

# Media Advice from Reporters

1. Sometimes we ask dumb questions for very smart reasons.
2. Just because one, or all, stories are not flattering to your organization or cause or do not reflect your perspective don't mean the stories are "biased" or "slanted."
3. Learn the difference between reporters, columnists and editorial writers. Remember it and don't confuse them.
4. Don't ask me what my "slant" on a story is going to be.
5. Make sure you understand what "off the record" or "on background" means, and that you and the reporter are on the same page.
6. I'm on deadline and have options. If you want to talk to me, return my call quickly.
7. We do not accept, or want, favors or subtle gifts.
8. We suck at math.

# Taking Control in Interviews

-Key takeaways-

## DO...

- Return reporter calls not just by deadline, but as quickly as possible, if you want to be part of the story and have a role in shaping the story.
- Prepare, practice and play devil's advocate; Narrow the focus of key message points.
- Think about your response. It's okay to pause a few seconds.
- Avoid jargon.
- Stay on message, and calm, with repetitive questions.
- Slow down when you hear them typing – make sure they have time to capture every word – correctly.
- Use anecdotes, examples.
- Repeat your point, messages.
- Suggest other sources.

# Taking Control in Interviews

-Key takeaways-

## **DON'T...**

- Don't let down your guard..
- Don't guess. "I don't know" is perfectly acceptable, so long as you offer to find the answer.
- Let a reporter put words in your mouth. Be alert for phrases such as "Are you saying that ...?"
- Answer hypothetical questions.
- Go off-the-record.
- Feel compelled to answer "yes" or "no" questions.
- Don't fill the silence, ramble.
- Lie.
- Ask to review the story in advance
- Be impatient if the reporters asks the same questions repeatedly.

# Tips to get back on message – “bridging”

- “That’s a good point, but the main consideration is....”
- “While \_\_\_\_\_ is certainly important, don’t forget that...”
- “And let me add ...”
- “What you should know ...”
- “The important thing is...”
- “It’s important to remember that...”
- “What I can tell you is...”
- “Before we get off that topic, let me just add....”
- “Let me put that in perspective.”

