Structuring a Message-Driven Interview

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Desired outcome:

The *nurse* is in CONTROL of the message being presented through an interview or other media!
An interview provides:

an opportunity to deliver:

1. a **SPECIFIC MESSAGE**
2. to a **SPECIFIC AUDIENCE**
3. through the filter of a **REPORTER**
Role of Journalists

Journalists’ reason for interview:
1. YOUR information will provide a story to attract readers, listeners, or viewers.

THEREFORE, they have ideas that your message
- Must meet audiences’ expectations
- Must meet reporter’s requirements (content, time, style)
Spokesperson’s Role

- Consider the message in ADVANCE
- Be as PREPARED as possible
- You are the representative of the organization
- Provide your organizations’ messages in a format and style that meets your objectives
  - Know what story or impression YOU want to deliver
- Be on time, ask how long is expected (~45 min.)
Where to BEGIN

- Start with the conclusion (*Your KEY POINT*)
- Use facts to support your message
- Provide a illustrative story if time allows

Be aware that reporter may hear:
- Snippets of your message
- Only ONE Key point
- No context or background
- And may have their own predetermined assumptions or conclusions they want you to verify
Facts about reporters

- General knowledge = You are the EXPERT
- Short deadlines = short notice of interviews
- Time-space limits = clear and succinct
- Facts may be wrong = correct the record with accurate information
- Everything you say will be edited
- There may be a hidden agenda
- Will come with several prepared questions
- Your words may live forever — be accurate!
Rules

- Establish ground rules for the interview: you will be identified (not listed as anonymous source)
- Be courteous, professional, and your real self, confident and relaxed
- Know why YOU were asked for the interview
- If you don’t know the answer, say so, offer to get information, return to reporter (keep word)
- “Off the record” does not exist
- Repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition
Readers, listeners, or viewers:

- Do not know background of issues
- Do not know jargon (speak in 8th grade terms)
- Want you to understand THEM or THEIR NEEDS
- It is better to over-inform the reporter if you know pertinent information to questions or to questions not asked
Answering questions

- Use opportunity to present KEY POINT
- Provide a CONCISE, relevant and recent background fact (“sparkler”)
- Provide a brief illustration if appropriate
- STOP talking
  - The reporter may want to ask more questions
The most **CRITICAL** RULE (formula)

- **Question does not = Answer!**
- The answer to any question is **ALWAYS** one of YOUR key points.
- **Key point must communicate:**
  - The situation or issue in terms audience can understand
  - What is being done or should be done
  - What has caused the situation or issue to rise to current public consciousness
  - ASNA actions or support needed to address the issue
Moving from reporter’s direction to your agenda (acknowledgement+bridge):

- “Yes…, and **in addition** to that…….”
- “**No**…., let me explain…”
- “I don’t know…., but what I **do know** is….”
- “That’s the way it **used to be**….here is what we do **now**…”
Flagging

Helps **audience recall** your message:

- “The most important thing to remember is…”
- “I’ve talked about a lot of things today. I think it boils down to these 3 things…”
- “Let’s not lose sight of the most important point…”
If asked negative questions

- Respond with positive facts or a positive story.
- May need to stop the negative with "No,..."
- Steer the interview in the direction you want it to go.
- Avoid "umm" or "ahhh".
- Be concise, understandable, polite, respectful.
Supporting your message

Add credibility through:

- Simply stated facts
- Statistics not stated as percent: “one out of three” rather than 33%
- Personal experience
- Quote an expert (third party)
- Analogy or comparison
Prepare by

- Write your objectives
  - What KEY POINT(s) should the audience recall?

- Write an outline of your “ideal” interview
  - Refer to it if possible

- Know related current events or trends
  - Write arguments, facts, statistics with sources cited

- Write 8th grade terms/phrases for jargon
Spontaneous Interview

Ambush questions are random or hostile

- Take control: set time limit and # of questions
- Defer questions
- Remain calm, avoid confrontation
- Exit gracefully
- Avoid over-the-shoulder responses
Define the **SUBJECT**: What is the issue that affects the audience?

Describe the **ACTION** that ASNA is taking: What does the audience need to know about ASNA and its issues?

Identify the **CAUSE** of the action: Why ASNA is doing what it is doing.

Demonstrate **RESPONSIBLE** action: Showcase the strength of ASNA’s leadership
3 Commandments

- Thou shalt not lie, or knowingly mislead a reporter
- Thou shalt not comment on matters beyond your expertise
- Thou shalt always keep cool and professional, even in the face of hostile questions
- Make one compelling point/convincing message
- Intellectual content forms the base for succinct facts
- Professional rapport surrounds the message (you are the expert). Correct the record if necessary
- The intended audience shapes the format (policy makers/readers/listeners/customers)
- Strategic techniques for maintaining control of the message (bridging, flagging)