

News Media Interviews - 10 Mistakes Spokespersons Often Make With TV News and Feature Media

By Amelia Brazell

Spokespersons often make mistakes during media interviews that can easily be avoided with preparation, training and confidence. Here are 10 of the mistakes spokespersons most often make during interviews for TV news and feature media.

1. Deer in the headlights: When asked about something the spokesperson would rather not talk about they look as if they are about to be hit. To avoid this situation, anticipate difficult questions and prepare for them before the interview. Remember, if you dread it, you'll get it.

2. Not staying on topic: Reporters can ask anything during an interview. Your job is to stay on topic and not follow the reporter who veers from your topic. You do this by blocking an off target question while bridging back to your key message points.

3. Being a push over: It is uncanny how many times a strong and confident spokesperson becomes meek and weak during an interview. Remember, reporters are just people and there is no need to cower before them.

4. Bobble-head: Often, a spokesperson will nod their head up and down as if to say yes when they are asked a question. Usually, they are letting the reporter know that they understand the question. However, this comes across as agreeing with the reporter and that may not be the intention of the spokesperson. In fact, it is often just the opposite.

5. Over answering: Be concise - always stick to your message points and stop talking when you have answered the question. The silence between questions will be edited out later.

6. Speculating or answering a question even when you don't know the answer: For some reason, spokespersons will sometimes try to answer a question even when they have no idea what to say. If you are asked a question that you don't know the answer to, say you don't know. The reporter will appreciate your honesty.

7. Agreeing to an on the spot interview: Never agree to an interview on the spot. If you are asked to do an interview and you want to do it, simply tell the reporter you are in the middle of something but will be glad to schedule a time for the interview. Even if you just get a few minutes. This gives you time to collect your thoughts so that you can do a strong interview.

8. Not controlling the interview: During an interview, you are representing your personal brand, your company or your cause. It is up to you to control the interview

by staying on topic, delivering your message points and remaining confident. If the reporter starts down a rabbit hole, do not follow.

9. Being boring: Be your natural self - energetic, interesting and entertaining. TV is an entertainment medium and the more natural and interesting you are, the better the interview will be.

10. Not talking in sound bites: TV interviews are edited down to a series of 10-30 second sound bites. It is your responsibility to deliver your message points in concise, clear sound bites that they can use with little editing.

If you are nervous about being interviewed, get some personal media training and coaching. With preparation and training, you can be a hit during every interview. Now, go get interviewed.

These are some of the tips and strategies I have used to train media spokespersons for some of the world's largest not-for-profit organizations and Fortune 500 companies.