

Media Training Guide

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Pre-Interview Preparation

- What is the topic?
- What is the program, publication? (Listen, read or watch before your interview)
- Who are the viewers, readers and listeners?
- What are the possible questions?
- Why have you been asked for an interview—what perspective are they expecting you to add?
- Where would they like to do the interview?
- What is the length of the interview?
- Who will do the interview?
- Is this a hard news, business or feature/lifestyle piece?
- Will the interview be live or taped?
- Do they need visuals such as a photo of a book jacket, a photo or Website information?
- Are they willing to mention eaTax.org? (Ask gently!)
- What time should you arrive at the studio? (If this is an in-studio interview).
- Get directions beforehand.
- If this is a phone interview, make sure to know who will do the calling for the interview and make sure the producer and host have backup numbers where they can reach you. You'll want their backup numbers too.

Before the Interview:

- **Know why you have agreed to be interviewed.**
Establish your objectives and decide what you hope to gain by giving the interview. Decide to whom your messages will be directed.
- **Provide the interviewer with background information.**
It is important to provide as much background information as possible about yourself and your organization. The more the interviewer becomes familiar with you and your group, the more informed his/her questions will be.
- **Decide what your main message points are.**
These should be based on what you want the interviewer and audience to know. This makes it easier to talk about what YOU want to talk about, rather than allowing the interviewer to lead you.
- **No matter what the interview subject, be prepared to answer questions on the current news of the day.** Your interview may be linked to the news of the day/week so it's important to understand how the subject of your interview may relate and be prepared for those questions.

- **Do not attempt to memorize your answers.**

While you will be prepared with your message points, you don't want to sound like you are giving a robotic response to the question answered.

Remember that it is ultimately up to the interviewer to decide what will be asked.

While you may have a list of suggested questions in your press kit, the decision on which questions to ask is in the hands of the interviewer. Don't tell what to ask! (This is a good way to ensure a negative interview or to be never asked back again).

Your Rights In An Interview:

Remember that you are not being forced to do the interview. You are doing it by choice, and there is no reason to feel intimidated. No matter how well informed the interviewer might be, you should remember that you know more about taxes than he/she does. You should feel confident in your knowledge. You are the expert!

You do not have to answer questions of a personal or a confidential nature. No matter what, explain if you cannot answer a question with, "I'm sorry, but that's a personal question," or "I'm sorry, that's in litigation right now and I'm not at liberty to discuss it." **You should never say, "No Comment."** Most people watching will think of that as an admission of guilt or suspect you have something to hide.

For the most part though, you should try to answer every question. You can learn how to take any question and turn the conversation back to where you want it to be. This is a much better way to diffuse the situation.

During the interview, always look at your host. Do not look at the monitor. (This can be a difficult thing. If you are curious, ask to see the monitor beforehand and then forget about it!) Your host represents the audience and if you turn away from the host, you are the turning away from the audience.

Ignore any distractions caused by the floor director or the crew. The floor director is there to give cues to the host. In most instances, you can and should ignore him/her.

Basic Interview Strategies & Tips:

Be Prepared:

- Make a list of 3-5 important points you would like to talk about in order of importance.
- Reread your promotional material or mission statement before the interview.
- Make your points early and clearly.
- Go into each interview knowing the points you want to make and the impression you want to leave.

Listen To The Questions:

- Answer the question that is being directed your way and then augment it with a related story or one of your points.
- When traveling or taking “phoners” in other cities, it’s a good idea to read the local newspaper if possible or know the local angle to your message.

Be a Good Guest:

- Be very willing to give information. You are the expert. The more you give, the more likely your message will be understood.
- Don’t use jargon or unfamiliar words.
- The audience knows their host and could be part of a loyal following. Make certain you are always respectful of that, even if he or she doesn’t reciprocate.
- Listen to the introduction. A good interviewer will mention you as the author/expert. It’s up to you to make certain the title of your organization, book or company is repeated again. But don’t oversell. Listeners are very savvy about that.
- Don’t be afraid to make a mistake. The people at home love it. Just correct it and go on.

ALWAYS HAVE A COPY OF YOUR PROMO MATERIAL WITH YOU.

Additional Interview Strategy

Be Yourself. Don’t attempt to change your style. If you are comfortable using humor, for example, and it is appropriate, then go ahead and use it. Don’t overdo it or you might seem foolish and not serious. In any interview situation, genuine warmth and

enthusiasm communicate well. Under normal circumstances, you should choose friendly over formal.

When you or one of your staff are being interviewed as the representative of your organization, remember that any comments you make will represent that organization. Do not give your personal opinion unless it is the same opinion that you want associated with the group.

Don't shuffle papers! It's ok to bring notes with you to a radio interview but lay them out so that the microphone cannot pick up the sound. You can bring notes for a TV interview but only one sheet if it's really necessary.

Be careful with statistics. Make sure your facts are straight. If the interviewer cites a stat you aren't familiar with, do not challenge them. Simply say that you aren't familiar with that statistic and add your comments on a statistic you are familiar with. ("I'm not familiar with that statistic but what I do know is that a recent study from...showed...")

Never be defensive. You can never win by getting into an argument. Don't sink to someone else's level.

If you are asked a hypothetical question, you can give a hypothetical answer.

If an interviewer asks you to choose between two answers to a question you do not have to choose if you don't agree. ("My answer to that question would actually be...")

Do not try to speak for an absent third party. You do not have to apologize or explain the actions of another organization. You can get back to your objectives by saying, "I cannot speak for Mr. Smith's actions. What I can tell you is...."

You cannot ignore a question. If a controversial subject comes up, provide a brief and general response and then bridge back to an area of discussion that matches your communication objectives.

Specific Types of Interviews

TV Interviews:

- Do not make unnecessary movements and noises. Quick hand and body movements are difficult for the camera to follow.
- Don't slouch or hold your chin down or get too casual in your sitting posture. (You don't want to look too stiff though!)
- When the red light atop the camera is lit, the camera is in use.

- Assume that you are the center of interest every second. Directors may cut to you when the host is speaking to show your facial reactions. Don't assume you are off the air until you are out of the studio. On the way to commercial breaks, the camera may still be on you.
- Interviews for news shows require advance planning. You will need to get your messages to your audience with a minimum of well-chosen words.
- For panel discussions, you should follow the same interview strategies outlined earlier, but be prepared with the positions and attitudes of your fellow panelists. Anticipate the key points they will make, and be prepared to express and support your views. Be well organized, prepared and have a powerful opening remark.

Radio Interviews:

- Maintain a distance of about 6-8 inches from the microphone with both elbows on the table.
- Talk normally. The microphone is very sensitive.
- Delivery is extremely important in radio interviews you must rely on the tone of your voice to emphasize key points.
- If you are answering a call--in question, you must not allow much time to lapse before answering, but you also want to allow your caller to finish their thought.
- Keep your emotions in check if you get an overly aggressive caller.
- Always keep water on hand to lubricate your voice.

WHAT TO WEAR IN AN INTERVIEW

Do:

- Remember the focus is on you and your message-not your clothing!
- Wear a color that you feel good in and that looks good on you. Solid colors are best.
- Wear make up if you are a woman. Not something you would wear to a black tie, but nice, everyday makeup that accentuates your best features. Sometimes there will be a makeup artist in-studio, but many studios have cut

back. Ask ahead of time if there is someone at the studio who does makeup, if you are concerned with your skills in this area.

- Keep your hair out of your face. This doesn't mean it has to be up, but it should not be distracting. You don't want to be nervously twirling your hair or pushing it out of your face in an interview.

Don't:

- Wear large prints or patterns. Some pattern in a tie is ok.
- Choose black and white shiny fabrics.
- Wear overwhelming scarves or ties.
- Put on noisy jewelry. Remember this can be picked up on radio too!
- Keep loose change in your pockets.
- Wear shiny jewelry for TV. Pearls or dull finishes are ok but sparkly and metal jewelry are a "don't."