

3 key techniques for a successful interview

- **Main Message**
develop and keep in mind
- **20 Second Rule**
learn how to deliver your message in a 20 second framework
- **Bridging**
master the art of delivering the message you want to deliver, regardless of what the interviewer asks



Reporters are always looking for quotes.

For this reason it is important to come up with good ones; quotes that the media will pick up on, and which deliver the message you want to give.

Tips for being quotable

- Obey the 20 second rule.
- Be colourful.
- Quote should be self-contained—that is, it should be able to stand on its own.
- Be precise. Avoid generalities. Use specific examples that make people care about what you are saying.
- Tell people what it means to them.
- Don't be afraid to express some emotion if it's appropriate, but always remain calm and in control.
- Avoid jargon. Use everyday language.
- Use analogies.
- Flag your quotes—ie, "What I am going to say next may shock you..."
- For radio and TV interviews, if you have a choice, choose "live" over taped.

One point of caution: Being outrageous is a sure fire way of getting quoted, but the cost in lost credibility is often too high a price to pay. Always consider the effect your words may have.

how to prepare for an interview

- Ask questions of the reporter: Name, what newspaper/broadcast outlet, what do they want to talk to you about, who else are they talking to concerning this story, what is your deadline, if radio or TV, is the interview to be "live" or "taped".
- Determine whether you are the appropriate person to do the interview. If not, explain why and offer to help the reporter find the "right" person.
- Offer the reporter any background documents or other information that might help them understand the story.
- Unless you are fully prepared, negotiate time to prepare: Agree to meet at a later, specific time, and then do it.
- Prepare by gathering facts, determining the main points you want to make, figuring out how best to make them (including colourful quotes, analogies, etc.) anticipating the questions that may be asked, along with how you will answer them.
- Practise by having a colleague(s) ask you the toughest questions they can come up with. Be sure to practise answering them out loud.
- If you have a choice between a "live" or "taped" interview, choose "live". A live interview gives you more control because you will not be edited.
- Remember the key techniques (main message, 20 second framework, bridging to your main message).

the 10 Commandments for dealing with the media

- 1 Understand how the media work.
- 2 Return calls promptly, and be as accommodating as possible.
- 3 Be polite. Don't argue.
- 4 Never lie.
- 5 Don't stonewall or say "no comment". If you can't answer a question, explain why.
- 6 Do not repeat negatives.
- 7 Remember the 20 second rule, and be quotable.
- 8 Be very careful about going "off the record".
- 9 Don't be suckered by leading, false-premised, or hypothetical questions.
- 10 Use bridging to reinforce your message.



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Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation



the edge

Information to help you understand how the media work and how to use that knowledge to your advantage.



the media can be powerful allies... or considerable foes.



Understanding how the media work, along with a few guidelines and tips on how best to use that knowledge, can reap some wonderful rewards. It can lead to stories that enhance the image of our profession, school or association, and it can give you a platform to present your point of view.

And knowing how to respond can help you survive a crisis, and hasten a return to normal.

There are no guarantees when you deal with the media. There are always risks. But the risks are far outweighed by the benefits.

The best advice is extremely basic: be prepared; and then be as straightforward and honest as possible.

Call it "THE EDGE"... it's what you can use to increase the odds that your media encounters will be positive.

Most journalists are competent and fair-minded in reporting the day's news within the limitations imposed on them — limitations of space or time, pressures for speed, and demands for content that excites. You must learn to live with the fact that the wheel that drives the media drives it too hard, too fast.

Contrary to the beliefs of some, reporters are not sensationalistic, heartless, unethical vultures ready to pick your bones dry for the sake of a story. Truth be known, reporters are a lot like you; honest, hard-working folks, trying to do the best they can.

When they phone, in all likelihood, it's not to roast you. They just want information and/or a quote.

Pure and simple, their job is to find interesting stories. They need lots of them. Every day.

Realizing this, mixed with a good grasp of how to respond, will result in any number of positive stories that enhance the image of your association or school and the profession.

But there's an even more important benefit. If you are to have any influence on the public policies that affect the profession, you must become an active spokesperson and participant in the public debate. This means you must be willing to be interviewed and publicly share your point of view.

The advice here is to be proactive and initiate stories.

View media inquiries not as an intrusion, but as an opportunity to wholesale your point of view.



developing good media relations

The best rapport is built on a solid foundation of mutual respect. Like anything worthwhile, it will take time and effort. Consider it an investment; purposeful actions aimed at obtaining the goal of adequate coverage.

Steps for developing media rapport

1. Identify key media people with whom you should be dealing, including reporters and those who do local interview and phone-in shows.
2. Meet them.
3. Educate them. Good reporters will educate themselves. Others will not, so assume that responsibility. Show them that you are real people, and share your concerns about issues relevant to your association or school.
4. Make yourself available as a resource for opinion or interviews on areas in your field of expertise.
5. Don't beg or otherwise make a pest out of yourself trying to convince the media to do a story they have decided isn't worthy of their attention.
6. Keep puff pieces to a minimum. They aren't appreciated, and serve only to dilute your credibility.
7. Don't ask for a story to be killed or suppressed. This amounts to asking the reporter to betray his trust. It seldom works, and often results in ill will. (If though, there is a legitimate reason why a story should be delayed, that's different. Explain why.)
8. Obey the ten commandments for dealing with the media—see the back of this brochure.

Accuracy and fairness in the media should not be viewed as the result of the reporter's work alone.

how to get your story into the media

There are two rules:

1. It has to be legitimate news. There is no other reason why the media would be interested.
2. It has to be recognized by the editor or reporter as legitimate news: prepare a properly written news release or call to clearly state why the event or issue is newsworthy.

what makes a story newsworthy?

This is something on which even trained journalists often disagree. This is why some media outlets will run a story while others ignore it. But while it is subjective, there are some guidelines which serve as a test. Look at your potential story as objectively as possible and ask yourself...who cares? The answer to that should tell you a lot. Beyond that, test your story against these criteria:

- Relevance (Whom does it affect? How?)
- Timeliness (Does it relate to a major story or issue of the day?)
- Human Interest Value (Does it strike an emotion? Is it something most of us can relate to?)
- Entertainment Value (Does it satisfy a curiosity? Would it make us say "wow"?)
- Controversy (Is it an issue on which most of us have an opinion?)
- Conflict (Little guy vs. city hall; one side vs. the other)

When in doubt, ask a reporter (or two, since their opinions are subjective).