

Tips for Television Interviews

Before the interview:

- Develop your message (Problem, Solution, Action)
- Control the Frame (Your analysis of the issue, the frame defines what's in your story)
- Consider getting the opinion of someone outside the immediate group about the clarity of your message. Does it make sense to them? What other details are important?
- Know your talking points and be well practiced—practice in front of the mirror, in front of your friends, and if possible even in front of a camera.
- Be familiar with both the short term (this cycle) and long term (campaign) media strategy and how this interview fits into each.
- Know your audience and know the medium (watch the show, research the reporter, understand who watches).
- Know the interview format and prepare yourself for the specific type of interview.
- Think about what the others interviewed (the “opposition”) will be saying.
- Ask the reporter a series of questions LONG before they ask you any!
 - Find out what kind of a story the outlet is doing (how long, what angle, etc).
 - What topics will be discussed in the interview?
 - Who else is being interviewed?
 - Are you live?
 - When will it air?
 - Where will it appear (and can you leverage that for more)?
- Prepare for distractions and interruptions.
- Choose a focal point for ‘state-shifting’ (an image, a sound or a body stance)
- Visualize the results!
- Warm up your voice and use the music of your voice (tone, intonation, emphasis)
- Image is very important. Be conscious of how you look and the impact of your appearance on your message. ALL of you is the message, not just what you say!
- Choose the right clothes: avoid busy patterns, think polished and a bit more conservative than you usually dress, avoid accessories that are too bright or dangly, be ready for hot lights.

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During the interview:

- Remember you have something important to say. Build up your self-confidence.
- Remember that this is YOUR interview, the reporter needs you for the story!
- There is no such thing as 'off the record' and no such thing as 'off camera' remarks!
- Avoid 'No Comment'.
- It is ok not to know the answer, but refer them to someone who does, and tell them what you want them to know (your talking points!)
- Don't be thrown off by the question; "discipline" the message.
- Don't answer the question, respond by speaking your talking points.
- Speak slowly and clearly and avoid pause words ('um' 'like' 'uh')
- Practice the art of 'bridging'—Build a bridge from the question you are asked to the talking points you have ready to deliver. (Especially important in live interviews!)
- Practice the art of 'flagging'—make statements before your talking points that flag for the reporter and editor that what is coming is the key point. (Especially important in taped interviews!)
- When preparing to answer: Stop, Breathe, Relax, Think, Speak!
- When answering: Listen, Respond, Expand (ONLY if necessary), STOP!
- Don't try to explain everything; stay on your key messages.
- Don't repeat the reporter's questions or phrases.
- Remember that you set the pace and tone of the interview.
- You can often determine the time, place and length of an interview.
- It is ok to ask the reporter to repeat the question.
- If you are not doing a live broadcast, it is ok to start over if you make a mistake. (Let them know you would like to begin again.)
- Know where to look: look at the interviewer, NOT at the camera—unless you are on a satellite 'talkback' style interview, in which case you do look into the camera. When in doubt, ASK where to look. And look at the same place throughout the interview!

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MORE During the interview:

- Know how to hold yourself: if you are standing, straight but not too stiff, no rocking, one foot slightly in front of the other, hands clasped in front or behind you, or on the podium. If you are sitting, sit up straight a few inches away from the back of the chair and watch out for how your clothes may bunch up. Always avoid fidgeting and excessive hand motions, don't tap your foot or your pen, don't touch the mike or your hand piece.
- For satellite 'talkback' style interviews: assume you are always being broadcast, even before the interview begins or when the host is talking to other guests. Don't be afraid to interrupt the host or other guests that you cannot see. You can request a monitor, but it can be distracting!
- Don't worry, the movement will not collapse if you mess up your sound-byte!
- Keep love in your heart, and let it come through in your interview. Let your integrity show!

After the interview:

- Debrief with others; how do you feel about the interview? What did they think?
- Watch yourself (request a copy or have someone record it!) and evaluate how it went: notice which bytes made it, did they ask the questions you were expecting, did you control the frame, did you stay on message?
- Leverage the interview! What can you do with the video to further your goals?
- Practice some more based on what you learned!!!

Good Luck! I'll See You In The News!

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