

Communication Tips for Positive Public Relations

By John Lotze

Careers and fortunes are made and lost on the turn of a phrase. Your image and your company's image often depend on what you say and how you say it.

Here are some basic tips that can help you communicate well and avoid getting dragged down or distracted.

Know your audience

And make sure you communicate in away that connects you with that audience.

Know your core messages

And don't stray from them. Put them in a concise, punchy, memorable format. Memorize them. Use distracting or hostile questions as transitions back to your main message points. Don't get distracted.

If you don't have two or three (no more!) core messages and the ability to articulate them, then formulate them. Otherwise you have nothing to communicate.

Never say "no comment"

This makes people think you have something to hide and sends a message of dishonesty and distrust. Make a comment. Even if the comment is, "We don't know, but we're working on it and we'll get back to you."

Be honest

You don't have to tell everything, but do tell the truth. If you don't know something, say so, promise to find out - then do it.

Avoid Jargon

Insider jargon is for insider audiences, not the public. Simplify and speak plainly.

Make sense

Common sense isn't so common any more, which means that people really appreciate it when they hear it.

Speak plainly.

Don't talk in circles. Don't evade. Never twist words. Don't say your answer depends on what the definition of "is" is.

Be human

People don't want to hear from a paid corporate hack; they want to hear from a human being. Relate to people as a person. Convey a sense of empathy and warmth. If you aren't this kind of person, get a spokesperson who is.

Keep it short

Nobody has a lot of time anymore. If you can't get your main message across in 15 to 30 seconds, it won't get heard.

For hostile media or interviews or serious crisis communication, invest in professional training

No handout can tell you all you need to know to handle crisis communications and hostile media interviews. Seek out professional help and training.

Basic tips for on-camera interviews

Television is highly visual. Following these tips can help you connect with your audience.

- Raise your eyebrows a little when you speak.
- Look at the reporter, not directly into the camera.
- Don't read. Have your points memorized.
- Use alliteration.
- Emphasize - punch - key words.
- Repeat key words and points.
- Smile, unless the subject is very serious.

If you find this handout useful, please visit:

www.johnlotze.org