CONTENTS

Tips for Successful Interviews

Tips for Crisis Communications

Formula for Crisis Communications
tips for a successful interview
When a reporter reaches out, find out their deadline and what they want to cover

Do your research

Develop your message

Anticipate the reporter’s questions and practice, practice, practice

always gather your thoughts before an interview
When you’re doing an interview, it is not over until the reporter leaves.

Anytime you’re with a reporter, even if you are not doing an interview, understand they may take something you say and use it in a story.
there is no such thing as off the record

THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP A SECRET IS TO KEEP IT TO YOURSELF

Even if you know the reporter, there are no guarantees they won’t publish the information you share.

Determine other ways to get the reporter the information.
REMEMBER YOUR AUDIENCE

MAKE SURE YOUR MESSAGES ARE RELATABLE & RELEVANT

To connect with stakeholders, you have to understand what is important to them.

Keep your audience in mind as you prepare for an interview and develop your key messages.
Establishing a relationship with the interviewer can turn a potential confrontation into a conversation.
CONSIDER YOUR DEMEANOR

YOUR EMOTIONS SHOULD MATCH THE SITUATION

A positive attitude helps you successfully deliver your message.

Smiling can convey confidence & control.

People often come across as too harsh in interviews.

Don’t let anyone get under your skin and make you lose your cool.
It is impossible to look someone in the eye and tell a lie.

If you are glancing around during an interview it signals you are nervous or struggling with how to answer the question.
LISTEN CAREFULLY

IMMEDIATELY CORRECT ANY MISINFORMATION

If you don’t set the record straight, the interviewer will assume their facts are correct.

Simple ways to correct a reporter:
“That’s not true. As a matter of fact…”
“I want to make sure you have the correct information…”
DON’T SPECULATE

ALARM BELLS SHOULD GO OFF WHEN YOU HEAR, “WHAT IF...”

Hypothetical questions are almost always negative in nature.

Reporters ask what if questions to get information you wouldn’t typically provide.

Address these types of questions by saying, “I can’t speculate but what I can you is...”
LYING WILL ALWAYS COME BACK TO HAUNT YOU

If you don’t know the answer, tell the reporter you will get back to them or put them in touch with someone who can help.

If you say the wrong thing, correct your mistake as soon as possible and move on.

Half-truths and outright lies only make bad news worse.
Correct your mistakes

If you realize you’ve made a mistake, fix it and move on

Mistakes leave reporters with inaccurate information and make it difficult to focus on the rest of the interview.

To fix a mistake you can say, “Earlier you asked me about XXX, let me clarify my answer.”
AVOID LINGO & JARGON

USE TERMS YOUR AUDIENCE KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS

Do not use any acronyms.

Industry jargon can prevent you from connecting with your audience.
Instincts tell us to fill silence in conversations – don’t fall into this temptation during an interview.

If you keep talking, you may tell a reporter more than you want.

Move interviews along by saying, “Is there anything else you want to ask?”
INTERRUPTIONS THROW YOU OFF YOUR GAME

Occasionally, a reporter will use interruptions to prevent you from sharing your message or to try and upset you.

One trick for stopping interruptions, “I’d be glad to answer your questions but let me answer your first question before we move on.”
Q: Isn’t your organization withholding information from the public?

Wrong A: No, we are not withholding any information.

Right A: No, in fact, we are known for our transparency and willingness to speak with the community.
DON’T ANSWER QUESTIONS BASED ON INCORRECT ASSUMPTIONS

When there is lots of misinformation in a question, it can be difficult to correct all the inaccuracies.

The easiest way to address these questions is to say, “I don’t agree with the premise of your question. As a matter of fact…”
If after careful research you believe the story will not be covered fairly, or you are in a no-win situation, consider turning down the interview.

If you decline an interview, provide the reporter with a brief written statement.

Never subject yourself to the speculation associated with “no comment”.

when you should decline an interview
tips for a crisis

Be proactive & always be on the lookout for a crisis

Respond rapidly

Communicate internally

Take responsibility

Put the crisis into perspective

Be mindful of your tone

Be open to the media & stakeholders

Ask your champions to support you

Be first with bad news

Communicate early & often

Convey control
What people want to know:

**People Want to Know:**

- How will this impact me?
- Am I safe?
- What should I do?
- Who caused this?
- Can you fix it?

**Media Wants to Know:**

- Who's in charge?
- Who is to blame?
- What can we expect?
- What should people do?
- Why did it happen?
- What aren’t you saying?
how to craft your message

Your message is the single most important thought or idea you want to leave with your audience

Messages are communicated by your words, demeanor, appearance, surroundings and most importantly your actions

You should have 2-3 messages prepared for each interview

Back up each message with stories, third-party validation or facts
what you need to include in your message

- Acknowledge the crisis
- Express empathy to the victims
- Answer the question, “Are we OK?”
- Let people know you are in control of the situation
- Focus on what can be done versus what cannot
You’ve run out of ballots in multiple precincts for one of the political parties during a primary election. The party, voters and media are calling asking about what’s going on.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?
C: We want to apologize to the voters who have been impacted by a ballot shortage we are experiencing at several of our polling stations.

A: We are working hard to make sure everyone who wants to vote in this election will have the opportunity. Currently, our team is delivering more ballots to the areas where there are shortages.

P: We print ballots based on historical voting records and projections for each election. While we believed we had plenty of ballots heading into today, we’ve seen a huge, unexpected surge at the polls. We are excited so many people want to participate in this election, but we are asking for voters’ patience as our team works to respond to today’s high turnout.
It’s 8 a.m. on Election Day and you’re getting calls because one of your poling places isn’t open. It appears the poll workers haven’t shown up.

**practice scenario 2**

**Work with your group to determine what you will say to the media?**
QUESTIONS?

natalie@foresightpublicaffairs.com