

Media Interviews

1. Find out what the topic is for the reporter's story.
2. If you wish to be quoted, you must convert your message points into sound bites.
3. All quotes have one or more of the following characteristics:
4. Analogies make good quotes and sound bites.
5. Bold action words make good quotes and sound bites.
6. Emotions and examples (the more personal the better) make good quotes and sound bites.
7. Attacks and absolutes make good quotes and sound bites.
8. Clichés make good quotes and sound bites.
9. Reporters can't write clichés but they love quoting other people using clichés.
10. Humor makes good quotes and sound bites.
11. Pop culture references make good quotes and sound bites.
12. Rhetorical questions make good quotes and sound bites.
13. Opposition quotes make good quotes and sound bites
14. The first letters from the following: Analogies, Bold action, Emotions, Attacks, Clichés, Humor, Pop culture, Rhetorical questions, and Opposition quotes spell out A BEACH PRO.
15. The higher number of A BEACH PRO elements you use, the greater your chances are of being quoted.
16. If you have not used any A BEACH PRO elements, you will not be quoted.
17. The subject matter is different, but the structure of quotes are all the same, whether you are reading the front page, sports page, business section, watching TV news or listening to radio news.
18. Go into an interview with a positive perspective.
19. Most reporters aren't trying to make you look bad - they just want an interesting story for their audience.
20. Never forget that media people make their money by telling as interesting a story as possible in order to gain the largest audience as possible.
21. If you act guilty around the media, you will be guilty.
22. Do you like it when possible business partners, clients, or dates don't return your phone calls? The media will hate you if you don't return their calls.
23. If you got your facts wrong, admit it immediately.

24. If the subject matter is something you'd rather not talk about, you still need to call reporters back. Otherwise you can be made to look worse and will have no influence on the story.
25. Have your three message points and sound bites written out in front of you during the interview - but don't read them.
26. Don't lie to the media. Like your friends, family and coworkers, they don't like to be lied to and they will get you back.
27. "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you before deadline" is an infinitely better thing to say to a reporter than making up facts that doesn't turn out to be true.
28. Be able to say everything you want to say in 30 seconds with no more than three points.
29. Use any extra time you have in an interview, whether it is 2 more minutes or 60 more minutes fleshing out your three main points and giving more concrete examples.
30. In a crisis situation, prepare just as you would in any other media opportunity. Have a three point message, speak in sound bites and stick to your message.
31. Don't ask what the questions are going to be.
32. The reporter does not work for you as a PR flack. Instead, ask what the general subject areas are going to be.
33. You aren't the Library of Congress for a reporter. It's not enough to be useful. You must be useful AND interesting AND quotable.
34. If a reporter calls you, don't start speaking off the cuff at that moment.
35. Ask what the reporter's deadline is.
36. Figure out your message, talk to your colleagues, and create your sound bites.
37. Then call the reporter back BEFORE the deadline has passed.
38. If the reporter says my deadline "is right now," then say, "I'll call you back in five minutes."
39. Come up with your message and then CALL BACK IN FIVE MINUTES!
40. There are no stupid questions.
41. There are stupid answers.
42. There are no tough questions.
43. But there are really stupid answers.
44. You don't have to answer bizarre hypothetical questions.
45. Don't complain about being "quoted out of context."
46. Every quote is taken out of the context of the entire interview and conversation.

47. If your quotes don't stand on their own, then you failed not the reporter.
48. Never dodge questions. Always bridge gracefully and quickly from questions to your message points.
49. Nothing is 100 percent off the record. Notes are made and reviewed by editors, publishers and lawyers.
50. Get reporters' e-mail addresses.
51. Send a short e-mail praise after an interview.
52. Don't say "no comment," especially if you don't want to comment.
53. A message has to be important not only to you, but important to your audience as well.
54. Don't go off the record unless you know and trust the reporter.
55. If you really don't want to be ousted or identified with certain information, don't tell a reporter - not even off the record.
56. 30 seconds is a good length of time to shoot for in an answer - it's longer than you think.
57. You have 0% control over questions you are asked.
58. You have 100% control of the answers given during an interview.
59. If you want total control over a story, buy advertising, don't talk to journalists.
60. Tough questions don't trip people up. Sloppy answers to easy questions are what do people in.
61. Reporters need you to say things they can't say themselves.
62. If you try to sound important by using big, abstract words, you won't be quoted. The reporter will just write you off as a pompous windbag.
63. The elements that make up quotes are the same on the sports page, business page and front page.
64. Avoid jargon.
65. Don't use stupid time wasting words and phrases like "If you will" to make yourself sound smart.
66. Pat yourself on the back for going to Business School, but don't say "going forward" when "in the future" will work even better.
67. Don't say, "That's a great question." Nobody cares about your metacritique on the interview as it is going on. Just politely give your answers.
68. Don't say, "I'm glad you asked me that. For reasons, see above.
69. No one ever lost a job by not speaking "off the record" to a reporter.

70. Lots of people have lost their jobs over comments that were printed when they thought they were speaking “off the record.”
71. The meaning of “off the record,” “not for attribution,” “on background,” and “on deep back ground,” mean very different things to different reporters and editors.
72. Find out EXACTLY what the terms mean to the reporters you are dealing with BEFORE you say anything you would NOT want to read on the front page.
73. Unless you have specifically and explicitly said that your conversation is “off the record,” then assume that anything you say can be used.
74. Don’t waste time by saying, “As I mentioned earlier.” Just repeat whenever you want to - you don’t have to provide roadmaps to your whole conversation.
75. After the interview has taken place, give the reporter your home phone number, pager and cell phone. Tell the reporter to feel free to give you a call anytime about anything - but mean it.
76. Media feed off each other. The more TV you do the more radio will want you. The more print you do, the more TV and radio will want you.
77. Be a news channel surfer.
78. Don’t say “no comment,” unless you want this to appear as your quote.
79. Don’t do TV or radio interviews on an empty stomach, your growling stomach will distract you.
80. Journalists don’t have big egos - they have HUGE egos-don’t forget.
81. It’s not how long you speak to the media, it’s how many sound bites you deliver.
82. Never assume a reporter is biased against you.
83. Never assume a reporter is biased in favor of you.
84. Never use a reporter’s words.
85. Always use your own words.
86. A reporter can use an obscenity in an interview, but you can’t.
87. A reporter can use a stereotype in a joke during an interview, but you can’t.
88. Compliment the media person you are dealing with in a specific and sincere manner before and after your interview.
89. Don’t pander and don’t give phony praise to the media.
90. Most media people never get anything but criticisms from people - they get sick of constant sniping.
91. If you promise an exclusive story to one media outlet, make sure it stays exclusive.

92. If another media outlet finds out about a story you have already promised as an exclusive, do two things: 1. Don't lie, 2. Notify the reporter who was promised an exclusive that another media outlet has found out about the story.
93. Don't demand that the media obey certain ground rules or observe "conditions" in order for you to be interviewed. You are not Frank Sinatra.
94. Assume the media can ask you any questions about any subject.
95. Assume you don't have to talk about any subject you feel uncomfortable about.
96. Never underestimate a media interview's potential to harm or help your career.
97. Reporters don't have to ask your permission to quote you.
98. Occasionally, you will think you are just having a casual conversation with a reporter.
99. You won't hear any typing or see any note taking, but your comments will still end up in a story.
100. The media didn't make a "mistake" because they quoted you in a way that made you look foolish.
101. The media didn't make a mistake by quoting other people who disagree with you.
102. Don't panic if the media makes an honest to goodness factual error about you.
103. Don't make a mountain out of a molehill. If the media makes a minor mistake of no consequence, just ignore it.
104. When the media make a mistake about you, don't assume they did it on purpose because they have a vendetta against you.
105. When necessary, politely and succinctly (50 words or less) write a correction and get it to the relevant reporter or editor.
106. Media organizations as a whole do not like or dislike anyone, favor or disfavor most organizations.
107. Media organizations are made up of highly opinionated INDIVIDUALS, who crave their independent power bases.
108. Resist the temptation to publicly critique the media - unless you are delivering praise.
109. Media people are not thin-skinned - they have no skins.
110. If you ever deliver even the mildest criticism to journalists in public or face-to-face, they will hate your guts forever and will go out of their way to never do anything that could help you.
111. The more you can talk about the big story of the day and not just about yourself, the more media coverage you will receive.

112. One bad story can rarely destroy you.
113. For the media to help you, you need to regularly communicate with the media.
114. Develop an area of expertise so that you can develop a niche with the media.
115. Focus on the media's needs, not your own.
116. Don't exaggerate, even a little.
117. Don't get angry when your competitors are quoted in the media.
118. Don't criticize reporters for quoting your competitors.
119. Instead, write a short, simple, positive note to the reporter who quoted your competitor and let the reporter know that you are always available for comment and a brief summary of your credentials.
120. Send media people thank you notes for taking the time to talk with you.
121. A successful media strategy isn't about getting on one show or getting one good profile, it is about building long term relationships with media so that they see you regularly.
122. Build your own media database and communicate with journalists regularly.
123. Invite journalists to parties.
124. Never be intimidated by reporters.
125. Don't let reporters threaten you.
126. Don't cry wolf to get the media's attention. If you promise something big and newsworthy, you'd better deliver.
127. Don't tease the media in a misleading manner.
128. Vary your media diet.
129. Quickly and politely correct a reporter if you think he/she is misstating something.
130. Never ask to have your quotes read back to you for accuracy. The implication is that you think the reporter is an incompetent jerk.
131. Never ask to see the story before it has been published.
132. Don't send journalists gifts, they probably can't keep them and it will just cause problems.
133. Other than the front page of *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*, one single media placement won't help you that much. The real power of the media comes only from regular and repeated exposure in it.
134. Try to develop a long-term strategy for dealing with the media.
135. The media are about what is happening now.
136. You have to be available now.

137. Don't wait for the media to call you.
138. Call, write, fax, mail and e-mail the media with interesting material.
139. There is no longer a 24-hour news cycle, there is an every second news cycle.
140. Return reporter's phone calls within 30 seconds. That doesn't mean you have to give the interview right away, but you need to let the reporter know you are available and will get back within the deadline, even if that deadline is in 5 minutes.
141. It is easier to get into the media if you give a quick reaction to a breaking story than it is to generate your own story.
142. If you are sending out a press release, make sure it has the following elements:
 1. A big, bold headline that summarizes the issue in the news.
 2. A two or three sentence summary of the issue and your facts.
 3. A short, sharp sound bite quote from you.
 4. A brief bio on your qualifications and media experiences.
 5. Contact info.
 6. Keep it to one page.
143. Create a resume that lists the most well know media outlets you have been in first, then other newsmakers you have appeared with or debated, then a list of every media outlet you have ever appeared in.
144. Update you media resume often and provide it to media people whenever appropriate.
145. Focus on building long-term relationships with the media.
146. Initiate interesting stories on a regular basis.
147. Pass along newsworthy tips to reporters, even when the story has nothing to do with you and you have nothing to gain from the story.
148. Make reporters feel you are on their team and helping them create great stories.
149. Work your way up the media food chain.
150. Every media contact is an opportunity.
151. Hire a media trainer.
152. You don't get to decide when the media is being fair.
153. The media don't have to be fair and balanced, merely profitable
154. When rehearsing, have someone ask you the one question you most dread.
155. Ask the media to call you by your first name, especially on TV and radio.
156. Don't demand to be called "Doctor" or "Ph.D." People will think you are a sanctimonious windbag.
157. Never forget that you know much more about your business than any reporter does.
158. If you are unsure about a question, ask for clarification.

159. If you prepare your sound bites in advance, all of your interviews will be done faster and you will have net savings on time.
160. Find out if the reporter is on staff or freelance.
161. Find out how to contact the reporter after the interview.
162. Don't audio or videotape an interview in front of a reporter unless you are 99% sure you are going to be mistreated.
163. It's fine to audio tape any print or radio interview when you are in your home or office (check your state laws to see if both parties have to be informed.)