

Crisis Communications Media Relations & Reputation Management



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Media Relations & Crisis Communications

The Rules of the Road

What You Should Know & Expect

Rule 1 Before you start the interview – what’s the topic?

Rule 2 Who will interview you and who do they work for?

Rule 3 Where will the interview run – in the “breaking news” section? Business? Metro?

Rule 4 Will the reporter be talking to other people for this story?

Rule 5 You can have some control over where the interview takes place.

Rule 6 You can keep the interview orderly – even an ambush interview.

Rule 7 You don’t have to answer every question you’re asked.

What the Reporter Expects

Rule 1. They expect to be treated courteously.

Rule 2 They expect reasonable access to news scenes.

Rule 3 They expect that you prove all your claims.

Rule 4 They expect a regular flow of information during breaking stories.

Rule 5 They will decide who they talk to and who they don’t.

Rule 6 They will call it as they see it.

Rule 7 They will demand speed.

“I want it – and I want it now !!”

Rule 8 They will demand directness.

You to me; not mediated by another - and I expect to interact with you directly.

Rule 9 They will demand transparency.

If I find out you are hiding something, I will never trust you again.

Hennes Paynter Communications Pre-Interview Checklist

Reporter _____ Media Outlet _____

Reporter's Telephone Number _____ Reporter's Email & Twitter Handle _____

What is the topic/angle _____

When will story run: _____ Is this story for: ___front ___metro ___business ___lifestyle ___sports

Do you need just a few short quotes: ___yes___no Or is this a longer interview: ___yes___no

Is anyone else being interviewed: ___yes___no How much time do you need for the interview: _____

Are you sending a photographer: ___yes___no May I provide visuals: ___yes___no

How knowledgeable is reporter _____ Has reporter/outlet done anything else on topic: ___yes___no

Does media/reporter have an apparent point of view: ___yes___no

Who will be interviewing me? _____

What is your deadline? _____

Desired Headline _____

Key Message #1 _____

Supporting Statement _____

Key Message #2 _____

Supporting Statement _____

Key Message #3 _____

Supporting Statement _____

The Most Difficult Questions You May Be Asked

Question _____

Response _____

Question _____

Response _____

Bridging & Steering Phrases	For TV Interviews
"The real issue is..."	Live or taped? Satellite remote?
"Let me add..."	Audience call-ins or emails? If live, how long broadcast?
"It's important to emphasize..."	What's the format?
"It's important not to overlook..."	Interviewer/guest or interviewer and 2 guests?
"The most important point to remember..."	Are visual props OK?
"Another question I'm often asked..."	Will video clips be inserted? Can I review them first?
"That deals with one aspect of a larger issue..."	Website to see clip: _____
"It's too early to talk about that until all the facts are in, but I can tell you..."	
"I'm not sure about that, but what I do know is..."	For Radio Interviews
"Let me put this into perspective..."	Location (media market): _____
"I'm glad you asked me that...people have that misconception, but the truth is..."	Interviewer's Name: _____
"Here's what we did and what we're going to do about it..."	Show Contact: _____
	On-Air Producer: _____
	Contact Tel #: _____
	Hotline/Studio #: _____
	Backup Tel #: _____
	Call-In # for listeners: _____
	Website to listen live: _____
	Website to grab audio clip: _____

Speak Slowly !!

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Reporter's Terms

The Basic Rule: Everything is on the record unless **both** parties to the conversation agree that it is not. You must negotiate anything else first.

You can agree to make something off the record or any of the other permutations below - only if you do so **before** the comment is made.

On the record means the speaker may be quoted directly.

Just between us has no real meaning. Do not use !

Off the record means you may not use the information at all, either in the newspaper or in further reporting. Period. It is important to get the reporter's agreement he/she will honor this **even in the event of a lawsuit, subpoena or otherwise ordered by a court**. Do not confuse "off the record" with "not for attribution." Caution – some reporters will decline to hear the information so as not to hamper their ability to pursue the story in other ways.

On background or not for attribution both mean you may print the quote, but you cannot attribute it to me ("a source familiar with the situation said..."). Be sure to agree on attribution to be used by reporter ("an agency executive...a former employee...a member of the board, etc."). It is important to get the reporter's agreement he/she will honor this **even in the event of a lawsuit, subpoena or otherwise ordered by a court**.

Deep background refers to information that may be reflected in a story but is not attributed in any other way. Often, reporters will use deep background to verify other information and increase their understanding of a story, without citing it specifically.

Check with me before you use it means only that. You have the right to correct errors and misunderstandings, but not to withdraw statements that you "don't like."

You must be very careful about negotiating these rights and especially about going on and off the record or not for attribution repeatedly within a single conversation.

REMINDER: Reporters may have their own definitions that are different than these.

There's only one way to guarantee that it won't show up in print, on television or on the radio – don't say it.