

Marketing – Interviews

Journalists want stories ‘from the horse’s mouth’ so be prepared to be interviewed.

Write down three or four key points that you want to get across and make sure that you do! You could also take notes of key figures or statistics into a radio or television studio but don’t read out a prepared speech. For debates, you should also prepare three or four questions that you would like to ask.

Keep radio interviews simple. Most listeners are not giving it their full attention – it’s background to another activity like driving or housework.

Compose a soundbite (a colourful phrase summing up your attitude to the subject) and try to slip it in as a closing remark.

Make it interesting – sound enthusiastic and avoid dry statistics and jargon.

Don’t be frightened of repeating yourself on radio interviews – people usually have to hear something several times before they remember it. At the same time, you must answer the interviewer’s questions.

Think about what you are likely to be asked in advance so that you are prepared. Don’t be too sensitive – if the interviewer asks probing questions, he or she is probably just looking for more information, not challenging you.

Never say ‘no comment’ – it looks as though you are hiding something, and the worst-case scenario is that a journalist could write that you refused to comment.

On radio speak slowly and clearly.

Try to listen to the programme beforehand so that you know what to expect.

Find out:

- if it is serious or light-hearted
- if it is recorded or live
- its length
- the type of audience
- whether anyone else will be involved
- when it will be broadcast
- and what the first question will be.

If it is recorded, you can ask to repeat an answer that you’re not happy with. If an interview is going to be conducted over the telephone, find a quiet room and make sure that everyone knows that you don’t want to be disturbed.

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Smart, casual clothing is best for television. Avoid patterns, especially vertical stripes, which strobe, and blue shirts, which disappear. Be relaxed and avoid fidgeting with your hands. A glass of water and deep breathing exercises may help to calm you before you go on air.

Buy time if you are contacted by journalists unexpectedly. Ask them for their deadlines and the length of contribution (in minutes or air time) that they need. This gives you time to plan your answer and check facts if necessary. But don't delay too long, otherwise the article or programme may go out without your contribution. Remember that all conversations are on the record unless agreed otherwise.

(This information was prepared by Lynn Leadbeater from bfunded, based at Keighley Voluntary Services, and is reproduced with permission.)