

EFFECTIVE MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

Meeting with Tony Tighe, Consumer Report, Global News, in Calgary, Alberta

Treat it as a **CONVERSATION** versus an **INTERVIEW**.

Think that the media needs us as much if not more than we need them. They need us to fill space in their paper and need our input to make it work.

It is up to us to set the terms – whether to sit down or stand up. Make sure you are comfortable. Keep eye contact and watch your body language. Don't be distracted by your surroundings.

Take time before answering each question take a breath and think about what you are going to say. Remember to **BREATHE**.

Start the conversation by setting a friendly tone. Get comfortable and ask them about themselves and their background and their paper, radio station, etc. Ask them questions to break the ice.

- What kind of story are they doing and what they are there for? Is the interview about you as GER or President, the local Lodge and area, or about National? Remember you can always steer it back to the local Lodge.....
- What do they know about the ELKS?
- What format are they going to use? A microphone in your face, a recorder on the table, taking notes, in studio.
- What info do **YOU** want to get across? What is your **KEY MESSAGE**.

Remember to keep reinforcing the message without being annoying about it. If you are in a town and it is the local paper, continue to talk about the local Lodge and what they are doing and have accomplished. This may take some background info so you know the community and the Lodge.

Don't start every answer with the key message but put it in there somewhere.

Turn their question back to the local info: \$ donated, projects, membership.

Always be **POSITIVE** and don't agree or disagree with their question or comment, but give **YOUR** answer. For example, the question might be "Is Regalia relevant?" The reply might be "It is the trademark and symbol of the ELKS and is used to identify us. We have different regalia from more traditional and formal to a more casual attire."

If they ask a pointed question you should always turn it around – "Yes, but...."

Promise a follow-up to any unanswered questions and if you were not sure.

The Interview

News is about people and reporters always talk to people to build their stories.

An interview is how reporters gather first-hand information to personalize their stories.

It's supposed to be a conversation to exchange information but since it is controlled by the questioner the person being interviewed feels the stress of making a mistake.

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You can even the tables and still give accurate information, get your message out and get positive media coverage.

What to do when a reporter calls

- Find out who they are and who they represent and make sure they understand who you are.
- Make sure you find out exactly what they are contacting you about and why before agreeing to answer any questions or begin an interview.
- Ask what information they want from you? Can you answer the questions? Should it be someone with more seniority or can you email or fax them the information?
- Never ask for a list of questions before an interview. It is a conversation not a prepared statement!
- Ask what their deadline is. When do they need the information or the interview? You should have time to gather the information and prepare. If you can't speak to them or provide the information in their timeline, then just say so.

What kind of interview is it?

- Print reporters may speak to you over the phone and record your answers or meet you in person and use a tape recorder or take notes.
- Radio reporters may record your voice over the phone or interview you in person with a microphone and tape recorder. They may also ask to do a live interview during a radio talk show and invite listeners to ask you questions.
- TV reporters typically arrange one-on-one interviews, videotaped, on camera.
- You could also be asked to do a live interview during a newscast, either at a remote location or inside the TV studio,
- Taped or recorded interviews are edited and small portions of your answer are used in a pre-recorded news story,

Be prepared

- Don't do an interview on the phone or in person unless you are ready.
- Take time gather the information you need to communicate your key message.
- Never be forced to speak until you are ready.
- Know what you want to say and rehearse potential questions.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so or explain why.
- Don't guess or speculate.

Everything is "On the Record"! – There is no, "Off the Record"!

- While you are speaking to a reporter everything is on the record.
- They do not have to say when they are recording or quoting what you are saying and when they are not.

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- Never tell the media anything if you are unwilling to say it publicly.

Tips for a good interview

- Listen to the question and answer the question that is asked.
- Be active and involved. Show some enthusiasm, confidence and interest in the interview.
- Don't speak into the camera or at the microphone. Speak to the person asking the questions.
- Stick to one thought or fact in each answer. If your answer is short, the reporter will ask another question.
- Don't give yes or no answers. Don't volunteer information you haven't been asked. If you don't understand a question say so.
- Clothes should be appropriate and pressed or clean. Make sure your hair is neat and men have shaved. Don't wear anything too distracting.
- Pick an interview location you are comfortable in. If it is for TV, make the location relevant to the topic.
- Call back if you forgot to say something or you made a mistake and have to correct it. They would call you if they did the same thing.