

**Coping With Sticky Situations
and
Trick Questions**

Or, What To Do When . . .

The interviewer expects you to comment on issues beyond your expertise.

- ❖ Inform the interviewer that you are only prepared to answer questions related to your expertise as a spokesperson.
- ❖ Transition into key message points.
- ❖ If the interviewer persists, say "I'm sorry; I'm unable to answer your question."
- ❖ Stick to the substance of your message.

The interviewer is unprepared and asks irrelevant questions.

- ❖ Take control by reaffirming your expertise.
- ❖ Stress your key message points, feeding him questions about your topic.
- ❖ Involve the interviewer by asking questions about his experiences and concerns.

The interviewer/guest keeps interrupting you in mid-sentence.

- ❖ When it happens again, say "I will be happy to respond to your comment, but first let me finish with mine."
- ❖ Be pleasant, but insist on your right to give complete responses.
- ❖ Do not interrupt a questioner!

The interviewer is particularly antagonistic and asks one hostile question after another.

- ❖ Do not become combative. Maintain your enthusiasm.
- ❖ Do not repeat a negative question.
- ❖ Remember, you are well prepared and rehearsed.
- ❖ Answer questions with a brief response, then transition to a key message

During a taped interview, the reporter keeps raising his voice higher and higher.

- ❖ Don't respond by raising your voice.
- ❖ Each time the reporter raises his voice, lower yours.
- ❖ Remain calm, and stick to your message.

A reporter puts down his microphone and says, "Let's go off the record"

- ❖ Never go off the record with a reporter.
- ❖ Assume that anything you say in the presence of a reporter will be quoted.
- ❖ Assume that anything you say in the presence of a reporter's equipment will be quoted.

The interviewer wants you to respond to questions with yes or no answers.

- ❖ Do not fall for this technique.
- ❖ If a one-word answer will not do justice to your topic, say that there is not enough time for a proper answer to the question.
- ❖ Offer to provide an answer in writing.

An interviewer attempts to elicit your endorsement of a legislative proposal or program related to your issue.

- ❖ Be pleasant, but inform the reporter that your purpose is to provide information, not to make judgments.
- ❖ Stress your key message points.
- ❖ Develop a transition to get back to your subject.

You are asked a question that you don't know the answer to.

- ❖ Say "I don't know."
- ❖ Offer to find the answer.
- ❖ Never attempt to respond to a question that you don't know the answer to. Your credibility will be jeopardized!

The interviewer starts questions with hostile or inaccurate comments. This is called the loaded preface.

- ❖ Don't allow the loaded preface to stand unchallenged. Either correct the comment or state "I would have to verify that; I'm not sure it is correct."
- ❖ Quickly dispute the interviewer's comments, and explain why. Then, respond to the question posed, using the answer formula.

The interviewer poses an either/or question, and you don't agree with either option.

- ❖ Don't fall for this old trick.
- ❖ If you don't agree with either option, your answer must be "neither."
- ❖ After you've responded correctly, explain your response, then develop a transition.

You've answered fully, but the interviewer stares at you as if you should say more.

- ❖ Don't. This is called the pregnant pause.
- ❖ Keep your eye contact, and ask him or her for another question.
- ❖ If the interviewer continues to use this technique, launch into a transition, and deliver your key message points.