people. But this volume is also much more, in that it offers Bill's reflections and musings on what it is like working with faculty who, when confronted by the members of the media, often appear to be deer caught in someone else's headlights. We storm, we fuss, we think the failure of others to notice how important our ideas and findings are is a product of their shortsightedness rather than a reflection of our hubris. Read this volume closely and you will understand what works and what doesn't and why. Just as he does in his practice, Bill the author can help you scale your expectations and focus your energies. Here is a volume truly chock full of practical advice offered in a context that helps make the mysterious rational.

There is a final aspect to Bill Tyson's work—he is an exquisite listener and practiced learner. Bill is forever telling those of us he works with just how much he learns from each of us. No doubt some of those with whom Bill works take his compliments as a good example of what one does in order to build and maintain a successful media consulting practice. I know better. Over these twenty-plus years, I have watched Bill develop an ever-deeper understanding of what the academy is about and what makes us academics tick. If he will allow me, I think I have contributed to

that process, in part by reminding Bill that what a research scholar wants is to have his work noticed in order that it can have the impact it deserves.

Long ago, I told Bill the story of my being interviewed by Arnie Eisen, now the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, but then a senior editor and columnist for the *Daily Pennsylvanian*, the University of Pennsylvania's student daily. Eisen had come to interview me when I was a young assistant professor. He wanted me to talk about the perils and pressures of a world in which you perished if you didn't publish. What I remembered telling him then, and repeated to Bill years later, was that I wasn't so much afraid of the pressure to publish as I was worried that I wouldn't be able to. I had spent a half-dozen years becoming an expert on American colonial history, and I decidedly had things to say, things to communicate. That was the underlying moral of the story. Being a faculty member and researcher is as much about communication as it is discovery. There is a power as well as an arrogance attached to new ideas well presented. My advice to Bill was not to let faculty claim that we didn't want the limelight. What we all want is to make sure that our ideas reach the right audience as quickly as possible.

The book you are about to read is testament to just how good Bill Tyson is at providing the right kind of advice as well as making the right kind of contacts to spread one's ideas. Enjoy.

Dr. Robert Zemsky
Education Professor and
Chairman of The Learning Alliance for Higher Education
University of Pennsylvania