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Dos and Don'ts for Media Interviews

How to Make the Most of Your Time with the Media

"I thought I was off the record!" When speaking with a reporter, you should never assume you are off the record. So, how can you avoid ever having to say those words to anyone after an article has been published about your company? Here are a few tips to help you get ready next time you are being interviewed by a member of the media.

Prepare – This is the most important thing you can do to get ready to meet with the media. Yes, you are the subject matter expert, but you want to make sure you are thinking about who you are talking to and their level of knowledge on the topic. You want them to be able to understand what you are saying and how it is relevant to them.

Key Messages – Prepare and know your key messages. Have three main points you want to talk about during the interview. Make sure you are able to simplify them and mention them whenever possible. Even if the question does not fit, you can always bridge to your messages.

Research - Know the media outlet, the reporter and their audience. It is a good idea to look at some past work by the reporter so you know what type of news he or she covers and how he or she handles different topics. It will also give you a good idea of his or her level of knowledge on your topic.

Avoid Internal Jargon – Remember that no one else understands internal names and words. This is like speaking a different language. It also makes them think you can't relate to their audience. Think like the audience and speak in that language.

Be Truthful and Honest - If you can't answer a question, say so. Don't try to cover anything up. Only talk about that which you have knowledge. If you don't know something, it's okay to say, "I don't know." If you have a different source you can recommend for them, this would be a good time to do that.

Most importantly, remember that nothing is "off the record." Anything you say is fair game. Meeting with the media can be overwhelming, but it doesn't need to be. Taking the time to prepare for your interview will help you to steer clear of sticky situations and make the most of opportunities with editors.



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