Kiwanis International interview tips

Before the interview:

- Determine three key messages. These are the messages you want the reporter to write or repeat.
- Learn about the reporter who will conduct the interview by visiting the outlet’s website and the reporter’s Facebook page. Learn about the kinds of stories they cover. For print media, read the publication. For TV or radio, watch or listen to the program.
- Anticipate questions. Reporters will not stick to your script but you can guide them back to your messages.

Dos and don’ts

- DO be positive and upbeat. You are selling yourself, your Kiwanis club and Kiwanis International.
- DO prepare a brief synopsis of Kiwanis and your club, unless your reporter specifically covers nonprofits or service clubs like Kiwanis. You can emphasize and repeat your key messages to the reporter. Avoid using jargon or acronyms.
- DO be honest. If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so. Avoid speculation. Offer to get the information, and ask the reporter’s deadline.
- DO follow your key messages and stay on track to make yourself quotable. Avoid rambling. Stay focused. Use an anecdote to tell the story.
- DO use your key messages to transition from a hypothetical situation or question, or a non-question/comment from a reporter. Avoid answering a hypothetical question.
- DO maintain eye contact with the reporter. If you are doing a television interview, look only at the reporter; don’t look at the camera. If you are doing a live-in-studio interview, follow the same guideline and look at the reporter, not the camera. Be conversational.
- DON’T repeat a reporter’s negative question, comment or rumor as those could be turned around and used as your quote.
- DON’T speak for another individual or club member unless you are authorized to do so.
- DON’T speak “off the record.” There’s no such thing. Everything you say is fair game for the reporter, even if it is not related to the subject matter of the interview.
- DON’T say, “No comment.” It’s better to say you can’t provide any information and return to your key messages.
- DON’T keep talking. Silence is golden. When you have completed your sentence, stop talking. If the reporter does not ask another question immediately, he or she could be formulating another question. Don’t offer information. Wait for the question and be prepared with your key messages.
- DON’T ask to see a story before it’s printed or aired. They won’t allow it, and it shows your lack of understanding how they perform their jobs.
After the interview:

- If you have promised to follow up with information after the interview, make certain you do so in the established time frame. If you said one hour, make certain you get back to the reporter in one hour.
- If the reporter calls you to clarify a point, or to ask another question, realize that is part of the writing and editing process. The follow-up call offers you an opportunity to repeat your key messages and further develop your relationship.
- You can call a reporter after the story is published or airs if you need to clarify a point. Avoid being argumentative.
- You can send the reporter an email after the story airs or is published if you wish to say thank you.