



Tips to an Effective News Interview

So, a reporter just called, what do you do? Below is a list of tips to help you survive the spur-of-the moment interview or the interview that you have been pushing for. Some of these tips may seem like common sense, but it is easy to become flustered when speaking to a reporter, so review these as often as possible to keep them top of mind.

These are general tips for an interview with any news reporter:

- **Never lie.** This might seem simple, but often you may feel pressured to answer a question. However, never give false information.
- **If you don't know, simply explain.** Chances are you are not going to have every answer. And, saying "I don't know," is an appropriate answer. However, if you can get the answer, ask the reporter when their deadline is and provide them with the information prior to that deadline.
- **Prepare, if you can.** If this is an interview related to a story that you pitched, you should know your stuff. If this is a call from out of the blue, ask the reporter if you can return the call shortly so you may prepare.
- **Avoid using "No comment."** Saying "no comment" has a very negative connotation when presented in a story. I would say return a reporter's call 99% of the time. It is better to share your side of a negative story than have no say at all. When in doubt, call the Ohio Credit Union League for advice.
- **Know your key messages.** No matter what, always have four key messages that you want to share during an interview. Prepare these key messages on a quarterly basis, and keep them handy. It is important to share these with your entire staff as well.
- **Always have something to add.** More than likely, the reporter will ask you if you "have anything else to add" at the end of an interview. Of course you do. While you may want to end the interview, this is an opportune time to reiterate a point you made earlier or share a key message or two.
- **Don't be rude or defensive.** Again, this may seem easy, but it is just as easy to get flustered during an interview. The more angry or defensive you become, the more likely you will appear unpolished, scared, or that you are hiding something. These situations are rare, but it is important to represent your credit union appropriately.
- **Off the record doesn't exist, sorry.** Unless you are married to a reporter, you are never off the record. Keep in mind it is their job to report a truthful, newsworthy story. Never say "this is off the record," and disclose information you do not want reported.
- **Mention your credit union as often as possible.** While you do not want to sound like a broken record, it is appropriate to mention who you represent to ensure you get a meaningful quote. "Members are the utmost importance to Communication Credit Union. Meaning Communication members receive the best rates on loans, higher interest rates on accounts, among many other benefits to being a member."

- **Be positive.** There are positive buzz words to use in interviews, even if it is a negative story. “We deal with this all the time,” “This is common to our financial institution,” and “We are working on the issues,” for example.

There are also a few tips that are specific to non-live TV or radio interviews, also known as live to tape:

- If you feel yourself starting to lose track of what you are saying, start over.
- Do not look into the camera, look at the person asking the questions.
- Speak in sound bites and keep your answers short. Chances are only one or two answers will be used in the story.
- Do not be afraid to repeat what you say in two or three different answers. Again, much of what you say will be edited out, so work hard to get your key messages in the resulting story.
- Once you have gotten your points across, there is no need to continue your answer. Let the reporter re-ask the question in a different way if there is more that needs to be said.
- For television interviews, try your best to represent your credit union in a professional manner by dressing professionally.