

TIP SHEET #2 – MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Prepare

- Know your key messages and your 'hook'
- Educate, train and subtly guide your interviewer
- Know the media
 - Monitor the outlets you plan to approach
 - Look for reporter profiles
- Expect the unexpected

What do media look for?

- Newsworthy stories
 - Prominent people
 - Local story
 - Human interest
 - Conflict/drama
 - Numbers, facts, figures
- Accurate story

Key Messages

- Brief, memorable—"catchy" phrase (not a definition or your mission statement)
- Think in broad themes
- Avoid buzz words or professional jargon
- Your contribution to the community
- Your contribution to business; the economy
- DON'T save the best until last

Delivery

- Use repetition of your theme and key points
- Key messages are answers waiting for questions
 - Look for opportunities and openings for bridging to your points
- Repeat, repeat, repeat
- Think in sound bites; be brief
- Offer supporting information, or a personal example
- Use a 'cheat sheet' for interviews and refer to it
- Watch the politicians—they are masters of key messaging

Your Performance: The basics

- Answer the question
- Bridge to key message
- Offer supporting evidence
- Stop!

Your Performance: Bridging

- Change the subject to your key message
- "However..."
- "In addition..."
- "Let me also tell you..."
- "That's an example of..."
- "Which brings me back to..."

Pay attention to the Nonverbals

- Establish a rapport
- Maintain eye contact
- Lean slightly forward
- Be confident
- No fidgeting!
- SMILE
- Enunciate
- Pump up the volume!
- Hands at your sides or in your lap when not in use
- Use natural hand gestures
- Be yourself

Performance: The Phone

- Don't let the comfort of the equipment work against you
- It is still an interview
- Keep your key messages handy
- Focus! No multi-tasking!
- Facial expressions and attitudes can travel through the wires...
- Don't get too comfortable

Are you recording?

- A reporter is working whether or not the tape recorder or camera is on
- Reporters you are comfortable with still want the "big story"
- Information from you can be verified elsewhere and appear in print
- If you don't want the public to see or hear it, DON'T SAY IT!

Tricks, Traps & Tips

- Negative Questions: Don't repeat or introduce negativity; bridge to positive key messages. DON'T NOD!
- Dumb Questions: Educate the reporter; correct misinformation—immediately
- Hypothetical Questions: Don't address. Stick to factual positive key messages
- Suspect Facts: Correct misinformation, let the reporter know if info is suspect, bridge to key message
- Paraphrasing: Don't let the reporter do it! Restate in your own words, using key messages
- The Pregnant Pause: Don't fill silence. Answer the question and ask for another

Forgot Your Lines?

- If you don't know, say so—be honest
- "No Comment"—Don't use it! You can gracefully decline to answer a question; just offer a reason: it's inappropriate, proprietary, against policy, etc.

Final Words

- Never "wing it" on an interview
- Use your key messages
- There is no such thing as "off the record"