

Terracom Tips

Making the Most of Your Media Interview

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Good media interviews don't just happen. They're the result of thoughtful preparation and follow-through. Here's how you can maximize your opportunity to spread your message.

Do your research.

Find out what you can about the reporter who will interview you. Read or listen to stories she has done. Does she have a beat that she typically covers? Does she seem familiar with the kind of work your organization does and your issues? If not, you can expect to spend some time providing background.

Communicate your message.

Always remember that an interview is not solely about answering questions. It is an opportunity for you to communicate your message.

Identify your key points.

Take some time before the interview to identify the two or three key points you wish to make.

Write out your key points.

By writing out your key points, you will become more comfortable and familiar with them. Follow the format of the points presented on this page: Start with a couple words or a phrase, boiling down the message. Then write out the point in a bit more detail. If you're doing a radio interview, you can have your key points in front of you as a reference.

Make your points.

Chances are, a reporter is not going to ask you the exact questions that will enable you to make your points. You will have to listen for opportunities to both answer his question and make a smooth transition to your point.

Repeat your points.

Everything you say will not be included in the final story. Look for opportunities to make your points more than once, to increase the chances that what you want your audience to know will survive editing.

Admit you don't know.

If you don't know the answer to a question, simply say so. Offer to find out the answer and provide it to the reporter later. Find out what her deadline is. Then provide the information in a timely manner.

Follow up if necessary.

Especially with print interviews, if you think of something afterwards that you wish you would have said, or you want to clarify something, contact the reporter. If he hasn't filed the story yet, he may include the additional information.

Be available.

If a reporter is on a tight deadline, make sure he has all your contact information, including your cell phone. By making yourself as accessible as possible, you can answer any questions that come up, seize an opportunity to stress a key point and enhance the accuracy of the story.

Return calls promptly.

When a reporter's on deadline, she needs to talk to you as soon as possible. Return her call promptly, and you'll help the story. She'll remember that you were a responsive source and may seek you out for future stories.