

4 Questions to Ask Before Your Next Media Interview

By Kristina Hill

If the circumstances are right, getting called to participate in a media interview can be a great boost for your business on many levels. Your inclusion in a news story is an ideal way to generate awareness of your business; position yourself as an expert; set you apart from the competition; reinforce your key brand messages; secure third-part validation; and satisfy the curiosity of current and future customers. Although most media interviews are beneficial, there can be a downside. Your input in the wrong story at the wrong time can damage your personal and professional reputation in a way that can take a long time to recover. Here are several questions to consider before you say, "yes" to your next media interview request:

1. Does the media outlet requesting the interview speak to your target audience: The media serves as a conduit to reach your business' target audience (s). So, if your business is targeted to baby boomers, it might not make much sense to conduct an interview with a teeny bopper magazine or interview with an outlet in Detroit if your target audience is based in Los Angeles.
2. Are you prepared for the interview: If you agree to a media interview, the reporter has every right to expect that you will be prepared and credible. Respectfully decline the interview if you are not articulate on the interview topic, or don't have an adequate amount of time to prepare for and conduct the interview appropriately.
3. Are you the best person to speak on the issue: Steer clear of positioning yourself as an expert in an area that you are not. If you're asked to participate in an interview that's out of your league, respectfully decline or refer the reporter to someone else in your network who can handle the topic. This will help you score points with the reporter, who will respect your honesty, and your contact for giving him/her a platform.
4. Is the issue too controversial: I'm a big fan of making the big story your story, but sometimes, it's best to steer clear of controversial issues. Measure the cost of commenting on these types of stories before you proceed with an interview. Some things to consider are whether or not you know the whole story; if you have relations with anyone involved in the controversy; possible legal implications; and most importantly, how you and your business will be viewed after the story is published.

Overall, interviews are a balancing act. To be successful, know your story, your business' key messages, target audience (s), and the local, national (and even international) climate. Having a grasp on these areas will be a good indicator of whether you should accept an interview or politely decline.

