

# INTERVIEW TIPS FOR THE INTERVIEWEE SUMMARY

John Milewski – February 2016

## CONTENT

1. What is the **STORY** you want to tell? What are the points you want to make? The average sound bite lasts approximately seven seconds, so you don't want to waste words or ideas. Longer form interviews are more forgiving, but time can fly by quickly. It's a good idea to **practice your key stories and points** out loud so you can eliminate audible pauses such as "um," "like" and "you know." Key content should be crisp. **Establish your focus and message during your first response whenever possible.**
2. Think of your **BEST ANSWERS** from previous interviews and find ways to work them in no matter what you're asked. Use caution on this. You can't be too clever or viewers/listeners will begin to feel like you aren't answering the questions. But you can **decide on a couple key points, stories, or phrases that you'll work to get in one way or another.** What's the magic number for your agenda items? I always like to fall back on the power of 3 when in doubt.
3. Once you've **defined** those **messages** you are prepared to deliver regardless of questions asked, focus your preparation there and be spontaneous with the rest. **CONVERSATIONAL** is the tone for which you're striving.
4. **ANTICIPATE** likely questions and prepare your strategy for either answering or avoiding. Are there questions from prior interviews that you wished you had another crack at? This could be your chance to do a better job. What's a **worst-case-scenario question**? Even if your content isn't controversial, you should think about what might be most awkward and how you'd respond. If you spend some time really thinking about it, you should be able to anticipate most interview questions. We (interviewers) tend to be pretty predictable as a group.
5. Think about ways to **make your key points "STICKY."** Use metaphors, interesting phrases, and specific examples. Nothing beats a good story. Specifics and vivid language increase recall.
6. If asked for a closing thought, be prepared with the 1 minute, 30 second, or 1 sentence version of your key message. What is **THE ONE THING** you want people to **REMEMBER** after the interview?

## STYLE

1. Make and hold **EYE CONTACT**, focusing on the interviewer and not the camera. **Moving eyes are a distraction** and make viewers uncomfortable.
2. **DRESS** to fit your message. Serious? Dress in a dark suit. Hard working? Roll up your sleeves. Fun and informal? Leave your tie at home. **Watch (or listen to) the program on which you'll be appearing.**
3. If you'll be sitting while interviewed, **SIT UP** and **LEAN FORWARD** slightly. This opens up your diaphragm, increases your air supply, and prevents you from slumping in your chair and looking **uninterested** or **low energy**. Some media coaches say that you should never let your back touch the chair.
4. **AVOID ALL DISTRACTIONS.** Turn off your phone, don't chew gum, remove coins from your pockets, don't hold a pen, etc. Also, **beware of chairs that swivel and rock.** They make it very difficult to sit still.
5. **UNEXPECTED** changes happen in TV and radio environments all the time. **Roll with the punches.** Be focused and flexible. Don't let anything distract you.
6. Be an **ACTIVE** and **ENERGETIC** participant. You've heard the expression, **"the camera never blinks."** If you're unsure about whether or not you're "on camera" at any given moment, assume you are. TV observes everything: posture; energy; and facial expressions. If possible, take a brisk walk before appearing on camera to get your blood flowing. Howard Dean did pushups in the green room prior to going on air when he was running for President. Arianna Huffington meditates for a few minutes. **Determine the pre-game ritual that works for you.**

# **FIVE FUNDAMENTAL PREPARATION QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWEE**

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Like most things in life, performance will likely reflect the amount and level of preparation you conducted prior to your interview. You are already expert in your subject matter, so your preparation isn't really about that. Instead, you need to focus on your specific message(s). What is it about your area of expertise that you wish to share during the particular interview for which you are preparing?

If you can answer the following five questions with clarity, you will be more prepared than the majority of people who step in front of a camera and microphone. It may sound simple, because it is. But simple isn't always easy.

1. What is the most important thing you want your audience to remember?
2. What are three key facts/ideas you want to highlight?
3. What is the phrase or concept you'd like to repeat at least twice?
4. When people think of your organization, what is a phrase or definition you want them to remember?
5. Are you a pundit, an advocate, or an expert?