

When the Media Call

Facing questions from the media used to be the territory of politicians and celebrities, but in recent times, the spotlight regularly falls on business leaders. The key is to see this as an opportunity rather than a trial.

By Pete Burdon

It's surprising how many business leaders run a mile when a journalist comes to them for expert comment. This should be seen as a major opportunity, but the fear of humiliation clouds the judgment of many when contacted.

Leaders turn down invitations to appear on television news, radio and leading print publications. I personally know people who have refused invitations to appear on *Close Up*, *Campbell Live* or in stories published in *The Press* and the *New Zealand Herald*.

This fear of humiliation is always the reason. Some think presenters will make them look foolish, while others worry about being misquoted or taken out of context.

These fears are felt by many who do accept media invitations. While these people can benefit from their media appearances, many also fail to make the most of their opportunities. That's because they don't understand how a media interview is different to any other conversation.

The reason most people complain of being taken out of context is because they don't realise the media will only take snippets of their interviews to appear in the news

stories. This means that all parts of an interview have to stand by themselves.

Similarly, those who are misquoted are usually the ones who give long, jargon-filled answers that are difficult for even the reporter to comprehend.

But those who understand the media know exactly how to get their points used. They not only receive all the benefits of an expert status among audiences, but they get invited back again and again by media outlets. This won't always be in general media, but niche outlets that are often more beneficial anyway.

The key is to change attitudes towards the media. Remember journalists are not out to get you, they just need sources for their stories. If you give them interesting information in a simple format, they will be grateful. Remember you have the power – without your information, they don't have a story. But also remember, if you don't give it to them, a competitor down the road will.

When preparing for an interview, it's important to come up with the three key points you most want to get across. Make sure these are of interest, but they should also be beneficial to your business. The best plan is to come back to these points

again and again in different ways. Media stories only ever include two or three points. If you give 57 points, you have three chances in 57 of getting your top three used. If you only have three, all three will be used. 🙌

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How to Prepare For An Interview:

- find out exactly what the reporter wants to talk about
- buy some time to prepare
- organise three key points you want to get across
- come up with other ways of saying these points (for example, using examples or analogies)
- prepare answers to perceived difficult questions
- practice the interview and record it