

Top tips for better media interviews

How tech companies can get the best out of the interview situation



Horses and courses

It should go without saying, but your spokesperson needs to be kept abreast of the news. They should be reading a weekly digest of relevant, hot stories (if these have to be sourced by the PR then so be it) and show some appetite for contributing to the debate.

Why not How

In the main, journalists are more concerned with business arguments than technology methodologies so the WHY needs to be answered way before the HOW and this is where many tech companies need to lift up their heads. The WHO is pretty interesting too, so whatever you do; don't tone down your colourful characters – they make great copy.

Listen to the question

It sounds obvious, but actively listen to the question and genuinely try to answer it. You need to answer questions as best you can and weave in your messaging where appropriate and *leave it out* where it isn't. It's critical to be seen as someone who understands the market and how it ticks. This is more important than getting all your messages across in each and every interview! You may manage it the first time, but possibly they won't want to talk to you a second time.

It's not all about you

The old truism, 'No-one is that interested in you,' is - erm - true. People are interested in issues though, so if you know all about them and can help solve them, then that's the angle to go in on.

Get to the point

Journalists are very busy people, so PLEASE get to the point. Work out a top down way of delivering your story. That way, if you've struck a chord with the journalist you can drill down with more insight or leave it as a one liner if it's getting no traction.

Journalists are not secretaries

Do not dictate. The journalist isn't your secretary. Do allow time for the journalist to finish their note-taking and prepare their next question. Do not just talk into the silence. Be courteous, offer sustenance, and DO NOT look at your phone.

Body copy or quotes?

The journalist is looking to create a compelling story from a mixture of background information, intelligent argument and quotes, so if you want to be quoted you need to have a view and be incisive; otherwise you find most of your effort gets swallowed up in unattributed body copy or as background information. Answers can be your own thoughts based on experience or theory, statistically or anecdotally-based, or ideally a mixture of the lot.

A two-way conversation

Remember this is a two-way conversation, ask what the journalist is seeing and hearing in the market, endorse and contribute to that if that is your experience, or offer a different side of the coin if it isn't. Ask about future story ideas he is working on.

Issue-based questions

Every interview is different but most journalists would be happy if you could answer the following issue-based questions:

- What tech Holy Grail are firms chasing?
- What's preventing them from achieving it?
- What are your customers finding IT budget for right now?
- What's the business argument for that?
- What's the technical challenge in doing it?
- How does the latest legislation affect your customers?
What's the biggest threat to your industry?
- What's the greatest opportunity?
- What's your sector going to look like in five years' time?

