

KOLT

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Media Interview Tips

"Style is as important as substance"

1. **SMILE**
2. **LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE PERSON ASKING YOU QUESTIONS.**
Stare into the eyes of the interviewer or at a spot on their face. Don't be distracted by other nearby activity during the interview.
3. **SAY THE HEADLINE.** Know what you want to say and say it. Don't wait for the right question to be asked. Be prepared to make two or three points and repeat them. Keep your answers short. Make positive statements. Don't tell reporters everything you know, tell them what they NEED to know.
4. **FLAGGING:** Begin your sentences with a "flag" that tells the listener whatever I say NEXT is important, like:
 - "The most important thing to know is"
 - "The absolute truth is"
 - "People should remember that "
 - "It's critical for the public to understand"
5. **HOOKING:** Address the question in the first part of your answer, then quickly switch to what you want to say:
 - "You asked about an illness and you should know we are working hard now to make the public safe, but what I also want people to know is that (list things that are true).
6. **USE GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD WORDS AND LANGUAGE, NOT TECHNICAL JARGON.**
7. **WHEN YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT, STOP TALKING.** Speak in short sentences. Avoid verbal pauses like, "aahhh" or "uhmmm". Rehearse your answers aloud.
8. **TELL THE TRUTH.** Make positive statements. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't guess, and don't speculate.
9. **AVOID REPEATING NEGATIVE QUESTIONS.** Don't allow questions you don't agree with to be asked or allow the interviewer to say things that are false in a broadcast media interview. Correct untruths immediately.
10. **NEVER SAY "NO COMMENT" AND DON'T GO "OFF THE RECORD."**
11. **REMEMBER, YOU ARE REPRESENTING YOUR ORGANIZATION.**
What you say should be on behalf of your organization and consistent with organizational policies and programs.
12. **DON'T GET ANGRY.** Angry people look stupid, and "getting stupid" damages your image as a credible source. If the interview gets rough, SMILE.

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A Few Things You Can Do To Get News Media Attention

1. Issue a press release.
2. Issue a position paper.
3. Publicly release a report.
4. Send a letter to the Editor.
5. Have friends write letters to the editor supporting you.
6. Release a letter you have received.
7. Participate in a debate, discussion or call the media.
8. Comment on a hot local news item.
9. Hold a press conference.
10. Arrange for a celebrity to attend an event or fundraiser.
11. Make a prediction.
12. Announce a committee or task force.
13. Make a staff appointment.
14. Do a holiday event.
15. Announce an endorsement.
16. Take a fact finding trip.
17. Give an award.
18. Get an award.
19. Hold a contest.
20. Preview your schedule.
21. Make a speech before a public body.
22. Organize a tour.
23. Inspect a project.
24. Organize a protest.
25. Release a poll or survey.

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Ten Commandments for Good Media Relations

1. **HONESTY:** *"Thou shall tell the truth."* Say what you mean clearly and honestly. Disclose the truth quickly to avoid startling disclosures.
2. **INTEGRITY:** *"Thou shall be fair."* Treat different members of the media equally. Be nice and fair. Don't hide anything.
3. **KNOWLEDGE:** *"Thou shall do thy homework."* Communicators responsible for media relations must know their organization and issues extremely well. If you are asked a question about a subject with which you are unfamiliar, do not guess. Say you don't know and get back to the reporter with the information as soon as you can.
4. **IMMEDIACY:** *"Thou shall respond quickly."* Respond to the press as soon as possible. When you discover a problem, make sure you expose it and remedy it quickly.
5. **DEADLINES:** *"Thou shall not procrastinate."* Learn and respect media deadlines. Embrace the newsperson's sense of urgency about meeting those deadlines.
6. **ACCESSIBILITY:** *"Thou shall not build walls."* Make the job of the press easy and give them access to the whole story, including top executives for comment.
7. **PROACTIVITY:** *"Thou shall get out front as often as possible."* To develop better relations with the press, seek them out and get to know their needs and priorities. On a regular basis, key media people should be contacted, and given information they might find useful.
8. **CONSISTENCY:** *"Thou shall be consistently persistent."* Limit messages but be truthful, understandable, appropriate and acceptable. Say the same thing over and over to the media.
9. **CREATIVITY:** *"Thou shall get the media's attention."* A unique idea or approach to a story tends to garner more favor with newspeople than stories told in a way that news consumers find boring.
10. **INTERACTIVITY:** *"Thou shall interact formally and informally with the media."* Media relations work best when they are developed through face-to-face personal communication.