

Media Outreach 102: Preparing for a Media Interview

Below you will find helpful ideas to ensure your team is staying “on message” when speaking with media.

Delivering Your Message

Take Control

- Once the interview begins, take control. Don’t wait for the reporter to guide you through your story. You’re in control and need to start from the beginning, delivering your messages early and often.

Use Flags

- Phrases such as “What’s most important...” “The key thing is...” “There are three critical factors...” signal to the audience that you’re about to say something important.

Build Bridges

- Building bridges is one of the most important interview techniques. Often a reporter will ask you a question that may not allow you to dive right into your message. Don’t just answer his or her question, find a way to go beyond the answer to your message.

Turn negatives into POSITIVES

- If the reporter asks you a negative question, don’t be defensive and don’t over-explain your response to the negative. Deal with the negative – and then bridge to a message. Always end on a positive note.

**Please note – NOTHING is off the RECORD*

Ways to Bridge

- **ADDRESS** the Immediate Question
(without echoing negative language)
 - “Not at all...”
 - “On the contrary...”
 - “I wouldn’t phrase it that way...”
 - “That hasn’t been my/our experience...”
- **BRIDGE** to a Key Message
 - “...but what I can tell you is...”
 - “...the important issue here is...”
 - “...the point I want to get across is...”
 - “...the most important thing to note is...”
 - “...the answer to the question I think you’re asking is...”
- **DELIVER** the Key Message
 - Often used in addressing negative questions, but can also be used for positive
 - “You’re absolutely right to say that, but there’s another aspect to this that people may not realize...”

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