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# Five secrets to getting great interviews

By Wally Newman

In the broadcast PR business, compelling sound bites are essential to producing programs that exceed client expectations.

So before you conduct your next interview, here are several tips that will ensure success.

- Make your subjects comfortable.

The key to getting a passionate interview is taking the time to make your subjects comfortable.

While you're setting up for the video shoot, make your subjects at ease by talking with them. However, don't let them get started on the actual topic until you're ready. They're likely to give you a great sound bite off-camera and it will be almost impossible to recreate their enthusiasm once you're rolling.

If you're interviewing for a video, and your camera operator is adept at lighting and has a preset on his or her camera that embellishes skin tone,

turn the monitor around and let your subjects see themselves. This will enhance their confidence and their performance.

With few exceptions, it helps to let your subjects know that, if they don't like where their answer is going, they can simply start over. The ideal sound bite incorporates your question in the answer, so include that in your instructions when you ask them to keep their response to no more than three sentences.

In addition, providing your subject with questions in advance can help alleviate their stress, while improving their poise and confidence.

- Establish trust.

Let interviewees know that it's your job to not only help them through the interview, but also to help them succeed. In fact, you are usually discussing a topic that is important to them — that's where their passion will surface. Customer testimonials can be

especially effective once you gain their trust.

- Be encouraging.

Every person, from an experienced CEO to a first-time interviewee, needs encouragement, especially when he or she is in front of a camera. If subjects give you a great answer, let them know it. Play to their egos. You will be amazed at how they open up.

- Let go of the outcome.

Prepare for each interview by identifying specific copy points you want your subject to address. Compose your questions to capture those statements, but then let go of what your subject says or how they say it.

Often what they deliver will surprise you. So stay flexible and be prepared to venture beyond your prepared questions if the answers warrant. Remember, your goal is to create a situation where your subjects are so comfortable talking about a topic that it's as

if they are bringing out the family album. Discussing their company's business is just like talking about their kids — and they are proud of it.

- The last question to be asked.

Don't forget your last question, "Is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to talk about?" This question often leads to the most surprising responses and, many times, can become the centerpiece of your project.

Honing your interview skills will not only improve your end product but will also have your clients asking you back. **T**



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