

Interviews



Adopted from Paul Mundy and Bob Huggan

Preparing for the interview

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- Best interviews where **interviewer** and **interviewee** are well prepared
- Select the **image** and **message** to convey
- Prepare **phrases**, **words** and **issues**
- Get info about the **reporter**: his/her views, interviewing style
- Be up-to-date on **events** relating to your org
- **Anticipate questions**, practise responses
- Give **background info** to interviewer (articles, press releases, brochures...)

Speaking to the media

- Your message must be easily understood
- Interviewee must sound natural and credible
- Keep the ultimate audience's interest in mind
 - the interviewer is only a conduit
- Speak clearly, in relaxed way
- Don't mumble
- Use clear ideas, simple words, short sentences

Speaking to the media

- Do not use scientific, technical, medical or academic jargon, or “NGO-speak”
- Avoid giving figures
 - ❑ They obscure the message
 - ❑ May be misheard or misquoted
 - ❑ May be open to dispute
- If figures are needed
 - ❑ Write them down
 - ❑ Give interviewer a fact-sheet

Speaking to the media

- Answer questions directly, confidently, and in few words
- Look interviewer in the eyes
 - Forget the microphone or tape recorder
- Listen to questions carefully
 - If a question is unclear, ask for clarification or rephrase it before answering
- Do not be afraid of silence
 - Just wait for the next question

Speaking to the media

- If an inaccurate statement is made, correct it immediately
- If interviewer is argumentative
 - ❑ Danger of sounding hostile!
 - ❑ Stay calm
 - ❑ Don't argue back

Speaking to the media

- If you don't know the answer
 - Say so
 - Refer to someone who knows
 - Offer to check info and get back later
 - Never say “No comment”
 - Give valid reason for not answering

Controlling the interview

■ Repetition

- ❑ Repeat your message to help the interviewer and audience remember it
- ❑ State main message several times
- ❑ Vary the words a little

Controlling the interview

■ Bridging

- Use a phrase to “bridge” to your message
- Deal with question, then follow with the message

■ Examples

- “*You’re correct...*(answer) *but in addition, let me say...*” (bridge)
- “*That’s not 100%...* (answer) *let me explain...*” (bridge)
- “*Well, that’s the way it used to be* (answer), *but here’s what we do now...*” (bridge)

Controlling the interview

■ Flagging

- Emphasise most important points

■ Examples

- *“The most important thing you have to remember is...”*
- *“We’ve talked about a lot things today, but I think it comes down to these three main points...”*
- *“Finally, let me make one thing perfectly clear...”*

Controlling the interview

■ Hooking

- An additional bit of info to attract follow-up question
- Like fishing hook with bait

■ Examples

- *“We are currently developing a major project with mothers in.....”* (reporter may ask for more info)
- *“I believe that the countries in the Caribbean can overcome their nutrition problems”* (reporter may ask how)

Controlling the interview

■ Off the record?

- ❑ Reporter hopes to get sensitive info
- ❑ Never give info off the record
- ❑ Some reporters misuse the info
- ❑ Info may be traced back to you
- ❑ Don't say anything you don't want attributed to you

After the interview

- Make sure the tape recorder is turned off
- Thank the reporter
- Offer to provide additional info, or introduce colleagues
- Offer to check story for factual errors only (reporter may not agree)
- Ask when story is to be printed or broadcast

After the interview

- **Record broadcast** or collect newspaper cuttings
 - If story is **positive**, consider sending to key stakeholders
 - If story is **fairly accurate**, don't complain about minor errors
 - If the story **very inaccurate**, ask editor or producer for a correction
- **Keep in touch** with reporter
 - Add to mailing list for news releases
 - Offer to provide info on other stories

10 rules for negative press calls

1. **Be prepared** before talking with the press
 - ❑ Formulate your strategy
 - ❑ Thoroughly research the facts
 - ❑ Familiarize yourself with the existing media coverage
 - ❑ Try to anticipate questions – have staff role-play as journalists
 - ❑ Prepare strong, forthright answers
2. **Answer all press enquiries** – do not give perception of deceit
3. **Give complete, concise answers** in tone to suggest you're totally on top of situation

10 rules for negative press calls

4. **Use facts** (where possible) to counter opposing views
 - ❑ Don't rely on opinions
5. **Stress the positive**
6. **Do not repeat inaccuracies**
7. **Reframe the situation** using your terminology

10 rules for negative press calls

8. **Explain your reason** if you cannot answer

- ❑ “Not enough information yet”, still unofficial, etc.
- ❑ Say you’ll get back quickly

9. **Do not participate in mud-slinging**

- ❑ Don’t attack opponents
- ❑ Maintain your credibility

10. **Never state your personal opinion**

- ❑ Even when asked
- ❑ Give only official, agreed response

Print interviews

- Generally longer than radio or TV interviews
- More words in print than broadcast
 - Can say more about your org
 - More opportunity to develop your messages
- Ask beforehand where and when story will appear

Print interviews

- Don't be afraid of tape recorder – it increases chances of being quoted correctly
 - Consider bringing your own tape recorder to verify what was said
- Bring written facts and figures
- If you check story for accuracy, correct only the facts
- Tell reporter how to reach you before story is published

Radio interviews

- Types of radio interviews
 - ❑ On-air (live)
 - ❑ Taped, to be aired at a later date

 - ❑ In studio
 - ❑ On location, inside or outside
 - ❑ Over the telephone

 - ❑ Tape may be used in entirety, or edited

Radio interviews

- Find out **interview situation**
 - Location, live/taped, topic, reason for interview
- Control your **voice**
 - Open with confident voice
 - Vary your voice: speed, tone, volume, not a monotone

Radio interviews

- Use interviewer's **name** in some answers
 - *“Well, James, that’s one question I can answer.”*
- Put **key messages** in several short responses
 - If tape is edited, some messages will remain
 - Conversational language
 - Avoid long, rambling responses

Radio interviews

- If you have to pause to think, stay silent
 - No “ums” or “aahs”
- Avoid noises
 - Don't hit the table
 - Don't jangle coins or click pen
 - Turn off your cellphone
- Clever interviewer may create silences, to lure you into talking
 - You don't need to fill gap. Let interviewer break silence

Radio interviews

■ Telephone interviews

- ❑ If asked to give immediate telephone interview
- ❑ Say that there's someone with you and you'll call back in a few minutes
- ❑ This gives you time to prepare

■ Before interview, make sure nothing will disturb you

- ❑ Close office door
- ❑ Turn off noisy air conditioner or fan

■ Practise!

TV interviews

- Similar to radio interviews
- But now you can be seen and heard, so appearance and actions are important
- Get to studio early so you are familiar with set, camera positions
- Think: “the audience is interested in this topic”

TV interviews

■ Clothing

- Yes Dress conservatively
- Yes Solid colours are best, but avoid white – it can reflect light
- No unusual styles or vivid colours
- No loud checks or stripes, or small prints
- No sunglasses or light-sensitive glasses
- No rings, bracelets, necklaces, or flashy watches
- Make sure jacket pockets are empty: no bulky items
- Keep your jacket pulled straight so no wrinkles

TV interviews

■ **Body language**

- ❑ Look directly at interviewer, not at camera (unless told to do so)
- ❑ Sit erect
- ❑ Lean forward slightly from time to time to give impression of alertness, control, interest in the questions

TV interviews

- Use **gestures** to emphasize something
 - But avoid sweeping arm movements
 - Avoid eye-distracting movements
 - No fidgeting: swivelling chair, playing with pencil, finger-drumming