Media and Message Training
2020
Media and Message Training Objectives

- Understand benefits of media relations
- Prepare for the interview
- Identify spokesperson and define their role
- Learn techniques for confident and controlled interviews
- Practice interviewing skills and message delivery
The Importance of Media Relations

- Vehicle to reach your target audiences
- Raises awareness of your organization, event, need, call to action, etc.
- Effective way to reach large numbers of people
- Shapes public opinion, providing “objective, third-party” endorsements
- If you don’t talk … others will
- Maintain solid reputation
- Reach influencers
- Establish trust and credibility
- Offer “your side of the story” in a controversy
- More credible and affordable than advertising
What the Media Wants

- To be the first to write/tell the story
- Quick access to top executives and experts
- Data to prove trends/claims
- Real-world examples/case studies to illustrate the story
- Concise communications
- Both sides of the story
Before the Interview - prepare

• **Know** the publication/program/outlet, the topics they cover and their interview format
• Know the **key points** of what you want to communicate
  • Do not memorize a script, but you can have talking points
• **Anticipate questions** and work out responses
• **Practice** answering questions out loud
• **Cover tough areas** ahead of time
The Best Interviews are:

- Positive
- Concise
- Simple and straightforward, free of jargon and acronyms
- Focused
- Relatable to the audience
- Supported by data/statistics

Keep in mind that both you and the reporter have a job to do, and together you can help tell important stories. Don’t worry if you are not a “polished interviewer,” they will help cast you in the best light!
When being interviewed, you are:

- The most credible source of information on the topic
- The “face” of the organization at the time
- Bringing a “human element” to the topic and/or organization
- Key to sharing the message
When initiating a “media pitch”/ interview:

- **Know** the publication/outlet, the topics they cover and their format
- **Determine** story angle and participants
- **Prepare** participants by providing talking points
- **Review** reporter background/past coverage
- **Have** high quality photos and/or video available
- **Refer** to sample talking points
Interviews are really a three-way communication between:

- You
- Reporter
- Reader, viewer or listener
Exerting Control

We cannot control
- The questions
- Who else the reporter talks to
- What anyone else says
- What the reporter ends up using

We can control
- Our answers
- Our preparation
- Our demeanor
Interview Strategies

There are four strategies that are helpful to use while the interview is in process. These techniques help to ensure you get your message across, especially if the reporter’s questions go off topic.

• Headlining
• Blocking
• Bridging
• Flagging
Headlining

Put the most important information at the start of the interview. Often times, especially with TV interviews, time is limited so you want to make sure the key points get mentioned first.

- Tell the “punch line” first…
- AND be prepared to tell the rest of the story
Blocking

Halting the direction of the interview if you feel the interviewer is leading you in a direction you don’t want to go. First acknowledge with a question to let the reporter know you hear and understand what they are saying. Then follow with an appropriate transition to smoothly redirect the conversation.

- “Actually, that’s not the case…”
- “That’s not the way we look at it…”
- “The way we see it…”
- “Let’s back up for a second…”
- “Let me set the stage for this…”
- “I can see why you would think that, but actually …”
Bridging

Follow a successful ‘block’ with a bridge. Bridging is a tactic that allows you to take an interviewer’s question and lead it back to your key message. Bridges are especially helpful when you’re asked a negative or challenging question. They allow you to acknowledge the question briefly and then bring it back to safer territory.

• “Let’s look at that another way…”
• ”The real issue here is…”
• ”No, but I can say this about that…”
• “Yes, and in addition to that…”
Flagging

Use flagging to emphasize or prioritize what you consider to be the most important points. When you use a flag, you should make sure what you say next is succinct, clear and prepared. These are statements you want the reporter to use as a quote or a sound bite. Emphasize YOUR most important points and get reporters to “put a star in their notebooks.”

• “The most important thing to remember is…”
• “Let me emphasize one really key item for you…”
• “I’ve talked about many things today. It boils down to these three things…”
• “I’ve talked about many things today. It boils down to…”
• “Here’s where we stand…”
Top Tips for a Successful Interview

• Use simple, direct answers (avoid jargon & acronyms)
• Repeat important messages
• Answer in complete sentences
  – Q: *What are we doing here today?* A: *Today, we are …*
• Don’t rush. Pause when you need to.
• Use facts, figures, analogies – but not too many!
• Listen, don’t interrupt
• Stay in your zone of expertise. If you don’t know it, don’t say it!
• Stay positive
• Don’t say it if you don’t want it reported/recorded
• Never say “no comment” or go “off the record”
• Keep eye contact with reporter or camera (they will instruct you which)
• Avoid nervous gestures – rocking, hand movements, etc.
• Avoid filler words (i.e. um, like, right)
• No gum!
• Be presentable for camera
  • Avoid a lot of patterns and brand logos
  • Good to keep a black blazer or cardigan at work just in case!
Interviewee’s Bill of Rights

We **HAVE** the right to:

- Know the topic, format, deadline
- Have time to answer the question
- Correct misstatements
- Use notes (for print/radio)

We **DO NOT HAVE** the right to:

- Know the questions in advance
- See the story/segment in advance
- Change style/tone of your quotes
- Edit the story
- Expect your view to be the only view
- Demand a story be run or not run
Three Secrets To Successful Interviews

1. Preparation
2. Preparation
3. Preparation

Remember: Good media skills are learned!
Crisis Response
In the event of a crisis, your CEO should ALWAYS respond

What Happened
• Incident details – what happened
• Injuries/fatalities

What’s Happening Now
• Safety = top priority
• Emergency crews on scene
• Containing situation

What Happens Next
• Investigate cause
• Work with authorities
• Transparency
Questions, Comments & Resources

Questions or comments, contact:

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Resources:

• For more resources, see information provided in the Partner Marketing Packet
Thank you!