



**GETTING
THE MOST
OUT OF
RADIO
AND
TELEVISION
INTERVIEWS**

WEST MIDLANDS POLICE

Press & Public Relations Dept

*'There aren't any embarrassing questions –
only embarrassing answers'*

Carl Rowan
The New Yorker

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF MEDIA INTERVIEWS

This leaflet sets out a few helpful hints about giving good radio and television interviews and lists some dos and don'ts to get the best out of your broadcasts.

What you want out of an interview

- To get information across that will help you
- To look and sound professional and confident
- To gain the support of the listeners/viewers

Before the interview

Before you agree to an interview, find out the following information from the press office or reporter:

- What areas will be covered
- Likely questions
- What angle the interviewer will take
- Who else is taking part
- If the interview is live or pre-recorded
- What type of programme it is, news, phone-in, chat show etc.
- How long the interview will last

Planning the interview

For a successful interview, plan, plan, plan. How can you turn the interview to your advantage and how can you get your message across most effectively?

What are your objectives?

- Appealing for help
- Gaining support from the public
- Promoting the force/police officers/your department
- Giving the public advice or information
- Answering criticism

Write down in less than 20 words the three most important points you want to make

List the key facts or examples that support your main points

Decide how you can use your facts and examples to get your points across

Note the questions you will probably be asked:

Who . . . What . . . Where . . .

When . . . Why . . . How . . .

Plan your replies with your objectives in mind. You may only get one opportunity to get your message across. Think of a short summary (25 words or less) which includes the points you want to raise and make sure you use it, no matter what.

Remember . . .

- Most radio news bulletins will only use 10 – 30 seconds
- Have incident room/helpline telephone numbers to hand
- Call back if you are asked to do a radio interview to give you time to plan
- Always assume the camera and microphone are switched on and do not say anything you would not wish broadcast
- If you forget something important ask if you can quickly record it
- Television leaves viewers with an impression — make sure the impression you leave is professional and confident

Handling radio chat shows and phone-ins

- Radio chat shows and phone-ins have a more informal, relaxed style — adapt your own style accordingly
- Think of someone who may be listening to the programme and talk to them as if they were sitting opposite you
- Dig out facts and figures to support your argument
- Research your subject well but if you cannot answer a question say so and give the reason why
- Decide which points you **must** get across and those which you would **like** to get across. Every time you answer a question try to use one of those on your 'hitlist'
- Give figures in non-mathematical terms, eg. one in four rather than 25%

Live or studio television interviews

- Arrive at the studio early — there are often delays at reception
- Ask to see the introduction and what will be said about you
- Meet the interviewer and other people involved in the interview
- If others are taking part check the speaking order
- Ask what the first question will be

Location interviews

- If being interviewed in your office, tidy up and remove anything inappropriate
- Put a notice on your door asking for quiet and no interruptions
- Divert your telephone
- Sit forward and look alert
- Take your own audio recording of the interview or ask for someone to be present who can give you advice/support
- If being interviewed outside check your background e.g. do not stand in front of a crowd of people

Dos and don'ts for a successful interview

- Do** put some 'life' into your voice, vary your tone and pace
- Do** control your mannerisms and fidgets
- Do** check your appearance and the interview background
- Do** avoid alcohol
- Do** look relaxed and sound interested
- Don't** use jargon
- Don't** argue with the interviewer but correct any inaccuracies which arise
- Don't** look directly at the camera, look at the interviewer
- Don't** try to put on a different accent, be natural
- Don't** make off-the-cuff comments — you should have planned what you want to say beforehand

Looking and sounding professional

- Be 'alive', alert and assertive — not aggressive
- Target your replies at an intelligent 16-year-old
- Don't try to read from a script or notes
- Personalise interviews if appropriate — talk about "I", "you" and "my"
- Be sincere and truthful
- Ignore distractions

If you want further help or advice . . .

Contact Press & Public Relations Department staff who can brief you on the likely questions you will face and give you advice on your response.

If you would like any further information or advice on media training please contact:

THE PRESS & PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

AT LLOYD HOUSE

on  extension **2561/2**