

WHITE PAPER

Media Interviews

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A successful interview will influence how media reports news and provide them with first hand information to develop a good story. Not only does news stimulate awareness of your brand, it also influences perceptions about your products or services. Effective communication during interviews is a must, but can be a challenge if you are not prepared with the right messages and knowledge to make immediate informed statements.

How to Prepare for an Interview

Are you ready to represent your company in a television, radio, print or online media interview? Do you know what reporters are looking for? Are you well-spoken and articulate? Are you accessible for media working within tight deadlines?

If you think you have what it takes to participate in media interviews, take a moment to review the information below. Here are a few things that will help you prepare for a media interview.

Identify Your Audience

Determine who your audience is and make sure your messages align with their needs and/or interests. Also, make sure you have a clear understanding of the interviewer's agenda.

Establish Your Key Messages

Create a short list of key messages (3-5) that you would like to communicate during your interview. These messages should be incorporated whenever possible through analogies and/or stories. If repeated, these will serve as take-away messages for the reporter and your audience. Use plain English and avoid industry jargon that your audience may not understand. As a rule, it is important to keep in mind that nothing is off the record so watch what you say.

Anticipate the Interviewers Questions

Work with your communications advisor or public relations agency so you are prepared for potential questions, concerns or opportunities to enforce your messages.

Dress Accordingly

No matter what type of interview you are participating in, it is important to dress appropriately. Whether you are taking part in a television, radio or other type of interview, you should always dress the part. It is important to avoid clothes with dramatic patterns or design; this could distract the interviewer and viewers.

Incorporate your Brand

Whenever possible, make sure your logo or company name appears behind you (in television interviews) and is repeated during interviews to help to increase brand awareness.

Remain Calm and Speak Slowly

No matter what question an interviewer throws at you, remain calm and collected. If you get nervous, it will be evident on your face and in your voice. Speak slowly and in a conversational manner so you are easily understood. If you are confronted with a question you do not know the answer to, do not make something up or say “no comment.” Simply explain that you do not have the answer to the question and will get back to them. Afterwards, keep your word and get back to the journalist.

Pay Attention to Your Body Language

In the case of in-person interviews, look at the interviewer, not the camera/microphone or down at the ground. Additionally, do not fold your arms across your chest. This could be interpreted as a defensive mannerism. By leaning forward slightly, you can project confidence and interest.

Measure Your Success

At the end of every interview, it is important to listen and/or watch the interview and make note of what was successful and what you can work on for the next interview.

TECHNIQUES TO CONTROL AN INTERVIEW

- *Bridge* – Bridging is the use of a transitional phrase that allows you to reform a negative question in a positive way that enforces one of your key messages. For example: “That is an interesting perspective; however ...”
- *Flag* – Flagging is a way to emphasize an important point by using phrases, body, hand or facial gestures or an accentuated tone of voice. An example of a flag phrase would be: “Most importantly, ...”
- *Hook* – Hooking the conversation is a way of answering a question that leads the journalist to ask another question that you would like to answer. For example: If you say something like “That is just one of the many benefits,” and stop talking, the journalist will be prompted to ask, what the other benefits are.