

## IEEE-USA Media Interview Guidelines

### Before the Interview:

- Prepare for the interview by anticipating what questions will be asked and brushing up on your facts and figures.
- Prepare three important points that you would like to convey. Then, regardless of the question, you can steer your answer to those key messages.
- Rehearse potential answers, but don't memorize them.
- Seek public relations guidance and assistance from colleagues, if necessary.

### During the Interview:

- Once an interview begins, assume that the camera is rolling and the tape recorder or microphone is on. Otherwise, you might say or do something embarrassing.
- When doing a television interview, don't wear anything (clothing, jewelry, etc.) that distracts from your message. You don't want a viewer paying attention to a wild shirt or dangling earrings at the expense of listening to what you have to say. Solid colors and modest jewelry are best.
- Try to be relaxed during radio and TV interviews. If you're too nervous, the viewer or listener could feel sorry for you and miss your message.
- Think before you speak. Don't just rattle off the first thing that pops into your head. Provide thoughtful, insightful answers that will make a good quote.
- Speak slowly and clearly, particularly if the reporter is not using a tape recorder. This increases your chances of being quoted accurately.
- Use humor, colorful anecdotes and personal experiences to make the interview more memorable and yourself more quotable.
- Keep your cool at all times. You don't want to say or do something that will reflect poorly on you or your organization.
- Remember that stupid questions are not printed or aired, but stupid answers could be.
- Be sincere and answer truthfully. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so.
- Correct the interviewer if a question is based on faulty or incorrect information.
- Avoid professional jargon or technical terms that the journalist probably doesn't understand. Speak in layman's terms so that your message can easily be understood by the public.
- Be personable. Try to use "I" more than "we."
- Relax and try to enjoy yourself.

### Major Things to Avoid:

- Unless you have 100 percent trust in a journalist, never speak "**off the record.**" An unscrupulous journalist could take something off the record and put it on the record, especially if it will make his or her story better. If your comments are negative or embarrassing, they could put you in an awkward position with your fellow co-workers, clients or the public. So if you don't want something to be made public, keep it to yourself.
- Don't answer a question with "**no comment.**" This makes it look like you have something to hide. Rather, explain that perhaps you're not the best person to respond because you don't have all the facts at hand. Offer to refer the journalist to someone better equipped to answer. Potential responses include, "Because of the circumstances surrounding this issue, I don't think it is appropriate for me to respond;" or "I'm sorry, but because of pending litigation, I'm not at liberty to discuss this topic."

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**Traps to Avoid:**

- If a journalist sits in silence after you have finished delivering an answer, do not add any new information. To do so only increases your chance of making a mistake.
- If you're asked the same question in different ways, stick to your answer and avoid frustration.

**After the Interview:**

- Offer to provide any additional, relevant information that you did not have access to during the interview.
- Thank the journalist for his or her time.
- By building a rapport with the reporter and presenting yourself as a trustworthy and sincere source of quotes and information, you're more likely to be called upon again. If the coverage is good, it raises you and your organization's visibility and makes you look better in the eyes of the public, colleagues and clients.

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