

Broadcast Interviews: Here's a Tip Sheet to Help You Prepare

You secured an interview with CNN ... now what? Keep in mind that broadcast reporters and producers work under extremely tight deadlines. Often, they have little time to research the topic and expect you in the studio only hours after the initial outreach.

If you've been invited to participate in a broadcast interview and are feeling the pressure, here are some key television interview tips.

Prepare for the Interview

- Understand the nature of the show.
- Ask about the story and interview questions.
- Find out in advance whether the interview will be edited or live.
- Know the three key messages you want to deliver – and make sure you can deliver them succinctly, with examples and facts.
- Practice your talking points using a stopwatch to time your key messages.
- Prepare a couple of interesting anecdotes or examples that bring your messages to life.
- Prepare for any uncomfortable questions that may come up.

During the Interview

- Be confident, and be yourself.
- Use soundbites and familiar terms, and keep it simple.
- Enunciate – speak slowly and clearly using short but complete phrases. Keep answers brief.
- Pause between thoughts during taped interviews to allow editors to cut snippets as needed.
- **Stick to your key messages** – revert back to them throughout the interview to stay on topic.

Control the Interview

- Lead off with the most compelling fact, especially in a short interview.
- Don't ignore the reporter's question, listen carefully...then bridge.
- Find the shortest way to move from their question to your key message.
- If the question is something you can't answer, don't. Instead, explain that either you can't speak to the question but you can tell them something else, or that it is outside your area of focus.
- Never speculate or answer questions if you don't know the answer.
- Don't let anyone put words in your mouth.



Lisa Altman

Senior Vice President
Public Relations
301.943.9948
laltman@jaffepr.com

Avoid Common Pitfalls of Media Interviews

- An interview is not a commercial – message delivery must be organic and natural.
- Remain even-tempered, and **keep your cool in the face of a combative reporter**. Breathe!
- Be prepared to segue into an appropriate response if asked an inappropriate or off-topic question – you are there to share knowledge, not to fall down a rabbit hole.
- Assume the microphone is always on.

Look Your Best

- Avoid wearing white, black or red – blues and pastels look best on camera.
- Clothes should be neat, wrinkle-free and comfortable.
- Avoid distracting patterns, stripes and bright colors.
- Avoid large, jangling or reflective jewelry.
- Wear a shirt or jacket with lapels so the microphone can attach easily.
- Facial hair should be trimmed.
- Accept make-up if offered; if not offered, make sure your own make-up is slightly bolder than normal.

Be sure to check in with marketing to clear the interview for conflicts before agreeing to participate. Remember to prepare and practice message points, be brief, and state the facts.

If you need assistance with preparing for a broadcast interview, feel free to contact me, [Lisa Altman](mailto:laltman@jaffepr.com), at laltman@jaffepr.com.