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Top 20 Ways To Prepare For & Give a Media Interview

By Hollis Thomases

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Imagine your good fortune: you've been contacted by a member of the press (newspaper, radio, tv, Internet, whatever) and they want to interview you! What a great publicity opportunity! You accept gladly, but after the initial thrill wears off, panic sets in at the prospect of being interviewed. "What will they ask me? What will I say? Will I sound intelligent and knowledgeable, or idiotic and incompetent?" Relax — this article is going to help get you prepared and calm your fears.

On Being Asked for an Interview

When you are first contacted about an interview, definitely "milk it" — sound eager and interested, not indifferent or disinterested. Encourage the reporter in his/her selection of you as an interview candidate. Marshall up your confidence — think to yourself, "I am the best and most qualified person for this interview."

It's also ok to be inquisitive — if you're going to be giving of your time and expertise, it's natural to want to have a full understanding of who this person is, what media outlet they represent, where your interview or quotes will be published or broadcast, what the angle of the interview will be, and how long the interview will last. You should always allow yourself the opportunity to refuse the interview if you feel at all uncomfortable about the subject matter or the media for which you would be interviewed. Proceed with caution because, after all, it is YOUR reputation that will be on the line.

Preparing for the Interview

Once you've agreed to the interview, you want to get prepared. Here's how:

1. Familiarize yourself with the show, publication, etc. before the interview. Get to know the reporter, the interview format, and the audience.
2. Prepare questions in advance that you feel the interviewer might ask you. It might help to have a friend or co-worker do a dry run with you beforehand.

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3. If there are certain points you want to get across (or messages you want to "plug") be sure to determine them in advance. Then, during the interview, you need to look for opportunities to get these points out and weave them into your response.
4. Have ready any press releases, bios, photos, video clips, sound bites, etc. that you can provide to the reporter to back up your statements or enhance the final interview piece.
5. If you're being interviewed for television and it's on an important topic for your company, you may want to hire a professional media trainer. This person can help you create your message, answer questions in a poised and effective way, and even show you how to gesture while speaking.

Giving the Interview

Our list continues with must-do's to keep in mind DURING the interview:

6. Generally give short answers rather than long, drawn-out ones. Get to the point.
7. Don't linger on a particular question too long. If you can, lead your answer into another related topic YOU want to discuss.
8. Correct the reporter/interviewer if s/he states something incorrectly, particularly if the statement is directly about you or your company. Make sure the reporter gets the facts.
9. If you do not know the answer to a question do not act like you do. Be honest. Even better, offer to find the answer for the reporter — by doing so, you'll make a fast friend.
10. Wait until after the interviewer is completely finished with a question before replying. Do not interrupt.
11. Do not become defensive when asked negative questions or and/or are confronted in a harsh manner. Stay positive. Offer solutions. Give facts.
12. Be polite and charismatic. Be genuinely nice.
13. Most importantly, remember that you are always, unless you indicate otherwise, "on the record." This means that everything you say, even if it's in an off-handed way, can be quoted (and most likely will be if it's a colorful or controversial remark). In other words, still keep your guard up no matter how charming or inviting an interviewer may be.

For specific kinds of interviews, there are a few other things you can do to prepare. For example, for telephone or radio interviews:

14. If a reporter calls you for an interview, ask what his/her deadline is. If it's not immediate, see if you can buy some prep time by asking the reporter to call you back in an hour or more.

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15. Make up your own list of bulleted notes. No one will ever know you are using a guide.
16. Use descriptive words so that your listeners or interviewer fully comprehends what you are saying.

The somewhat more intimidating television interview requires even more thought and advanced planning. You have to take into consideration clothing, makeup, your facial expressions, how you speak, etc. More helpful hints include:

17. Avoid wearing patterned fabrics and/or solid black, white, or red. Blue tones are a safe bet.
18. Maintain good posture while being interviewed but don't look overly stiff.
19. Look directly at the interviewer rather than at the camera.
20. There's no need to yell into the microphone --- the audio crew will adjust your volume.

So now that you're prepped and rarin' to go, is it time to give 60 Minutes a call? ;->

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Preparing For Your Media Interview

By Judy Jernudd

Media interviews are an important part of an overall public relations campaign. Any size company from entrepreneur to Fortune 500 can benefit from media interviews. Always arrive for a media interview prepared and early. We've seen competent CEOs drown in uncharted media waters. Being unprepared guarantees you won't get asked back. When you are contacted for any kind of media interview ask the following questions: What is the angle of the interview? Is the interview for Television, Radio, Print or the Internet? Will the reporter be interviewing anyone else for the same story? How much time will you have for the interview? What is the date the story will air?

Keep adding questions to your own checklist to help you prepare for your interviews. The following tips will help you:

- Tip 1: Preview any show or publication before your interview.
- Tip 2: Know what you want to talk about so you get your main messages across.
- Tip 3: Prepare for the questions you expect to be asked.
- Tip 4: Create 10–15 second sound bites that are memorable and get your point across.

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Tip 5: Understand colors and styles that are effective for on camera interviews.

Tip 6. Create any graphs, photos, or video to enhance your story in advance of the interview.

Being prepared and knowledgeable about your impending interview will boost your confidence and help you get the most from your media experiences.

Judy Jernudd is the CEO of STARtegitic, a Media Consulting and Coaching firm in Beverly Hills, California. Companies that benefit from STARtegitic Media and Presentation Coaching include IBM, Mobile Corporation, Dow, NASA and the United States Postal Service. Judy is the author of "Media Star Power ABCs to Successful TF, Radio, Print & Net Interviews." More information can be found at:

Preparing For Your Media Interview

15 Ways to Win a Job Interviews

What to Say When the Media Calls

Media Star Power Book Review

The 7 Tough Job Interview Questions That Can Make or Break You – and How to Answer Them

The Ultimate Guide To Acing ANY Job Interview

The Classified List

147 Killer Epublishing Strategies

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