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INTERVIEW TRAINING

workbook

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Communicating in an era of expanding accountability, rising expectations, enduring issues and a 'greenward' shift of public opinion.



Introduction to Media Interviewing

Agenda

This course is designed to give participants the opportunity to learn skills for interviews with reporters. It is not intended to make each of you into a public communications specialist.

This handout reflects the course material and you are encouraged to make notes, mark these pages or listen, whichever method best suits your learning style. You need only take those things from the seminar that are significant to you and you are encouraged to continue any techniques and practices that you have found successful in the past.

A television camera will be used to record your practice interviews whether you are preparing for print, radio or TV because it is an excellent learning tool. Its use does not indicate that the techniques taught in this course are equally applicable in all three media.

The workshop addresses these concerns:

- Being put on the spot
- Being unclear in an interview
- Being misquoted or misunderstood
- Having to simplify complex information
- Reporters who skew information



What are your concerns?

What do you want to accomplish through this workshop?

Please take time to introduce yourself.

Please include any observations you may have about how the media operates and highlight any experiences you have had with the media.

You have 90 seconds for your introduction – a long story on a television news broadcast!

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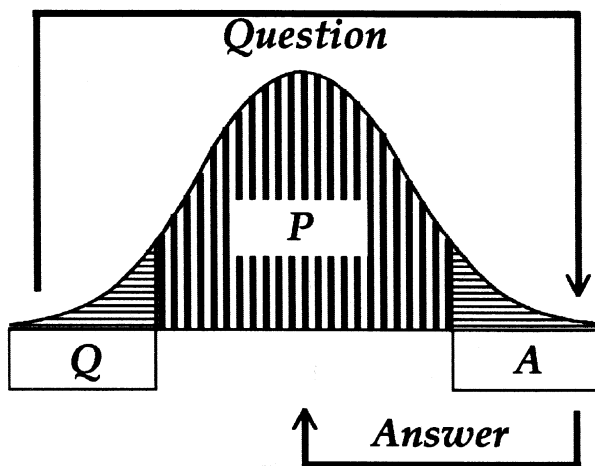
The Audience

This workshop is designed to teach effective communication skills to help you advocate your side of the story with skill so that people are informed about your facts. The reporters, on the other hand, often act as neutral extremists, and ask questions from the perspective opposite to yours in order to generate a highly emotional dynamic.

If you reply in response to this dynamic, the consequence for the audience may be that no one is any better informed and those with little or no knowledge of the subject may lose interest. It is far better to direct your answers to the majority of the population who neither opposes nor necessarily agrees with your position.

Express your answers in terms of the values, interests and needs identified and held by the majority of the audience.

Fig. 1 Audience for media & other publics



NOTES: _____



The Media

What is the role for media?

- They provide basic political information.
- Links government, groups, citizens, regions.
- They make some people famous.
- They inform people.
- They set the agenda of public discussion.
- Editorials.
- They influence influential people.

What does the reporter want?

- News is a business.
- Limited space or time.
- Deadlines are strict.

Journalists are generally:

- Inquisitive
- Skeptical
- Well-educated
- Competitive
- Under a lot of pressure

Causes of friction include:

- Reporters criticize.
- People are suspect.
- Critical stories are easier to write.
- Your business is confusing.
- They distort when they simplify.

NOTES: _____

Characteristics of a news story:

Surprise	Reporter's Interest
Affect	Mistakes
Effect	Change
Conflict	Editor's Perspective

The Famous Five:

- | | |
|----------|------------------------|
| 1. Who? | 4. Where? |
| 2. What? | 5. Why? |
| 3. When? | [AND How much?] |

What is a story?

Accurate	Complete
Balanced	Compelling

Building blocks for a story:

- Sound or clips
- Reporter
- Archives
- Third party expert
- YOU the newsmaker
- The folk hero
- Voice-over and visuals
- Public reaction (people in the street)
- Newscaster

NOTES: _____



Interview Preparation

Preparing for the interview:

1. Investigate
2. Prepare
3. Practice
4. Deliver
5. Evaluate

Key Messages:

- your main points;
- what you want the audience to remember;
- limit the number of messages to TWO;
- brief;
- memorable; and
- if possible, NEWSWORTHY.

Delivering your message:

- understand and reflect the public concerns;
- speak the audience's language;
- know what the audience needs/wants;
- communicate frequently;
- use third parties for credibility;
- develop long term relationships;
- exercise or rehearse;
- be careful of the seven deadly sins; and
- bridge the gap between your answer/message.

NOTES: _____



Bridging The Gap

Exercise:

Clear Question

----- “Yes because ...”

Direct Answer

Key Word

----- “The problem is ...”

Mirror

----- “The opposite is true.”

Bridge

----- “My main concern is ...”

Parallel
Construction

----- “Another approach is ...”

Small Concession

----- “It is also true that ...”

Cherry Pick

----- “The most important point you raise is ...”

Refocus

----- “The real issue is ...”

Telescope

----- “The big picture is ...”

Microscope

----- “One example is ...”

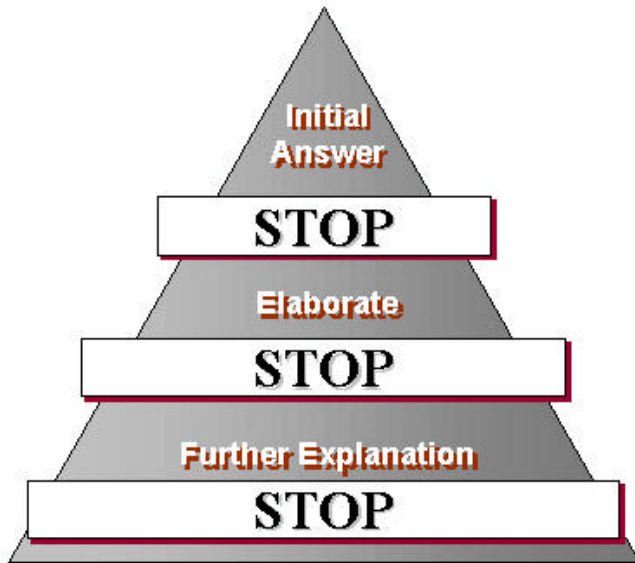
Flagging

----- “I want you to remember ...”



Questions And Answers

Responding to questions:



The following are examples of questions we do not answer BUT neither do we say “no comment.”

- prejudice and rumors
- outside your expertise/knowledge
- opinion (especially personal)
- hypothetical (speculative)
- inordinate expectations
- other people's quotes
- confidential or personal issues
- policy formation and justification
- anything before the courts or in quasi-judicial process.

NOTES: _____

Some Examples of Questions from Hell:

Example 1

Loaded Question: “How much damage has his allegation caused to your organization?”

Answer Strategy: Do not accept the premise by trying to ignore it. Instead, challenge the premise politely but firmly and then move to your message.

“We have had one of our best years delivering...”

Example 2

Sympathetic Approach:

“I guess it must be really tough on you with all the problems your organization is facing?”

Answer Strategy:

Do not get lulled into agreeing.

“The main concern is continuing to carry out our responsibilities.”

Example 3

Multi-part question:

“What impact will the changes make ... at the same time will you...?”

Answer Strategy:

Choose the question you want to answer – do not try to answer them all: let the reporter ask a follow-up.

“The changes will make us more efficient and more responsive to the public and ...”

Example 4

Hypothetical Question:

“What will you do if you don’t agree?”

NOTES: _____

Answer Strategy:

Label it as speculation and do not speculate.

“I am sorry but you are asking me to speculate and I am not prepared to do that. Our firm ...”

Example 5

Bait Question:

“Do you think government is being indifferent?”

Answer Strategy:

Do not repeat the offensive word *indifferent*, even to deny it. Refute without repeating word.

“I wouldn’t say that. Addiction and mental health problems affect over 60% of families and our agency ... (add key message)”

Example 6

Personal Opinion Question:

“What about your opinion on that?”

Answer Strategy:

Keep you personal opinion out of it – whether you agree with the statement or not.

“I don’t believe that my personal opinion is relevant. The issue is...”

Example 7

You do not know the answer:

“How much was the settlement?”

Answer Strategy:

Say you do not know or cannot answer and why.

“I don’t know” or “I’m not in a position to say.”

“That information is confidential.”

“That issue is before the courts and I cannot say until the issue is settled.”

NOTES: _____



Summary

1. Review audio/video clips of other's interviews.
2. Preparation routine summarized on card.

NOTES: _____



Practice Session

NOTES: _____



APPENDIX 1

Television Tips

- If you are anywhere near a camera, assume it's on and recording every word/action.
- Don't wear stripes; they dance around on the screen and are distracting.
- People shouldn't judge you by your appearance, but they will.
- If you do/wear anything distracting on TV, people will remember that, not what you say.
- Every TV anchorman, soap opera actor, sitcom star and talk show host on TV is made up and groomed for TV. Unfortunately, this is the standard of comparison used by the TV audience when they are watching you.
- Don't look at the camera unless there is no reporter or host to speak to.
- It is easier talking to a human being than it is talking to a hunk of metal.
- Don't lean back in your chair; you'll look short and fat.
- Don't sit up perfectly straight; you'll look stiff and nervous.
- Lean forward 15 degrees into the camera; you'll look taller, leaner, and more confident.
- If you lean forward, your double chin will disappear and you will appear to have a stronger jaw line.
- Do keep moving your head.
- Do move your body a little.
- Do move your hands – whoever told speakers not to use their hands was not given accurate information.
- Don't move your hands above your face, below your chest or wider than your shoulders.



APPENDIX 2

Preparing Key Messages



APPENDIX 3

Pillars, Supports & Sparklers

Pillars are short, concise statements that:

- define (or re-define) the issue in least-arguable terms;
- define your role/mission/concern;
- define your job/expertise/responsibility;
- frame (or re-frame) the question in the public's mind;
- outline the main reason(s)/factors/challenges/steps/teams;
- inform/describe/explain -- rather than defend.

Supports are short literary devices that support your pillars:

- metaphors, analogies, proverbs, famous short quotes by others;
- one-liners, etc; and
- titles of reports, books, brochures.

Or, they are statements that support you in the interview process:

- phrases that help you deal with tough questions;
- manage/control the interview;
- bridges, baiting statements, repetition, pauses;
- summations; and
- sound bites.

Sparklers are devices that bolster your pillars by adding "sparkle" to a story:

- anecdotes and examples;
- charts, graphs, photos, maps;
- statistical analogies;
- success stories;
- unique features.



APPENDIX 4

Key Message Exercise

Media Monitoring Radio - CBC

Home Depot spokesperson Goldie Taylor comments on Carrier-Sekani's request to boycott northern BC wood products -- a.m., Friday, April 25, 2003 --

EVANS: The letter arrived but they're not ready to act. That's the word from lumber giant, Home Depot. The Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council asked the company to boycott all BC wood logged on their traditional land. Goldie Taylor is with Home Depot, in Atlanta, Georgia. She spoke with CBC reporter, Betsy Trumpener yesterday about the request for a boycott.

TAYLOR: As of today we're taking all of those correspondences under advisement. We truly don't feel that we have a place in this issue, or at least not today assessed that we have. That assessment continues. You know, part of what's - what's part of our DNA[?], our normal course of business, is that we partner with different constituencies in the community. And in this case that means we're going to partner with key influencers in the forestry community, there in Canada. We're going to partner with Paul Blumb[?] and the First Nations Tribal Council, in British Columbia. We're going to partner with our vendors, of course. And we're going to get to the root of and really understand all of the elements involved in this issue, and then survey whether or not our involvement is warranted. We understand our position as - as stewards. We are the number one wood purchaser in the world, bar none. And so we understand with that comes great responsibility. And so our response is to be - to listen and be responsive. Now what form that takes is yet to be seen. We have yet to make some definitive decisions, but right now we're in a listening mode. As of today, we have not assessed compelling reasons to get involved directly in this action, whether it be to get actually seated at the table, to help mediate solutions, or to participate in any call to action. We have not yet found compelling reasons. However, that doesn't mean those reasons won't come. And that's why we're in a listening mode now. We are pledged to be responsive to our constituents, to all of our customers, and make sure that they're met at their point of need, but those assessments continue. And if a compelling reason comes, we're going to be there.

EVANS: Goldie Taylor is with Home Depot, in Atlanta. And she spoke with CBC reporter, Betsy Trumpener.