

10 top tips for dealing with controversial media interviews

By Jenni Metcalfe

1. Try to find out as much as you can about the agenda of the media. Why are they doing the interview? What are the related issues? Who else will they be talking to?
2. Find out the media audience for the interview – this will shape the questions and agenda of the interviewer.
3. For TV: Where will the interview be held? How will the location affect your image and that of your organisation? Take control of this.
4. Do lots of preparation and work out what you want to talk about, and what you DO NOT want to talk about – draw a very clear boundary around your story.
5. Prepare positive explanations of the research that will ensure you stay on the front foot during the interview. Never become defensive.
6. Be careful with analogies and explanation of risk. These can backfire. If you want to use analogies, make sure these make sense for the media audience you will be talking to.
7. Rehearse with a freelancer or ex-journalist who can ask you the difficult questions.
8. During the interview stick to the key points that you want to get across. Remember, with the media a question equals an opportunity to say what you want. It does not equal an answer.
9. Remain cool, calm and polite during the interview. If the interviewer becomes aggressive, they will be the ones who lose out, not you.
10. Don't be afraid of silence. Say what you want in answer to a question then stop. Silence is the interviewers problem, not yours.

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