

ON THE AIR

A Broadcast Media Survival Guide

Delivery tips for media interviews:

1. Be prepared! Find out what the angle of the story will be, and have information available that will tie into it.
2. Greet the reporter with enthusiasm and a readiness to answer questions.
3. State your most important points first. Summarize your main point and get it out in the first 10 seconds or less. News is reported in short “sound bites”.
4. “Bridge” to your key message if you are asked a tough, or off-topic question. This means acknowledging the reporter’s question but then quickly redirect back to one of your key messages.
5. Be concise, but don’t answer just yes or no.
6. Incorporate your organization’s name into your answers as often as practical. And always use your organization’s full name, not just an abbreviation, or acronym. Most people wouldn’t understand what it means.
7. Rephrasing the question as part of your answer will ensure more of your “sound bite” will be used. For example if asked, “how does Lose the Chew week help children avoid using tobacco?”. Your answer could be, “The (Your department name) promotes Lose the Chew week because we have found that it...”
8. If you have more than one point to make, state the number, then answer numbering each point as you go. For example, “This solution demands a three step approach, first it has..., second we will..., and last it will....This will ensure your message remains intact through the editing process.
9. Never use “I”. As a spokesperson, you are representing your organization, not yourself. Only exception is if you are relating a person story that relates to your overall issue.
10. Memorize important statistics to use to underscore your point, but weave them in sparingly.
11. Avoid technical jargon. Make sure your descriptions are easy to understand. So “pulmonary disorders” would become “breathing disorders”. Speak as if people heard your information for the first time.
12. Always emphasize the positives and never repeat a reporter’s negative language.
13. An appropriate anecdote or analogy will almost always be used by a good reporter. Use examples of how your organization is helping people.

14. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Then offer to find the answer.
15. Don't go "off the record". Never say anything to a reporter that you don't want reported. Remember, they are paid to be professional gossips!
16. Don't respond to an unknown source. Don't feel that you have to answer a reporter's presentation of facts from another source.
17. Avoid responding to "what if" questions.
18. Keep personal opinions out of the interview.
19. Never lose your temper.

Dressing for television, how to look your best:

1. Always appear neat and clean.
2. Wear conservative clothing in solid colors. Avoid white or black as they can cause problems with the way the camera adjusts to your face. Also avoid stripes, polka-dots, or any high contrast print. Wear neutral or muted pattern ties.
3. Women, wear natural tone makeup. Even for men, Max Factor pancake in shades #3-#5 are used by most on-air talent.
4. Don't wear a hat. It will shadow your eyes and make you look dastardly.
5. Watch out for any jewelry which might make noise or cause excessive reflections or sparkles.
6. When wearing pants, wear knee-high socks to prevent your leg from showing if seated.
7. Find your best light. Sometimes, media crews will not bring a light and will just shoot you where you stand. Stand, or sit, in a well-lit spot.
8. Find a good background element. This can be a poster or wall with your organization's or project message on it.

Body Language:

1. Relax...you are the authority, the one with the information.
2. For television interview, use your hands to emphasize key points. But use them sparingly as too much motion will be distracting or make you appear nervous. Keep gestures close to your body as you don't know how much of you is included in the shot.
3. Try to stand, you'll have more energy in your speech. But whether sitting or standing, do not slouch.

4. Don't cross your arms or put your hands in your pockets, it sends a negative signal.
5. Look the reporter straight in the eye, not at the camera. The only time you would look directly into the camera is if the reporter was back at the studio instead of in front of you.
6. Don't be stiff, but try not to tilt your head too much.

Voice:

1. Speak directly and clearly into the microphone. But don't be a "bobbing-chicken", the reporter will put the mike where it needs to be...you don't have to go to it.
2. Use vocal inflection...don't talk monotone.
3. Smile. Unless, of course, you are talking about a serious illness or other serious issue. Smile even if you are doing a telephone interview for the radio, it really comes through.
4. Use pauses and silence to your advantage. But keep in mind this can give the radio and television news editor an easy place to cut.
5. In radio, your voice is especially important. It really helps to stand up, you may feel a little silly, but it will improve your breathing and make you sound more natural and alert.

After the interview:

1. Give the reporter a media kit or other additional prepared information. Refer them to your website if possible. And add the reporter to your media mailing/fax list for future news releases.