

# Managing the Interview

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# Before the Interview

- Do your research and Be Prepared
  - Research the reporter and the publication or show
    - Check the background and public material on the reporter/media organization
    - Review your previous experience with the reporter/media organization
    - Get information about their readers or viewers

# Before the Interview

## – Prepare for the interview

- Write down 3 points you “must make”
- Note 3 anticipated questions you expect to be asked
- Write down 3 controversial or negative points that the reporter or interviewer might raise
- Practice ‘**bridging**’ and ‘**flagging**’ techniques:  
*“Equally important is...” or “The issue here is...”*
- Know the facts, know what you don’t know

# During the Interview

- Introductions – set the frame of the conversation
  - Explain your position and area of involvement or expertise
  - Confirm the focus of the interview and time available
- Tell your story
- Keep it simple
- Provide context
- Cite facts and figures
- Drive the interview with your messages

# During the Interview

- Get to the point at the start
- Don't try to convince or win an argument with your interviewer -- speak to the viewers or the readers instead
- Know the facts
  - If the reporter misstates a fact, correct it politely and immediately
- You know it
  - No matter how well-informed your interviewer, you know more than he or she does about your issues

# Stay on Message

- You maintain the best control of your 'story' when you know exactly what you want to say and you stick to it
- Don't just answer questions – state your message
- Use your own words, not theirs
- Stay calm, make your points, be polite but firm

# Enhance Your Message

- Be concise
  - Saying 1 thing in 10 seconds = control
  - Saying 10 things in 30 seconds = No control
- Use colorful examples, words, comparisons
- Avoid jargon, statistics, and concepts that are hard-to-understand
- Credential your message by citing others, when possible
  - “As Ban Ki Mun said, ....”

# Provide Details and Color

- Give examples
- Cite personal experiences
- Use 3<sup>rd</sup>-party endorsements
- Tell colorful analogies and anecdotes
- Provide facts, research, and simple statistics
  - A fact sheet can be helpful
  - Do the math for the reporter



# Bridge Your Message

- In response to a negative or unexpected question, you should **acknowledge** the question, then **bridge** to your message
- The magic formula is:

$$\mathbf{A + B = M}$$

**Acknowledge** question, **Bridge** to your answer, deliver your **Message**

# Bridge to Your Message

- Use bridging to get back on track:
  - “That may be the case, but one thing to consider is...”
  - “That’s a good point, but the main consideration is...”
  - “We all agree with that, but the real issue is...”
  - “That’s not my area of expertise, but I can tell you...”
  - “That’s an interesting question, it reminds me of...”
  - “While that is certainly important, don’t forget that...”
  - “We may be overlooking the fact that...”
  - “Another question I am often asked is...”
  - “Equally important is...”

# Flag Your Message (Highlight It)

- Headline your key messages for reporters:
  - “The important point here is...”
  - “The best part about...”
  - “The three most significant areas are...”
  - “There are two reasons why...”
  - “Let me put this into perspective...”
  - “Let’s take a closer look at...”
  - “What that means is...”

# Interview 'Don'ts'

- Don't answer hypothetical questions
  - Acknowledge it's a hypothetical question and bridge to a message
- Don't guess – tell the truth
- Don't say “No Comment”
- Avoid “Yes” and “No” answers – Seize opportunities to tell the story
- Avoid long, complex answers – don't bury the lead. Say your main point first.

## Also Avoid...

- Buzzwords or acronyms
- Speculation
- Overreacting
- Bluffing/lying – a reporter will check
- Criticizing the media...they have the last word.

# Tips for Phone Interviews

- Stand up rather than sit during the phone interview
  - To sound more energetic
- Smile, if appropriate
  - A voice sounds more appealing when smiling
- 90 % of your effectiveness is determined by how you deliver your message
  - Use your body mannerisms to your advantage
  - Show some emotion but don't get emotional
- If they ask a question on which you are not sure, tell them you will need to call back—and then do so
- Call back if new information develops

# Keys for Face-to-Face (Print or TV) Interviews

- Sit straight in your chair, slightly forward
  - Don't swivel – place your feet comfortably on the floor
  - Use your hands effectively
    - Place your hands on your knees/thighs
    - OR keep hand motions between your abdomen and your shoulders
  - Maintain eye contact with the reporter/  
interviewer

# Maximizing Your Impact

- Gesture to underscore your points
  - But, without detracting from your message
- Personalize your conversation
  - By using your host's name
  - Telling your own stories
- Speak clearly (not too fast)
  - Note: in stand-up interviews – keep your hands in front of you, up and ready to gesture



# At the End of the Interview

- Reiterate areas that require follow-up
- Pose ideas for future contact
- Measures of success:
  - Good article, key messages apparent
  - Good timing
  - You are on the record – attributable quotes
  - You “pushed” your issue or goal
  - You were prepared for the questions