



75 STEPS TO PREPARE FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

THE **PR** GROUP

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FOREWORD

This booklet is a compilation of tips, rules and advice from clients, hosts and producers, reporters and other media experienced people we've worked with over the years.

Whether you're a prospective client, a new client or a client who has been around a long time, we're happy to share this collection with you!

And please feel welcome to send us info you think others would benefit from, which hasn't been included here.

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GENERAL TIPS FOR BROADCAST MEDIA INTERVIEWS

- Define your message. Look over your interview sheet or press release and prepare yourself for the main talking points.
- Determine three to five main talking points and list them on a sheet of paper by importance.
- Have a summary sentence prepared to answer questions such as, “Do you have any final advice for us?”
- Anticipate both positive and negative questions. Remember that the host/anchor is not required to stick to the questions provided.
- Before the interview begins, you should know who is conducting the interview and familiarize yourself with their style or reputation.
- Do not use big words or jargon the audience is unlikely to understand. Always use simple terms and short sentences, and approach the content of your information from the public’s point of view.
- Take your time when answering questions; give yourself a moment for reflection without an awkward pause by rephrasing the question before answering, if needed.
- Do not say “Umm.” It is very distracting.
- Some interviewers conduct interviews with an equal communications exchange. With these hosts/anchors, speak one to three sentences at a time and allow them to talk back. You will also find that some interviewers do all the talking and some will let you do all the talking.
- You can usually anticipate a negative question when it is preceded by an inaccurate lead-in statement. When answering, correct any inaccuracies and neutralize the negative with a simple fact, then bridge to a few points that present a positive view.
- Speak truthfully. A minor misrepresentation can be problematic and jeopardize your credibility. If you misspeak, stop and correct your statement for the record.

- Be sensitive about political views. If you are discussing a controversial political issue, always try to acknowledge that the other side has some good points. Remember that audiences can be diverse. By “giving and taking,” you will win credibility points with your entire audience.
- Be culturally sensitive. Again, take into consideration the viewpoints of the audience you’re talking to.
- Tie into a local angle if possible. For example, if your book is about real estate, talk about the real estate values in that particular city. By localizing the message, you are reaching the audience members with information that is real to them. More importantly, you keep them tuned in and interested.
- Research current news topics and become well-versed in the news that relates to your topic.
- You are the “expert” on your topic. Don’t be caught unaware of a current or breaking news story that pertains to your interview.
- If the host has not mentioned your website, product, book, and/or contact info by the middle of the interview, jump in and say: “By the way, if anyone would like more information, call us at 800-000-0000 or go to www.yourwebsite.com.”
- Your job is to inform, educate, entertain and inspire. The host/anchor wants you to be an interesting guest for his or her audience, and that usually means providing the audience with useful information. It is acceptable to offer useful information along with information about your product. What is not acceptable is a product commercial. The best approach is to balance product information with news, statistics and entertainment.
- If you have to miss an interview, please be considerate of the producer and host/anchor by letting them know ahead of time. They have to fill the empty air time, so a last-minute cancellation notice may be very difficult for them.
- If you had a positive interview and/or established a special rapport with the host/producer, send a thank you note or thank you email.

TIPS FOR RADIO INTERVIEWS

- Be cautious when using a cell phone. Cell phones can be unreliable for an on-air interview and cause your interview to be cut short due to loss of reception or poor connection.
- If you use a landline for your interview, disable the call-waiting feature if you have it. If you have a two-line phone, turn the ringer off the line you won't be using.
- Conduct a radio interview in a quiet place.
- It is a good idea to record your interviews for critiques or to post them on your website and social media pages.
- Have a hot cup of coffee or tea as well as a large glass of water available, in cups with tops. Throats constrict and cups spill.
- If you know anyone in the listening audience, and it's a call-in show, have the person call in with a question.
- At larger radio stations, they might record the interview and play the parts they like. It may be a bit disconcerting because you can hear yourself being interviewed in bits and pieces. Just concentrate.
- If you've been set up to initiate the interview, call a minute or two early just to give them the comfort that you're there and ready to go.
- If the interview has been set up to have them contact you to initiate the interview, and you don't hear from them within a minute or two of the pre-arranged time, give them a call. They could be running behind or just need the reminder that you're ready to go. A call from you will be appreciated and ensure that the interview still happens as scheduled.

TIPS FOR TV INTERVIEWS

- You have a few minutes to tell your story, and studies have found that the average TV sound bite is approximately seven seconds. Create your sound bites and practice with a stopwatch. By practicing, you can also eliminate audible pauses such as “um,” “like” and “you know.”
- Spend time identifying specific examples that help make your message personal. You can tell your story by using examples, anecdotes, and graphics. Telling stories helps break your conversation into sound bites.
- Recognize that anything can happen in TV news. Don't be surprised if an in-studio interview changes to a satellite hook-up or an interview that was supposed to be taped is suddenly live. Breaking news can postpone your interview, so flexibility is a must.
- TV interviews usually take place in the early morning, so whenever possible, drive past the studio the day before. You'll have a lot on your mind before the interview, so if you don't have to also wonder if you're driving in the right direction or walking into the correct studio door, it'll be one less thing to have your attention on before the interview.
- Arrive early rather than late.
- Arrive with your make-up on and almost ready to go. Most shows have a green room, which includes a mirror and a place for you to touch up your make up. National shows usually have make up artists available to you.
- Turn off your cell phone, spit out the gum, remove coins from pockets and don't hold a pen.
- Avoid chairs that swivel or rock.
- Be an active participant. TV observes everything, especially posture, energy and facial expression. Watch the delivery of news anchors, and you'll see how much they accentuate what they say with unspoken cues.

- Make and hold eye contact. The more your eyes move around, the more uncomfortable your audience will become. The underlying message is that you are either trying to hide something or you are unsure of yourself. A powerful, steady gaze speaks volumes about your trustworthiness.
- Occasionally look at the camera (in a natural way). The conversation is also with the viewers at home.
- Watch excessive hand gestures and smile.
- If the opportunity presents itself, ask for a copy of your segment while you're in the green room before the interview. Otherwise ask for it as you're leaving. Most of the time, they'll give you the name of the service they use where you can order your copy. The cost is between \$35 and \$150, per show. Once in awhile, they will be kind enough to give you a copy right there on the spot, so it's good to at least ask.
- Leaving your products or books behind for one or more of the production staff or anchor can be nice, although every once in a while the media will have a "no gifts allowed" policy – make sure to check. If you have a book, sign it.

YOUR APPEARANCE ON TV

- Make sure your appearance is consistent with your message. If your message is sober and serious, dress in a dark suit. If you want to be seen as hard working, roll up your sleeves. If your message is fun and informal, leave the suit at home and dress casual.
- Find out the background color of the set, and dress in a complimentary color.
- Avoid clothing patterns such as small checks and pinstripes.
- Avoid highly reflexive materials and clothes that make noise when you move.
- Avoid clothing with large geometric shapes or patterns.
- Try to avoid black, white or red.
- Make sure your clothing is comfortable.
- Always keep double breasted jackets buttoned. Single breasted jackets can be open, but not too wide.
- Make sure a lavalier or lapel microphone can be attached to your clothing
- Avoid shiny or jingling jewelry.
- If necessary, wear eyeglasses, but avoid shiny frames, tinted glass and glass that darken in bright light.
- If wearing glasses, tip the bows of your glasses up slightly off your ears. This angles the lenses down to reduce a glare.
- Wear face makeup – this also applies to men. Makeup has the practical purpose of reducing the glare of TV lights.
- Bring your own makeup with you.
- Don't wear vivid red lipstick or lip gloss. Stick to softer tones. Dab lips with a little powder, if you want to reduce the shine.
- Remember that studios are kept cool to negate the effect of the hot TV lights.

- Bring a handkerchief or tissues to dab perspiration during breaks. Consider dress shields if you perspire easily.
- Make sure your hair will stay where you want it.
- Don't second guess the camera. Act as if you are always on screen.

WORKING WITH MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

Your message has more credibility as editorial material than as an ad. In other words, news articles are more prestigious, so you want to make the most of these editorial opportunities. The rules for working with print media journalists, editors and writers are different from the rules you use when working with broadcast media. Investigative newspaper reporters can be more antagonistic than magazine or trade-journal editors, who tend to be friendlier. Among the different media, broadcast journalists are talented verbal communicators, while magazine and newspaper journalists are talented writers. The most important tip is to be considerate of the different personality types and talk with each journalist in a way that makes it easy for him or her to talk with you. Additionally, take into consideration the following tips:

- If you're emailing a journalist, never send an unexpected attachment.
- Be certain your facts are accurate. If you need to double check your facts, let the journalist know ahead of time.
- Don't quote statistics or studies without being able to show documentation if asked.
- Refer the journalist to your website.
- Provide photos and graphics whenever possible.
- Notify the journalist when a sample or demo product is being sent.
- You may or may not be allowed to check the article before it goes to print.
- Be yourself. Relax and be conversational. Having a correct amount of energy and enthusiasm will make the interview more interesting. If you're not interested, the journalist won't be either.
- There is no such thing as "off the record" when talking to the media.
- "I don't know" is a better way to say "no comment."

- If you have a good reason for not answering a question, let the journalist know what the reason is.
- Never argue with a reporter. You will probably lose.
- Have your information and facts ready at interview time. Journalists work on strict deadlines.
- If you're offering to give away anything free to readers, such as a booklet or product, let the journalist know during the interview and allow him or her to decide if they will include it in the story.
- Be available after the interview in case the journalist wants to contact you.
- The lead times for print media can be long, especially for magazines and trade journals. Some writers usually work two, three or even six months ahead of the issue date.

RECORDING YOUR RADIO INTERVIEWS

As a new radio spokesperson, it is important to get copies of your initial radio interviews to learn from your mistakes and become better and more experienced in the future. Unfortunately, it is highly unlikely for radio stations to provide interview copies due to lack of time, budget and staff. To ensure getting your copies, go to your local computer store (i.e. Best Buy or Radio Shack) and purchase a recording device that can be hooked up to your phone and/or computer.

WHERE TO GET COPIES OF YOUR TV APPEARANCES

Check if the show is able to provide a copy of your TV segment. If this isn't possible, ask for a recommended local monitoring service.

If you don't easily find a local monitoring service that has recorded the show you want, search online for "video monitoring services" or call Metro Monitor within 30 days of your aired interview.

- Metro Monitor
1-800-861-5255
www.metromonitor.com

WHERE TO GET MAGAZINE & NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Search the internet with relevant keywords from your press release and/or consult the following companies for their clipping services and fees:

- Cision
866-639-5087
www.cision.com
- Metro Monitor
1-800-861-5255
www.metromonitor.com
- Burrelles/Luce
1-800-368-8070
www.burrellesluce.com

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