



Media Training 101 - the basics of being interviewed

If you've done a good job promoting your business, then chances are that you'll be approached by the news media at some point. Here are some quick tips to keep in mind when being interviewed:

- Talk in plain English and be conversational.
- When you receive a call or message from a reporter or producer, respond in a timely manner as they may be on a tight deadline.
- Keep answers short and simple (especially for broadcast media). Speak in 15- to 20-second sound bites.
- You have a right to ask about the type of story the reporter is pursuing and the context in which you might be quoted.
- Never say the following phrases: "No comment," ".. off the record?"
- Don't get angry, raise your voice or otherwise show emotion in an interview, even if the reporter asks an infuriating question.
- Be positive – don't bring up negative issues.
- Review your talking points before beginning an interview.
- When possible, download NCTA's talking points on an issue for reference. (i.e. Trees for Troops)
- Remember the audience for the story - make it compelling and relevant for the listener or reader.
- Think before you speak. Remember, an article or story in your local paper could be picked up nationwide. Consider whether you would want what you say to be printed in *The New York Times*.
- Make it an opportunity to educate – tell them something they won't hear in a commercial.
- When possible, illustrate your message with brief anecdotes or descriptions that dramatize your points.
- Remember that you're the expert.
- If you are not an expert on something asked, do NOT attempt to bluff your way through a question that you don't know the answer to. Simply say, "I'm not really an expert on that, but here's what I do know..."
- At the end of the interview, a good reporter will usually ask if there's anything he's missed or if there's anything you'd like to add. Be sure to take this opportunity! If the reporter doesn't ask, volunteer "There's something else I'd like to say..." or "There's one thing I always tell people ..."
- Give the reporter or producer an opportunity to expand the story – i.e. invite them to come out to your farm to take photos or video, offer them the opportunity to speak to your customers or employees (assuming you've properly trained your employees on how to handle the media.)
- If you're doing an interview by phone, keep your talking points handy to refer to.

If you find yourself in any of the following situations:

- A reporter wants to speak to about a topic or issue that you do not feel comfortable talking about, whether due to lack of experience or knowledge.
- A reporter brings up a potential "hot topic" or negative issue for the Real Tree industry.
- You have concerns that the media outlet is trying to paint an inaccurate or negative portrait of the Real Tree industry, and you're not sure how to respond.

Contact the NCTA office immediately at 636/449-5070! NCTA's PR staff can help to research the issue, provide talking points as needed, refer the reporter to a trained spokesperson or follow up with the media directly.