

Preparing for a Media Interview

© 2006 Make Hay Communications

Before the Interview

- Avoid going into a media interview 'cold' – prepare yourself. If a journalist calls for your comments ask if you can call back or set an appointment. This allows you to collect your information and your thoughts. Keep in mind, journalists have deadlines – respect them.
- Before an interview ask what subjects the journalist wants to cover; who he or she is reporting for and when the story will appear; what other sources of information they will be using and who else is being interviewed.
- Develop your own strategy for the story by deciding on the key messages (2-3) you want to get across and how you can work them into the interview.
- Think about the types of questions that could be asked and have your answers ready.

During the Interview

- Speak in a language everyone understands. Don't use 'jargon.'
- Be brief and concise. Put your most important message first and learn to talk in statements. Avoid run-on-sentences. This is especially important for radio and television interviews which want short (6 second) clips, not long explanations.
- When you've answered the question or made your messages, stop talking! Resist the urge to fill 'dead space'.
- Don't get bogged down in statistics and numbers – especially on radio and television.
- Don't repeat a journalist's buzzwords. If a reporter asks questions using loaded or negative buzzwords, do not give credence to them by using them.
- If a question is not completely clear, you can rephrase it.
- There is no such thing as "off the record," assume that everything you say may be used.
- Don't argue.
- Make literature available to the media and offer to send them additional information that they can use for this or future new stories.

Audience Action

- If you want people to take actions from your media experience, then make sure to state this as explicitly as possible.
- Point out the benefits the audience will reap from taking the action you advocate.
- Ask the audience to do something immediate and specific.