

KNOW THEIR NEEDS

Television needs visuals. Radio needs interviews. Think in those terms. If you're talking to a reporter about a tractor in the field, conduct the interview in front of that tractor where they can see it, rather than in an office, where they can only imagine it.

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

Reporters are not here to promote you. They don't care how great your program is. They want to know how the program benefits or affects the life of their listeners, readers and viewers. Will it be more efficient, reliable, etc.

DON'T PRODUCE THE STORY

Try not to tell the reporter how to do their job. You should provide information to guide them, educate, inform but ultimately, they will write the story. The reporter does not work for you and is not interested in promoting you or advancing your career.

SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE

We know you're smart which is why we're interviewing you, so please don't use big words. Speak simply and conversationally. If the reporter doesn't understand you, then they can't explain it to the reader. Don't talk down to them, but think about how you might explain a difficult subject to a high school class or your own children?

WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

You can't control technical difficulties, where your story is placed or if you don't like the way your picture came out. You can control how you act, what you say and your attitude. So, think about what you would like the reader to know and instead of hoping the reporter asks you a specific question, look for opportunities to share the information in the interview.

BUT, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS GOING TO ASK ME!

That's because you didn't anticipate the questions in advance. If you have a chance to talk to the reporter, find out what they want to know, why they're writing the story and what you can do to help them tell that story. Come up with analogies, examples, colorful phrases that people can relate to and understand.

DON'T ASSUME THE REPORTER KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

Reporters are often assigned stories because they were nearby or not busy at the time. Many know a little about a lot, not a lot about a little. What is clear to you might sound foreign to them. Make sure they understand what you're talking about.

Often the best way to do that is to ask them. Reporters are just like you. Most want to get it right, but they can't accurately tell a story that they only THINK they understand.