

UVic Handout #1 Meet the Press

How to Cultivate good rapport with the Media

Find out:

- When are their deadlines? (Whenever you call the media, be sure to ask “Are you on deadline” before continuing the conversation)
- What are they interested in?
- Who are the reporters and assignment editors in various media?

Helpful Tips:

- Send info to the current person in a position (worth checking if you don't know)
- Check spellings of names, gender of persons!*
- Add a personal touch...Perhaps a personal message in an email before or after the news release itself?
- Release media releases to the media at the same time
- Return phone calls promptly!!! (Essential!)
- Respect deadlines
- Make sure reporters know how to contact you after hours (cell phone? (Text?) Gmail Hangouts, etc. and email? Home phone?)
- Give accurate facts, or check unknown facts and get back to reporter promptly
- File of photos and bios of you and employees is helpful
- Compile an accurate media list for your organization and keep it updated
- Never argue with a reporter about whether something is newsworthy
- Call or write or email with thanks, when earned
- Give advance notice of newsworthy event
- Take advantage of free publicity: PSAs, community bulletin board, events calendars
- Consider writing an article or letter yourself for the Op Ed (opposite the editorial)

Interview “Rules” and Expectations for both Reporter and Interviewee

Interview Rules for Reporters

1. Identify yourself at the outset of the interview
2. State the purpose of the interview
3. Make clear to those unaccustomed to being interviewed that the material will be used
4. Tell the source how much time the interview will take
5. Keep the interview as short as possible (in most cases)
6. Ask short, specific questions the source is competent to answer
7. Give the source ample time to reply
8. Ask the source to clarify complex or vague answers
9. Read back answers if requested or when in doubt about the phrasing of crucial material
10. Insist on answers if the public has a right to know them
11. Avoid lecturing the source, arguing, or debating
12. Abide by request for non-attribution, background only, or off the record should the source make this a condition of the interview or of a statement

UVic Handout #3

Recommendations to those being interviewed (Interviewees, that's you!)

- *Journalists form impression in the first 10 to 20 seconds
- *When you meet a journalist, look them in the eye and don't look away
- *Lean forward when you're talking; keep your arms and hands open (this shows an open and accepting attitude, not on the defensive)
- *Smile when you talk
- *Don't touch your ears or face
- *Don't put your hands on the back of your neck
- *Don't lie.
- *Never say "No comment" Instead you might say, "I'm sorry, I can't say anything more", or "I don't have anything more to say." ("No comment" always sound like someone is guilty or hiding something or angry).

You can offer to explain, when things change, or offer different info (e.g. "I wish I could share that info, but you can understand it is a matter of confidentiality. But I can tell you... (and offer a positive)

from News Reporting and Writing (Mencher)

Provided by Star Weiss, Feb. 2017

UVic Handout #4

Types of questions you may be asked in an interview

1. Closed...yes or no questions, demand direct answer
2. Open...(or open-ended)...tell me how it feels to be the new ED...requires longer answers
3. Leading: Do you agree it's wrong for...? Be careful not to be led
4. Double-barrelled: What do you think of noise pollution and how is your firm going to fight it?
5. Reflective: Seems to me if I were a researcher I'd.....What about you?
6. Antagonistic: Don't you think you should be doing a better job fighting noise pollution here? Why aren't you?
7. "Off the record" Reporter trying to get info (or you want to explain something) that is helpful for you both to know and understand, but will NOT appear in print. Can I ask you "off the record" if you agree with corporal punishment in the schools?

If you don't know the reporter well, DON'T go off the record. Most reporters honour this request, some do not.

Other phrases used:

"On background"...reporter can use info, and attribute it to unnamed spokesperson

"On deep background", can use info but not identify source at all (this is rare)

8. Speculative questions (the "if" scenario). ...Don't answer or make guesses about the future

UVic Handout #5

Dealing with questions:

1. Maintain control...remain patient and calm, never become antagonistic or angry
2. Stay on the record
3. Never say “no comment” but instead offer to explain, when things change, or offer different info (e.g. “I wish I could share that info, but you can understand it is a matter of confidentiality. But I can tell you... (and offer a positive)
4. When asked negative questions, do NOT repeat them. People remember what they hear. E.g. “So you’re guilty.” Don’t say, “No, I’m not guilty”, but instead “I’m innocent” or I’ll do everything I can to prove to you my innocence.”
5. To collect your thoughts, remain silent for a moment. Or say, “Let’s see what’s at issue here, Michelle.” (Don’t say, “As I’ve said before”, sounds rude)
6. For stressful questions:

*Build on common bonds, minimize differences

*Simply state your points

*A point you can’t refute? “We have a different way of looking at this” or “I appreciate your right to a different viewpoint”

7. State your positions right at the beginning and keep the ball in your court

(E.g. Talk about why your research is important, ground-breaking, or making a difference

(from Stephen C. Rafe)

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Tips for Telephone Interviews:

Call-backs: Always talk to reporters asap, but you may say you're in the middle of something, ask their name, publication, and deadline, and call them right back, after pulling files, getting stats, finding out what interview is about, gathering your thoughts, deciding if someone else should talk on this subject

Keep brief (normally, or let the interviewer set the pace, i.e. if he or she want to ask more questions, let them, but don't go on and on unless they ask questions)

Use variety of your voice, inflection

Gesture as you speak (adds animation to voice)

If appropriate, smile as you speak (comes through the phone)

Don't cradle phone on shoulder: creates tension in voice

Speak at a moderate rate

Don't interrupt. Wait before speaking

Consider the call a chance to tell your story properly and clearly

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