

# Interview Skills: How to Stay in Control

The following pointers should help you through any interview situation:

- **Your messages should form the basis of the agenda that you want to get across in your interview.** Remember that you are the expert and you are in charge.
- **Listen to the question.** People speak 125-150 words per minute. The brain processes 400 wpm. What do we do with the extra time? We start formulating our answer. People often get distracted by a reporter's delivery and become more concerned with the HOW instead of the WHY. Focus on what the person is asking.
- **If you don't understand the question, ask the reporter to repeat it.** This gives you time to think.
- **If you don't know the answer, say so. But offer to get the information, and then make an appropriate transition to your message point.**
- **You can't be quoted if you don't say it.**
- **Bat down any wrong information before answering the question. Silence gives consent.** Just say, "I disagree with that." Do not repeat what you disagree with.
- **Never say "No comment."**
- **KISS. Keep it short and simple.**
- **Don't answer statements.**
- **"Yes," "no" and "I don't know" are perfectly good answers.** Then transition to your information or reemphasize your message.
- **Unless you feel extremely confident about the future, don't answer speculative questions.**
- **Personalize what you are saying, and try to be informal.** If you must use technical terms, explain them, and try to provide an analogy that the interviewer--and the audience--can relate to.
- **Multiple-part questions are the easiest to answer.** Answer those parts of the question you feel comfortable with and then move to the next question.
- **Don't volunteer more information than the question requires.**
- **If you know the reporter's name, use it but don't abuse it.**
- **You don't have to answer a reporter's hostile question. Rephrase it and move on. Don't repeat the negative.**

(over)

- **If you make a mistake, stay calm, admit it and correct it promptly.**
- **Don't allow yourself to be interrupted.**
- **Never answer for another person's organization.**
- **Remember, you are in control of the interview.**

## **Transitions: How to Keep an Interview Focused**

In an interview, you have specific ideas you want to deliver to the audience, and you want to leave them with a particular impression of the program. Set your agenda by listing the five basic points or messages you want the audience to know.

Your interviewer, of course, has his or her own agenda for the interview, and it may or may not mesh with yours. Nothing dilutes the strength of your messages--and loses your audience --like a tangential discussion. If your interviewer begins to stray from the points you want to make, use transitions to get back on track.

Simple transitions:

- "The real issue is..."
- "Let me explain..."
- "I'm also frequently asked..."
- "Let me add..."
- "A common concern is..."
- "For example..."
- "You should also know that..."
- "Equally important..."
- "One point I believe your listeners would be interested in..."
- "You can go one step further..."