



Giving a media interview

Before the interview

Ask the interviewer why they want to interview you, establish how much they know about the subject and what more they want to find out. Try to identify who else they might be interviewing on the subject and find out all you can about the publication or programme they are working for.

The better you know your interviewer, the more relaxed you'll be and the better you'll perform. At the very least you should remember that journalists generally work at great speed and under intense pressure. They have to find a colourful angle that will attract the reader. If you can help them do that and remain true to your own organisation, you've got a much better chance of being asked back.

Don't go into an interview before you've prepared some notes on the subject you will be talking about. If a journalist comes on the phone for an immediate quote promise to call back and spend at least a few minutes preparing your ground. Remember to call back as soon as possible as new stories always crop up and you could be forgotten.

You might have several points to make but at the very most your audience will remember two or three. The less you say, the more they'll remember, so try to identify the issues and subjects that will appeal most to the audience.

Try to picture the journalist and audience reading or hearing your message for the first time and ask yourself whether it will overcome their subconscious 'so what?' barrier. If not, find another way of presenting it.

During the interview

Remember the 3C's principle:

Confidence

Have confidence in your own knowledge. You know your subject better than the journalist.

Clarity

Use a clear, conversational style. Establish a maximum of three key messages and illustrate your points with anecdotal examples for colour and credibility. Avoid jargon.

Control

Take charge of the interview. Preparation is the key. There is no such thing as a wrong question, only wrong answers.

Use the ABCD technique:

A Acknowledge and address the question (1 second)

e.g. yes, no, I don't know, I'm not able to answer that...

B Bridge (3 seconds)

e.g. but, however, what I can tell you is..., let's be clear about this...



C Control and clarity (30 seconds)
e.g. key messages from your interview brief

D Dangle
e.g. what's really interesting is...

Other tips:

Give examples

A good example can be worth a thousand words. People love stories so identify a graphic example or anecdote to back up every assertion.

Use analogies

Analogies are another good way to 'ring a bell' in the audience's mind. Relate abstract terms and dimensions to everyday things such as converting hectares into football pitches.

Give advice

People love to be 'in the know'. Therefore, where possible give the audience a few hot tips on how to get the best out of something or to avoid disaster.

Anticipate questions

Don't worry too much about being asked a surprise question. There are a finite number of questions that can be asked on your subject and you're in a better position to know them than the journalist.

Body language

Bum in the back of the chair, lean forward, use your hands to communicate.

Don't discuss

It will make you sound too equivocal.

Don't defend

At least, not in such a way to make you sound defensive.

Don't debate

This lowers yourself and your organisation. The exception to this is a panel debate.

It's your show

Every interview presents a golden opportunity to communicate your position to a large number of people. In thoroughly preparing your brief you are preparing the messages you are going to get across to the audience.