

Media Training Guide

Presented by Barefoot PR

An Overview of Media Relations

What it is...

- Developing mutually beneficial relationships with media professionals and outlets as a way of communicating your story to target audiences
- Leveraging relationships with media professionals and outlets to ensure, as much as possible, that you receive the best and fairest representation of your story

What it is NOT...

- A way to ensure you will not be asked difficult, or even inappropriate, questions.
- A way of guaranteeing your story will be told and presented as you hoped it would.

Inside the Mind of a Journalist

- Journalists are people just like you – but likely have a different understanding of your world.
- You need each other, but in different ways and at different levels.
- Just because your story is important to you, doesn't mean it's news.
- A history of honesty and accessibility goes a long way.
- No – you cannot see or hear it before it goes public – and once it goes public, corrections are rare.
- PR is NOT unpaid advertising – but it is free awareness raising, whether good or bad.
- Timing is everything.
- Every MENTION counts.
- You can't have all of the outlets telling your story in the same way – remember, media outlets are competitors.

What Makes a Story “Newsworthy?”

- **Proximity:** Is the focus of your story local? Will it interest the local public?
- **Prominence:** Is there any “star power” attached to your message? Do you have a prominent spokesperson, guest speaker, etc.?
- **Timeliness:** Is the focus of your message current/immediate?
- **Significance:** Is your story likely to affect/impact a large number of people?
- **Unusualness:** Is your message something unheard of or unprecedented?
- **Human Interest:** Can you “put a face” on your message – connect your story with a personal story? The media is interested in humanizing stories as much as possible so the general audience can relate.
- **Conflict:** “If it bleeds, it leads” – can you attach your story to a conflict in current events?
- **Newness:** Is your message something unique? Does it have new characteristics to an “old cause”?
- **Visual:** Is there a visual element to your story that would make for a compelling photograph/video appealing to a general audience?

The Rights of the Interviewee

You Have the Right...

- To courteous treatment by the interviewer and his or her staff.
- To inquire about the questions the interviewer intends to ask – although you may not always receive them.
- To research the interviewer and other interviews he or she has conducted.
- To refuse to answer questions that are pejorative or insulting – but do so in a courteous manner despite the situation.
- To request a tape of the interview – although note there may be a charge associated.
- To know the context in which your interview will be used – but there is no guarantee that it will always be used in the way you are told on the front end.
- To know what other guests will appear with you and what points of view they represent.
- To ask to have a difficult or confusing questions rephrased.
- To videotape or record the interview yourself, especially if it is taking place outside of a studio.
- To say “I don’t know, but I will find out for you” – then get back to the reporter with the appropriate response in a timely manner.

Tips for Television & Radio Interviews

Cardinal Rules:

1. Know what you want to get across – no more than three main points
2. Know how to phrase these points in a concise, compelling and clear manner.
3. Try to express these points in the first minute of the interview.

DO...

- Keep your answers short and to the point. (*Rule of thumb: 5-12 seconds for TV; no more than 30 seconds for radio*)
- Be clear, direct, and declarative – state the most important facts first.
- Talk naturally – be yourself.
- Take time to consider the question and gather your thoughts before answering – don't rush. The "silence gap" allows you to think before answering and conveys authority.
- Maintain the "viewers' perspective" – speak in terms of what the viewer would want to know, rather than just what your organization wants you to convey.
- Keep eye contact with the interviewer, not the camera.
- Sit up straight – relax but don't slouch.
- Use your hands when you talk – it keeps you animated.
- Keep a glass of water nearby.
- Breathe normally and deeply – you will feel more relaxed and secure.
- Wear simple clothes without too many patterns.
 - Best options for men: grey or blue suits, white or light blue shirts, solid or minimal pattern ties.
 - Best options for women: Blue, grey, orange, red and purple. Suits or blazers with dark skirts and light colored blouses. Avoid sweaters and pants.
- Make sure your legs and feet are in an "attractive position" when on camera.
- Check your "grooming" – hairspray can be your best friend for television interviews as can be heavy make-up.

DON'T...

- Stammer or say "um" or "ah" – just pause, take a breath, and finish your thought.
- Fidget.
- Become contentious or defensive. Despite the interviewer's question, stay calm – remember, your reaction will stay on tape forever.
- EVER say "No comment..."
- Make any comments before or after the interview that you wouldn't want on tape – you never know when the recording actually starts and stops.

- Interrupt the interviewer – and if the interviewer tries to interrupt you, hold your ground and finish your thought.
- Frown or keep too intense a look on your face.
- Be drawn into an argument – DON'T lose your temper.
- Ramble – if you find yourself saying “Getting back to the point...,” you’ve gone too far.
- Use jargon – speak at “an eighth-grade level”
- Bluff on an answer – if you don’t know the answer, be honest and say you will find out.
- Exaggerate.
- Use jokes – but do, however, feel free to use humor.
- Be overly familiar or falsely humble.

Appearance Counts

Remember, your appearance is just as critical as the preparation and delivery of your comments during an interview.

Although self-analysis is difficult, we must all recognize that each of us could use “improvements” when it comes to physical presentation, especially on camera in front of a general audience.

Appearance tips for on-camera interviews:

- Wear understated clothes so as not to distract
- Wear appropriate “business” attire, but remember who your audience is
- Don’t wear white
- Ideal colors: yellow, orange, light red, medium blue, medium red, light blue, bright green, magenta, gold
- Your appearance should reflect warmth, personality and compassion
- Don’t wear dark glasses
- Don’t carry bulky items in your pockets
- Keep your jewelry understated – and avoid dangling earrings

Always consider your body language...

An effective spokesperson makes use of body movements to convey appropriate emotions.

The following gestures and expressions are considered positive and convey interest and self-confidence:

- Always pause before answering questions.
- Look people in the eye.
- Sit up straight and lean slightly forward.
- Make hand movements that occur naturally as a supplement to what you are saying (but avoid gestures that block your face).
- Listen intently to what other people have to say.

Overcoming Nervousness

Nervous emotions before an interview are natural.

Tips for overcoming nervousness:

- Think of these emotions as your way of “being prepared” – and use that adrenaline to give you strength.
- Practice some relaxing exercises before your interview – i.e. rolling your neck, stretching, etc.
- Take several deep breaths, blowing slowly out of your mouth
- Stand naturally with your feet shoulder-width apart, and let your hands hang loose and relaxed. Then shake your hands and arms, letting the vibration work itself into the rest of your body.
- Be prepared for the interview – the more prepared you are with a few key points to cover, the better you will feel beforehand.
- If appropriate, spend a few minutes “chatting” with the interviewer before the interview to get to know them.

Checklist for Television Appearances*

- Are you familiar with the show you're appearing on – its host, its format, and what is expected of you?
- Have you rehearsed all possible questions and your answers?
- Can you explain clearly in about 85 words or less the major point you want to get across?
- Is your delivery style anecdotal and conversational, or preachy and too full of details?
- Are you able to support your opinions with evidence?
- Do you know your audience? Remember, it's the people at home, not your interviewer.
- Are you prepared to listen before you speak?
- Are you ready to answer any questions without resorting to "no comment?"
- Are you prepared to restate your major point(s)? To get these points in twice or more is ideal – but you must find a way to make them sound different to your audience.

**Adapted from "On Television" by Jack Hilton and Mary Knoblauch*