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GET GREAT RESULTS WHEN WORKING WITH THE MEDIA
8 Simple Steps to talk to Reporters

When a reporter covers a story, they ask three questions. 1. Who cares? 2. Why should they care? 3. How many people does this affect? If you cannot answer those questions, there's a good chance the reporter won't be interested in what you have to say. Most spokespeople fail to realize they are not talking to the reporter, but rather to the reporter's readers, listeners and viewers. So, for starters, become your reporter's audience and you will quickly figure out what they care about.

KNOW THEIR NEEDS

Television needs visuals. Radio needs interviews. Think in those terms. If you're talking to a reporter about a tractor in the field, conduct the interview in front of that tractor where they can see it, rather than in an office, where they can only imagine it.

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

Reporters are not here to promote you. They don't care how great your product is. They want to know how your product or what you do benefits or affects the life of their listeners, readers and viewers.

IT'S OKAY TO BE REAL

People want to relate to you. No one wants to hear from a robot that is so "on message", that he never smiles or shows emotion. Enthusiasm is contagious. If you want to engage a reporter, then be passionate so they can feel how you feel.

DON'T PRODUCE THE STORY

Try not to tell the reporter how to do their job. You should provide information to guide them, but ultimately, they will write the story. The reporter does not work for you.

SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE

We know you're smart which is why we're interviewing you, so please don't use big words. Speak simply and conversationally. If the reporter doesn't understand you, then they can't explain it to the reader. So, what's the point?

WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

You can't control technical difficulties, where your story is placed or if you don't like the way your picture came out. You can control how you act, what you say and your attitude.

BUT, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS GOING TO ASK ME!

That's because you didn't anticipate the questions in advance. If you have a chance to talk to the reporter, find out what they want to know, why they're writing the story and what you can do to help them tell that story. Think about what you would want to know if you were reading that magazine or paper.

DON'T ASSUME THE REPORTER KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

Reporters are often assigned stories because they were nearby or not busy at the time. Many know a little about a lot, not a lot about a little. What is clear to you might sound foreign to them. Make sure they understand what you're talking about.

Often the best way to do that is to ask them. Reporters are just like you. Most want to get it right, but they can't accurately tell a story that they only THINK they understand.