



Media Advocacy

Interview DO's & DON'Ts

DO's:

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

- DO talk informally with the reporter about the focus of the story.
- DO preview the questions.
- DO prime reporters with your thoughts.
- DO take the initiative.
- DO ask how much time the reporter has.
- DO contact RI Tobacco Control Network to help prepare your talking points for the interview. DO carefully prepare talking points or “sound bites” that you want to be sure to include during the interview.

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- DO be yourself! Be likable and engaging. SMILE.
- DO keep answers short and simple. SIMPLIFY. DO use colorful words, analogies and absolutes to emphasize a point.
- DO talk in sound bites.
- DO shift the focus to your objectives, if necessary – go back to your sound bites.
- DO make your points in every answer.
- DO say “I don’t know” when you don’t, but offer to get back to them with info when able, in a timely manner.
- DO be positive.
- DO remain cool.
- DO always behave as if the camera/tape recorder is on.
- DO repeat your key message when ending the interview – again, sound bites!

DON'Ts:

- DON'T speak “off the cuff” without time to prepare. If a reporter calls unexpectedly, say “I am in the middle of something right now, but if you tell me a little bit about what you’d like to discuss and what your deadline is, I can call you back.” Then hang up, prepare your talking points, and return the call.
- DON'T use jargon, acronyms or technical terms.
- DON'T speak off the record, ever! (There’s no such thing.)
- DON'T become angry or provoked.
- DON'T speculate, guess or conjecture.
- DON'T speak for someone else.

- DON'T lie.
- DON'T answer dumb or impertinent questions.
- DON'T personally attack people.
- DON'T say “no comment” –don't answer a question you don't want to answer, but you can avoid saying “no comment” by responding with one of your sound bites.

Dressing for success (on TV)

DOs:

- DO wear something appropriate for the subject matter you are discussing – you want the seriousness or good nature of the interview to reflect in what you are wearing.
- DO wear something you feel comfortable in – you don't want to look stiff.
- DO ask the reporter if there are colors you should stay away from.

DON'Ts:

- DON'T wear all black.
- DON'T wear all white.
- DON'T wear clothes with small patterns such as pinstripes and polka dots – they squiggle on TV.
- DON'T wear logos for products not associated with the interview.
- And ALWAYS...DO let the RI Tobacco Control Network know when you've been interviewed by the media and share any resulting press coverage!