



## **HOW TO PREPARE FOR A RADIO OR TV INTERVIEW**

### **Who is my audience?**

Decide who you're talking to. Is it mothers with bored kids, office workers looking for something to do in the evenings, or retired people with free time midweek. You can't decide exactly what you're going to say until you have decided exactly who your audience is. Your target audience will usually be a subsection of the total audience for the programme. You can guess who the audience, for the programme, is from the time it is broadcast. For example, Morning Ireland is usually on at 7.30am to 9am – the audience is business people going to work.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of a member of your target audience. Here's what you need to write down:

### **WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS NOW**

What they know VS What they feel

What do I want my target audience to be thinking, saying or doing after the interview?

You must have a communication goal. This goal is to shift the target audience from position A to position B.

Identifying your audience and your communication goal are the two most important steps in preparing for a radio interview. If you get these wrong your interview will not be effective. Here's what you write down:

### **WHERE I WANT THE AUDIENCE TO BE AFTER MY INTERVIEW**

What they'll know VS What they'll feel

Don't be over-ambitious. In a four-minute interview, for example, if you're a very good talker, you might make your chosen audience remember 3 pieces of information about the event you want them to attend. You certainly won't make them remember 6 pieces of information.

Talk your answers out aloud. Sometimes, we hear ourselves saying something we realise does not do justice to the point we wish to make. It's a lot better to find that out at home, before we go to the studio, than live, on the air.

When you're sure of what you're going to offer, take a card and, with a big, black felt-tip pen, put down a few key words:

- All of the family will enjoy our event
- Protecting our biodiversity protects all of us
- Everyone should take part in National Heritage Week

Make sure you also note down any figures, names or other factual data, which might elude you, under pressure.

## **MEDIA INTERVIEW DON'TS**

- Don't read aloud. Answer questions in a conversational way.
- Don't say 'I'm glad you asked me that question' or 'that's a good question'. Just get to your answer.
- Don't tell the interviewer what to ask you. Stay on your own side of the fence and offer what you came to offer.
- Don't argue with the interviewer. It's not him or her you have to persuade. It's the people at home.
- Don't put padding in front of your answers: 'Well, it's important that your listeners see this issue in its wider context.' Cut to the chase. Get to the point.
- Don't bring a mobile phone, a pen with a clicky end, a pager or a watch that tweets on the hour into a TV/Radio studio.
- Don't wait for the right question. It may never arrive. Find a way to make your point without it.

## **COPING WITH NERVES**

You have prepared the points you want to make, your plan for handling obvious questions and your method of coping with nasty questions. In theory, you're sitting pretty. In reality, it's at this point that nervousness sets in.

Most good performers suffer nerves before they go onstage or in front of a microphone. It is an appropriate response before a challenging public appearance, especially if the public appearance is important to people other than oneself.

Make sure, any time you are broadcasting, that you have water within reach, and use it.

The key to controlling nervousness during the interview is to stop looking at yourself. Keep your attention on the audience.

## **A FEW EXTRA FACTORS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN PREPARING**

The first and last questions follow a pattern.

In most interviews, the first question is what's the story here?

In most interviews, the last question is where do we go from here?

Different words are used but the meaning is usually some variant of these two questions. Prepare accordingly.

Keep control of the interview by talking about specific examples.

You're the expert on your topic.

Set out to be interesting. Don't force the interviewer to ask a million questions to get the story out of you.

If you don't know the answer, say so.

Don't try to flatter interviewers by using their first name. Once at the beginning – only. Your target audience is out there in kitchens and motorcars. If you continually use the interviewer's name, it makes the audience feel they're eavesdropping – they're outsiders.

Go live if possible. People tend to perform better live, despite (or perhaps because of) the possibility of making an error.