

## **TACS tips for being interviewed by a journalist**

### **TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS**

Even if you dread the thought of being interviewed, you should welcome it. An interview with a journalist is a sure sign they are planning to run a story about TACS. As a general rule, remember that the media are not your enemy – the average journalist won't be trying to catch you out by asking awkward questions. But depending on the story, some may, so it's always worth you being 100% ready for any interview.

### **DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS**

#### **Newspaper interviews**

Here journalists will be doing a general 'fact find' about the story, and then may ask you further questions to get some good quotes. Most newspaper journalists use shorthand, so may sometimes ask you the same question 2 or 3 times, to ensure they get the relevant facts or quotes down properly.

Increasingly newspaper journalists are also recording interviews, not just for their use but for possible use as an audio file on their website.

#### **Radio interviews**

Unless you are taking part in a discussion-type programme, radio reporters are primarily looking for soundbites. Be natural, don't try and use a "radio voice". Radio is a one on one medium, so avoid phrases like "people out there".

Use your imagination to paint pictures. And always treat every microphone as live – if you don't want it recorded, don't say it!

#### **TV interviews**

Again the journalist will be looking for a soundbite, and also a video bite. Follow their instructions about where to look (normally at them, not at the camera). Try to keep your eyes fixed on the journalist, as you can look a bit shifty if your eyes dart around!

## **PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW**

### **Find out what they want**

Be 100% sure who will be doing the interview and how it will be used. Ask the interviewer the scope, length and format of the interview. There's a big difference between a ten minute interview and one that is an hour long.

### **Gather your thoughts**

When you have an idea of the interview's subject matter jot down some notes about the topic. Create a list of talking points or notes to help you direct the conversation and help make sure that you cover all the points you want to cover.

### **Prepare, prepare, prepare**

Never try and wing it! Re-read any press releases you have sent out, and any source materials. The journalist will consider you to be an expert on this, so you need to know it inside out. Keep the relevant facts and figures to hand to spice up your interview. Consider what negative questions might crop up and prepare responses.

## **DURING THE INTERVIEW**

### **Think before you speak**

Collect your thoughts and formulate your answers to questions prior to responding. The extra second it might take to think your answer through will result in a polished, professional interview. It also might save you from a potentially embarrassing thoughtless response. Remember, think before you speak.

### **Bring it to life**

Use concrete examples which convey the reality of the points you are trying to make, rather than leaving everything theoretical. You will come over as more authoritative when you have facts and specifics to back yourself up. Remember to stress the points that are likely to interest the journalist's readership and paint a picture.

### **Talk slowly**

Talk slowly – don't gabble, even if you are nervous. There is no need to rush.

### **Avoid controversy**

In most cases it is best to avoid controversial issues. Prepare in advance a stock answer that will address any controversial positions.

### **Things to avoid**

Never ever lie; it will come back and bite you. If you don't know the answer, say so, don't try and guess. Say you will call them back in the next 10 minutes – then make sure you do. Don't say “no comment” as it implies you are hiding something. Don't argue with the journalist or get angry with them. In order to keep your message factual, avoid speculating.

### **Clarification**

If you do not understand the question, do not be afraid to ask for clarification. It is best to have a clear understanding of what is being asked, instead of running the risk of giving an uneducated answer. If you do not understand the question, be sure to ask them to rephrase or clarify it!

### **Avoid yes or no responses**

When asked a question, be sure not to simply answer yes or no, expand on the answer. Interviews are an opportunity, take advantage of the opportunity by expanding on your responses.

### **Keep it simple**

The reporter to whom you are speaking, will not understand technical jargon and acronyms (and DHL has plenty!). Keep explanations simple and in plain terms that will make it easier for them to understand the particulars of what you are explaining.

### **Off the record**

The concept of an 'off the record' comment doesn't really exist any more. Anything you say is fair game.

### **Use your social skills**

Make and keep eye contact with the journalist. Find their name and use it (although not during radio interviews if they're trying to get a soundbite). And unless it's a sensitive subject, remember to smile and try to enjoy it!

### **Thank the Interviewer**

Thank the interviewer for their interest in TACS. Possibly send an email after the interview and include links to any additional resources or any examples you cited during the interview.