

Media Interview Tips and Techniques

Introduction

The following outlines several interview tips and techniques to help you prepare, perform and effectively engage with the media. These tips will strengthen your ability to:

- Clearly define your position messages.
- Face interviews with confidence and control.
- Assure that your message gets through to the audience.
- Enhance your relationships with the media.

Media Interview Tips

The following tips are important to keep in mind when preparing and speaking with reporters.

- **Prepare**
 - Do your homework. Familiarize yourself with the interviewer and the audience.
 - Determine the key messages you want to convey and deliver them effectively.
 - Be sure you have the basic facts and messages at your disposal, on index cards, if necessary.
- **Perform**
 - Be conversational in tone, you have a great story to tell and appreciate the opportunity to tell it.
 - Control the interview. Answer challenging questions briefly and return to your own agenda.
Don't wait for the interviewer to bring up your topic. It may not happen.
 - Support your key messages with colorful anecdotes, examples, and evidence.
 - To give yourself a moment of reflection without creating an awkward pause, repeat or rephrase the question before answering. Or, you may use hesitations such as "I'm glad you asked that...", "Your audience might be interested to know...", etc.
 - Remember nothing is "off the record", even if you've said it and the reporter agrees. Say only what you would want quoted and keep confidential information confidential.
 - Immediately correct any inaccurate statements made by the reporter.
- **Conclude**
 - If you don't have the answer to a question, offer to follow-up after the interview to provide additional information and explanation, as necessary.
 - Encourage the reporter to call you for any clarification or additional information.
 - Determine when and where the story will appear.

Interview Control Techniques

The following techniques help ensure that interviews stay on track and touch on the key talking points.

- **Bridging:** Deal with the question honestly and briefly, then move logically to your message:
 - “And let me add...”
 - “In addition...”
 - “What I can tell you...”
 - “That reminds me...”
 - EX: *“What I can tell you is that doctors of optometry are able to provide comprehensive eye exams that can diagnose eye and vision diseases, as well as detect symptoms of conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure.”*
- **Flagging:** Emphasize to the reporter what you want them to highlight — what one piece of information you want them to print or broadcast — by creating a “star” in their notebook.
 - “The most important point here is...”
 - “It is critical to understand that...”
 - “One thing really stands out and that’s...”
 - “The point is...”
 - EX: *“It’s important to know that doctors of optometry, the main providers of primary eye care in America, deliver an essential component of patients’ overall primary health care.”*
- **Hooking:** You can prompt the next question you want asked by ending your response with a “hook.”
 - “And that’s just one possibility...”
 - “We’ve done something no other organization has done.”
 - EX: *“And the great news is that doctors of optometry are geographically accessible and uniquely available to provide Americans’ primary eye care services.”*