



HOW TO HANDLE THE MEDIA TYPES OF INTERVIEWERS

Interviews

The main situations where you will face the media in either face-to-face or direct contact interviews are on the television or when giving a telephone interview. Telephone interviews can either take place in a studio or may be what's called "down the line" – which simply means over a landline. Press conferences are another occasion when you are likely to come in direct contact.

Meeting the media – the do's and don'ts of interviews

Do

- Tell the truth
- Keep to the point
- Be sure of the facts
- Be positive and direct
- Keep your message simple
- Be informal and spontaneous
- Light up your message
- Let your voice sell the message
- Be brief and clear
- Use the questions as pegs for your answers
- Look at the interviewer
- Tackle distractions or untruths at once
- Beware of speaking off the record

Don't

- Give a journalist information 'off the record'
- Shoot from the hip
- Get drawn into areas you don't want to discuss
- Be arrogant or pompous
- Use jargon or waffle
- Say 'no comment'

Types of hostile interviewers

By and large television interviewers do not seek an adversarial relationship with their guests. In some circumstances, though, interviewees may find themselves facing hosts who view them as opponents. Good media training includes preparation in handling any of several hostile interviewer types.

The machine gunner

This interviewer will often fire off an entire series of questions, then sit back to watch the interviewee squirm. The way to handle this is to answer only one question - the one that can best be used to make a transition to your communication objective. No one is obligated to perform verbal gymnastics by answering every single question.

The interrupter

The interrupter never lets the interviewee complete a single thought. He or she is right in the middle of a very productive statement when the interviewer chimes in with another question. Interviewees who let that happen never get to complete the great idea they were in the midst of developing. The conversation drifts to another topic.

Interviewees have two choices when dealing with the interrupter. They can stop, listen patiently to the new questions, suggest that they'll address that topic in a moment, and continue their thought with "as I was saying..." Or they can ignore the interruption, complete their thought, and then address the interviewer with "Now, you asked me something else. What was it again?" In either case the interviewee keeps the initiative and retains control.

The paraphraser

The paraphraser is the antagonistic interviewer who incorrectly (and unfairly) restates everything interviewees say, subtly altering their responses. They should deal with this by patiently correcting the interviewer and restating their case.

The dart thrower

Probably the most dangerous type of interviewer, the dart thrower attempts to convict interviewees by innuendo. Interviewees should never answer a dart thrower's question without first addressing the innuendo. Ignoring it is a sign of acceptance. Interviewees should say something like "Just a minute, David, before I respond to your question, I must object to the form in which it was addressed..." No hostile comment should go unanswered.

The red rag

Don't charge at it when it's waved at you. That's what the interviewer wants you to do. If an interviewer asks what seem to be rude or hostile questions, he or she may be trying to provoke you into losing your temper. You might say something that you would later regret.

Fellow interviewees

There may be occasions when the interviewee is a guest on a television talk show with another guest of an opposing viewpoint. Most times an informative debate will result, and the interviewee will enjoy the challenge. But it doesn't always work that way. Sometimes a debate opponent will take on the characteristics of a machine gunner, interrupter, paraphraser or dart thrower. The techniques for dealing with these types of debate opponents are the same as with similar interviewers.

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