
A media interview can make or break you

Managing a media interview successfully is an increasingly important skill for professionals.

Done well, an interview can make your position clear or mitigate a crisis. Done poorly, it can be a career killer.

A sitting governor once used a derogatory term in referring to an ethnic group. It haunted him throughout his re-election campaign. His inability to handle media inquiries about it ultimately contributed to his defeat.

The news comes at a rapid-fire pace. We live in a world of 10-second sound bites. Whether an interview is for television, radio, print or Web-based me-

dia, it is on the air or the Web almost instantly.

Nothing is off the record.

A sentence said is a sentence that can make its way around the world in seconds on the Internet.

Consequently, you need to get your message across accurately and concisely the first time.

Here are some tips on how to handle the spotlight:

► **Take time to prepare.** An effective media interview takes preparation.

Know what you are getting



PATTY
McCARTHY/
PAULA
BLANCHARD-STONE

McCarthy-Blanchard
executive training firm

into. Ask what the reporter is looking for before you agree to do the interview. Ask who else is being interviewed and who the sources are.

► **Have an agenda.** A media interview is an opportunity to advance your agenda, to tell your story.

Use key messages as your agenda and safety net. Stick to

your key messages. Resist the temptation to attempt to answer every question and stray from your agenda.

Use your key messages to stay on “safe ground.”

► **Remain calm and non-defensive when being interviewed.** Watch your body language.

Ask yourself the questions you don’t want to be asked in advance. Write down your answers and say them aloud.

This way, you will be confident and prepared for the worst.

Contact Patty McCarthy and Paula Blanchard-Stone at mccarthyblanchard.com or call 339-7447 or (313) 882-9200.