

## Summary

Media is an important element to marketing. As a vehicle for communication, distribution of information, and establishing credibility, media relationships and interactions must be managed with care. These practical considerations and techniques will make sure you always maximize every media opportunity to the fullest.



## ACTIVTips

Summary information or practical advice for business leaders, ACTIVTips represents best practices for businesses seeking new opportunity, predictable growth, and leadership excellence. Integrating ACTIVTips into your business can help you consistently **“Lead Like Never Before.”**



the **afterburner** group

## Marketing - Media Interview Techniques

You have heard the phrase tell them what you are going to tell them and tell them what you told them. This is so true of any interaction with an external audience like press or analysts. Unless you know exactly what you want to communicate it is very unlikely that you will end up communicating it effectively in fact you may very well end up doing more damage than good.

The following are worthy steps to consider before engaging in any interview:

**Know the Publication or Analyst Organization:** Why does the publication or organization exist? How long has it been around? Frequency of the publication or reports? Are they online only, print, or both? What is their audience concerned about and how do they cover these concerns? If you are going to speak to an online publication you should expect your comments to be on line minutes after you speak the interviewer.

**Know Who You are Talking To:** Do some research on the reporter or analyst, what they write about, how long they have been covering the beat (focus area) and read an article or publication or two they have written recently – mention them in passing during an interview.

**Understand Why the Person is Talking to You:** Are they writing on a certain topic? Is the writer looking for comment or opinion on a subject or circumstance? Is the deadline short or is their interest for a longer piece with a longer lead time?

**Determine Where They are in Their Writing Cycle:** Is the interviewer on deadline and just needs a few quotes; or, do they have 30 minutes to learn more about your company, its offering(s) and you? If you don't know, clarify this at the beginning of the interview so you can adjust accordingly.

**Plan Exactly What You Want to Cover:** Put key messages together in the form of talking points and steer the conversation throughout the interview. If the interview is in person you will need to commit them to memory.

**Prepare Q & A (Questions and Answers) on Difficult Questions or Issues:** Make sure all the answers are accurate, represent your position(s), and don't repeat any negative language.

**Stay Positive and Upbeat:** Never repeat negative language posed in a question. Instead respond to a negative question by stating a positive point that generally ties back to the question posed.

**Be Selective and Purposeful:** Know that you can choose not to answer any question. It is an accepted practice to say that a question is outside of the scope of the interview and you not willing to comment on that subject. Feel free to answer any question as you wish, not necessarily as it is posed.

**Never Slam the Competition, Publication, or Analyst Organization:** Always redirect such questions by stating something you might like to ask such an organization on the topic at hand.

**Know How to Answer Questions:** After being asked a question, pause for a second, collect your thoughts and see if there is any way to connect your answer to a key point you want to make - then deliver your response.

**Stay Ahead of Difficult Questions:** 1) Stop and reflect and compose your answer 2) If you still not sure how to answer, ask the person to repeat the question - rarely is it asked the same way and often you gain additional insight. 3) Never, ever, ever answer a question you don't know the answer to. It is better to say you need to get back to them, setting a time/date when you will, and following up.

**Know That Nothing is “Off the Record”:** That phrase only exists in movies. Nothing is ever off the record and words spoken can not be retracted. No matter the interviewer, subject, or circumstance conduct all interviews and discussions as if all are “On the Record.”

**Stay In Touch:** Ask 1) Name, contact information 2) Name of their publication and 3) Deadline. Follow up to ensure accuracy or to return requested information. Manage the process...

**Ask for Help:** Don't go into media interviews without some help. If anything, those you ask can coach you for effectiveness, record any issues for follow-up, and generally help keep all on message and focused on the topics at hand. For more information on PR and media training call The Afterburner Group.