

How to Get Quoted in the Press

The right quote can be the best way to spread your message. Use these tips to make it happen.



By Richard S. Levick

Between 50% and 75% of all media interviews don't result in the interviewee being directly quoted. If your goal is to convey credibility to a key audience and you haven't been quoted, you may feel as though you've wasted your time.

But reporters are always looking for a good quote. If you give them one, they'll probably opt to use it. Here are some key points to remember when you want to get quoted in the press:

- **Introduce conflict.** A news story with an adversarial component will always trump one without any conflict. Think about how you can give the reporter some conflict without gratuitously picking a fight.

- **Be brief.** Whether you're creating broadcast sound bites or printed statements, most quotes take only 5-10 seconds to say.

- **Correct yourself.** Reporters have a vested interest in your looking smart. Fumbled words rarely appear in print, so if you

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make a mistake, don't hesitate to back up and start over again. Your corrected comment is the one that will be quoted.

- **Know the rules.** In some circumstances, providing off-the-record and not-for-attribution background information can serve your interests in the press. But be sure to distinguish between what the reporter can and can't attribute to you.

- **Start a relationship.** Every interview with a reporter is an opportunity to become a trusted source for future stories, which means that if you don't get quoted this time, there will most likely be a next time. ■

Recommended Readings

For more on using public relations and communications to advantage, see these *Nonprofit World* articles at www.snpo.org/members:

- **When Reality Becomes Image: Dealing with the Media** (Vol. 12, No. 5)
- **Getting Your Message on the Air** (Vol. 4, No. 6)
- **Are Nonprofits Newsworthy?** (Vol. 17, No. 3)
- **When You're Forced to Say "No Comment"** (Vol. 22, No. 4)
- **Strategies for Long-Term Electronic Media Relations** (Vol. 2, No. 5)
- **Let the World Know: Make Your Cause News** (Vol. 15, No. 1)
- **Top 10 Keys to Effective Communication** (Vol. 15, No. 4)

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