

5 tips to nail your media interview

By [Ayanda Siswana](#) and [Allison MacDonald](#)

3 Feb 2023

A common social anxiety disorder that people face is the fear of public speaking, or glossophobia.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Most people would probably rather go head-to-head with a shark in the ocean than have to stand up and speak in front of 100 people in a room.

Credibility with the media

Consequently, media interviews can be scary to navigate, but it is important to conquer your fears and ensure you get the most out of them when they do come around. Getting a handle on media interview skills builds credibility with editorial media, which is at least three times more effective than advertising, in our experience with clients and the media monitoring agencies the agency works with. It also serves as a direct route to the public and to a brand's target market.

However, media interviews can be nerve-racking – and when you're nervous, it's easy to make mistakes, resulting in a missed opportunity for effective communication and, ultimately, brand building. Media interviews don't have to be as daunting as they feel. Remember that as intimidating as it may be to have (possibly) thousands of people listening to or watching your interview, you're the "expert" at the end of the day, and you're only talking to one person – a journalist – at a time. The journalist reached out to you to speak on a particular topic for a reason, because they trust that you know best about that topic.

So, how do you make sure you have a good set of basic media interview skills?

1. Don't be taken by surprise

If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail. Educate and inform yourself beforehand. Find out who the audience is. Anticipate the questions you're going to be asked. You will already know what the interview is about, so think about what kind of questions could possibly come up. Once you've drawn up a list of possible questions, formulate the best answers so that you go into the interview armed with a toolset and knowledge that give you the confidence you need to manage the interview successfully.



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Ask the journalist or producer of the show to send you an indication of the questions if they can, not to be prescriptive to them, but just to be adequately prepared. To reiterate, you are the expert. You are knowledgeable and have been asked to speak about a topic about which the audience is curious. Go into the interview reminding yourself that you've been asked to speak on this subject because you are well-versed and, no matter what you get asked or where the conversation goes, you have the skills, background and experience to cope.

You're equipped to handle that conversation and those questions.

2. Use clear, accessible language

Even though you are the expert, the people you are talking to are not specialists and may not understand your area of expertise as well as you do. So, during the interview, speak in clear, simple and accessible language and make your points easy to understand.

"Decode" your language and make it interesting for people who don't have insight into your field of specialisation. This way, there is less of a chance for people and journalists to misunderstand you. That's also how you get people interested in listening to the full session.



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Think of ways you can make your message easy to relate to. For example, if you're in the energy sector and are called to speak about electricity, be clear on facts and figures. Instead of just talking about "30 megawatts", say "30 megawatts of electricity, which is enough to power a town the size of Klerksdorp for about 24 hours".

3. Seize the golden opportunity for brand building

When you're in a media interview, you're being given a priceless platform to build your brand and let your audience know that you're about more than the interview and what's being spoken about.

A media interview gives you and your brand or business access to thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people. It's

a brilliant brand-building opportunity that should not be wasted.

So, remember to “brand” often. What do we mean by “brand often”? Mention the name of your company or organisation at least once every 90 seconds or so. This is really easily done in the conversation. For example, “We at Flow Communications encourage our clients to study interview questions before the interview and prepare answers ahead of time ...”Furthermore, try your best to accept all media interview requests that come your way as these are golden opportunities that money can’t buy to build your brand.

4. What if you get thrown off?

Every now and again, difficult and even controversial questions come up during interviews. What do you do then? Relax. There’s nothing wrong with saying you don’t know the answer to a question. A brilliant spin word is “but”. For example, answer something like, “That is not my field of expertise, but what I can tell you about is...”Our best advice for dealing with difficult questions is to say something like this: “On the contrary, this is not our understanding or experience of the matter. What we know is that 99.9% of clients find our services to be excellent. In fact, we survey clients annually to make sure our services, our fee structure and our management of their communications is, and remains, excellent.”

Confront and address the negative statement by giving facts and furnish your interviewer with a positive story instead.

5. Some final tips

Here are a few last-minute pointers that will ensure you’re ready to knock those interviews out of the park:

- If it’s a telephonic conversation (and many interviews are), find a quiet room to sit in
- It’s best to use a landline number, because mobile technology can be unreliable. The last thing you need is for the network to drop your call in the middle of a fruitful discussion
- Be in your quiet space and ready for the discussion at least 10 to 15 minutes before the interview. That way, you’ll have enough time to calm down and not be in a panic because you’re running late
- Always take a glass of water into an interview, because when you get nervous, your mouth may get dry

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ayanda Siswana and Allison MacDonald are account directors at Flow Communications.

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