
The Interview

Before the Interview

- Decide to be nonconfrontational and nondefensive, regardless of what you face.

 - You may face:
 - “You all don’t know what you’re talking about; people are dying here.”
 - “Ha, ha, did you get too much radiation? Your face is red!”
 - “You people are just covering stuff up.”
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Before the Interview

- Decide whether a “show and tell” is an option.
 - Take meters and sources along if it is.

 - A message can become much clearer with a demonstration.
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Before the Interview

- **Decide on your goal and your key messages.**
 - Use them in your answer to every question.
 - The public has to hear your key messages several times for them to be held in memory.

Before the Interview

■ Reporters and Stakeholders

- What slant is the reporter taking?
 - What are the issues that could be brought up?
 - Identify issues that are in opposition to your messages and determine how you will lessen their impact.
 - But, before you respond, make sure you let the audience know you heard the issues if they are brought up.
 - Identify issues that are similar to yours and when you hear them, use them to build collaboration and build on your message.
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Before the Interview

Practice – don't “wing it.”

The Interview

- Show understanding and reflect feelings:
 - “I understand that (restate the point) and...”
 - “I have heard that (restate the point) and...”
 - “I’ve run in to something similar with...”
 - “I, too, have read that (restate the point) and...”

 - Never make a joke about the people or their feelings.
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The Interview

- **Demonstrate your competence.**
 - Give brief, nontechnical answers unless asked for detail.
 - Know of studies that back up what you say in the event you are asked.
 - Do NOT pull numbers off the top of your head.
 - You are always on record!!
 - Try to put your answers within a context understood by the audience.
 - “The risk is small; about 1 in 5,000 people would be affected. It would be like planting 20 acres of corn and having 10 stalks that didn’t seed.”
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The Interview

- Respond to the feelings underlying any anger or resentment.
 - Try not to use “but”—for example, “I know you are (angry, mad, sad), but...”
 - If you do not live in the area, do not say “I understand how you’re feeling.”
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The Interview

- Respond to the feelings first, then pause.
 - With feeling and sensing the audience angst:
 - “I realize that people are uneasy about the siting of a cell tower close to a school.” <pause>
 - With competence and humility:
 - “There is no scientific data, however, showing a link between health effects and cell towers.”
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The Interview

- Weave your key messages into your answers.
 - Key message: Nuclear power plant fuel cannot explode.
 - Reporter: “If something happens at that plant, we’re goners.”
 - You: “An explosion, not of the nuclear fuel itself because it cannot explode on its own, would have effects similar to explosions of the same magnitude at any location.”
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The Interview

- Listen carefully to the reporter and/or the audience:
 - Not just for what is said, but especially for what is not said—watch body language.
 - For underlying feelings.
 - Ask questions to get a good understanding of the feelings underlying the issue.
 - If you have a question about the question you are being asked, ask first, then answer.
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Closing Thoughts

- If you remain calm and nondefensive, you hear the questions more clearly and appear more competent.
 - If you dismiss feelings, it doesn't matter what you say. You will be disregarded.
 - Think before answering a question, even if the answer pops right into your head. Give yourself a 3-5 second time-out, then answer.
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