



## Broadcast media interviews

**To communicate well on TV or radio needs preparation and practice, but it is a skill that can be learnt and put to use in any kind of public speaking.**

### Your role

By appearing on radio or TV, you're the face and voice of your organisation. Your personal views don't count, it's your company's views that you need to get across - although if they happen to coincide, then great.

Broadcast interviews often take place outside of your comfort zone – physically and mentally. But whatever the circumstances - because of proactive PR, or because something has gone wrong - they are a great opportunity to sell, promote, reassure, inform or explain.

### Your audience

The people watching or listening are your real audience – not the journalist or presenter. Bear in mind the type of programme and its 'typical' listener or viewer. If you're not sure, ask and pitch your message appropriately.

### Be prepared

Knowing your audience is just one aspect of preparation. You need to know other things in advance, too. For example:

- How long is the interview?
- Where will it be staged?
- Is it live or pre-recorded (and likely to be edited)?
- Who is the interviewer?
- Is anyone else being interviewed – if so, what's their point of view?

### Your message

Think about your own news consumption. How often do you completely pay attention to the radio or TV? Most of us come away with a general impression and remember one or two points. You've got little time, so make sure you get across what you really want to say – and think about this in advance, too.

It's a good idea to have two or three key points – your 'must' points, if you like; those points that you 'must' get across. Bear in mind, though, that memorising these is one thing, but communicating them in an engaging, memorable way is another. It takes practice.

### Your interview

#### Your posture

If it's TV, remember the BBC – Bum in the Back of the Chair – sit up straight, look at the interviewer (not the camera) and take a couple of deep breaths to help you relax. Wear comfortable clothes that are appropriate to your role and the context of the interview.



If it's radio, sit comfortably and practice speaking into the microphone – the producer will tell you if you're too close.

Whether it's TV or radio, your whole demeanour needs to be right. If you're trying to sell something, then you need to look and sound enthusiastic – if you're not, why should anyone else be? But be warned, people can tell a phoney.

### ***The intro***

It may put you more at ease to ask what the first question is going to be. Once underway, if it seems like a normal conversation, you shouldn't treat it like one. Your interviewer may have an agenda, but you've got to have one too. As I've already said – and repeating yourself in an interview is no bad thing - you have to prepare. Don't assume any knowledge – or interest – on the part of your interviewer.

### ***A few dos and don'ts:***

Do:

- Get your point across quickly
- Speak in plain English and avoid jargon
- Stop talking when you've made your point
- Stay professional, even if the interviewer is hostile
- Be memorable – use metaphor, image, anecdote or analogy

Don't:

- Lie – ever
- Comment on matters beyond your responsibility
- Pretend you know when you don't
- Use too many facts and figures – they get confusing

One helpful technique is 'bridging'. You acknowledge a question and then 'bridge' to your message, eg "Yes that's true, but I can tell you that today..."

*After the interview*

Obtain a tape if you can and try to get some honest feedback. Above all, learn from the experience.