

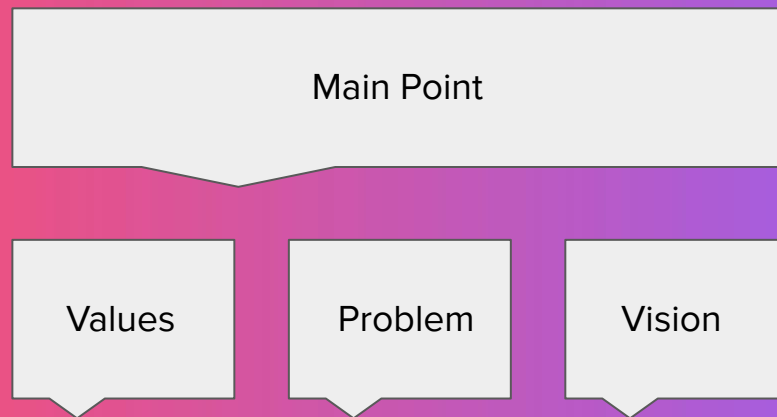
Giving a Great Interview

Published: December 2024

Preparing for an Interview

PREPARATION STEPS

1. Research your audience
2. Nail down your main point
3. Prep your topline messaging within the values / problem / vision framework
4. Brainstorm questions – simple and tricky
5. Mock interview



1. RESEARCH YOUR AUDIENCE

Your audience includes: (1) the reporter and (2) the outlet's readership / viewers / listeners

Consider:

- Looking at the reporter's previous stories, their Twitter, etc. Are they values-aligned? Will they throw tough questions at you? What do you think their framing will be?
- Researching the outlet. Who are their readers / viewers / listeners? Are they aligned or persuadable? What messages will resonate with them?

You very well may be able to skip this step if it's a reporter and outlet you're quite familiar with, but just know that **it's key to understand the opportunity you have and to reflect on what you want to get out of it.** This will help you develop your main message.

1. DEVELOP YOUR MAIN POINT

Questions to ask yourself:

- What is the main point I want people to take away from my communications on this issue?
- If people remember just ONE thing I said, what do I want that to be?
- If I could choose what quote the reporter uses for their story, what would it be?

Example: Welcoming New Arrivals

Main point:

“Every single one of us deserves the chance to build a full, vibrant life. Whether our family has been here for generations or has just arrived, we all want to create a better future for our loved ones.”

3. PREP YOUR VALUES, PROBLEM + VISION

Questions to ask yourself:

- Values:
 - What do I and my desired audience agree on?
 - What will bring people together?
- Problem:
 - What's the real issue here?
- Vision
 - How can we fix this issue together?
 - What will an ideal future look like?

Example: Welcoming New Arrivals

Values: *Our communities are stronger when we all have the resources we need to thrive. And you're right, for too long, many long-term residents have also been left behind.*

Problem: *Unfortunately, anti-immigrant folks on the right are pitting communities against one another to stoke fear, distract from these needs, and advance their own harmful political agendas that certainly don't help any underserved communities.*

Vision: *In actuality, the solutions that I'm advocating for – permanently affordable housing, strong social services, protections for workers, education and job training, better coordination between our local government and nonprofits – will help all of us, newcomers and long-time residents alike.*

4. BRAINSTORM ? QUESTIONS ?

What questions do you expect the reporter to ask you? Consider:

- Simple questions you know they will ask
- Questions that get at the “big picture”
- Questions that would easily allow you to pivot to your main point
- Questions that get at the conflict of the issue, aka, tricky questions

Take some time to think about how you might answer them! And remember, it's ok to say “I'm not well positioned to answer that question, but I can [refer to ally, send you a report I found useful, etc].”

5. DO A **MOCK INTERVIEW**

Finally, if you have time, practice with a colleague, family member, or friend.

Have them ask you the questions you developed and practice answering them, focusing on BREVITY and PIVOTING to your main point when needed.

Interviewing Best Practices

GENERAL INTERVIEWING BEST PRACTICES

Concisely deliver your message.

Lead with your main point and keep coming back to it.

Contextualize your main point with your values, problem, and vision framework. Use the following tactics to emphasize your main point when possible:

- **Storytelling:** humanizing your points by giving examples of human impact
- **Statistics:** using data to make your points more digestible, understandable, and impactful.

Remember that YOU control the interview. The following are two ways to remain in control:

- **Flagging:** signaling the most important takeaway (“the bottom line is...[pivot to main point]”)
- **Bridging:** pivoting from the question to your message (“there’s more to the story...[pivot to main point]”)

THEIR STORY

What is the story they want to tell?

BRIDGING

OUR STORY

What is the story we want to tell?



That's a great question, but the most important thing to know here is...

I'm not able to comment on that. What I would like to say is...

What's absolutely critical to remember is...

There is more to the story, specifically...

That's a good point, but I think your audience would interested in knowing that...

I know that's one of our opponents' favorite talking points, but the reality is...

GENERAL INTERVIEWING BEST PRACTICES CONTINUED

- Pretend like you are explaining your points to an elderly neighbor – **speak slowly and clearly**, don't use jargon, and remember that you know far more than the average listener about this topic. **Speak on their level, not yours.**
- Finish your sentences and **stop talking once you've made your point.**
- You don't need to answer questions that you don't want to answer. **When in doubt, pivot** to your main soundbite/point.
- If the reporter asks you if you have anything you'd like to add at the end of the interview, **REPEAT YOUR MAIN POINT.** This is often the quote reporters will use.

WHAT HELPS US WIN

→ Consistent messaging

If you feel like you're repeating yourself over & over again, you're doing it right!

→ Give YOUR messaging, regardless of theirs

You should be driving home the same points home every single time.

Don't repeat their messaging!

→ Center all your messaging in VALUES and VISION

Formulate your message as common-sense, forward-thinking, and focused on community



REPETITION IS KEY

- You do not need a unique response to every question or argument.
- In fact, you should be responding with the same messaging to everything. This works to build understanding of and confidence in what you're saying.
- **If you feel like you're repeating yourself, you're doing it right!**

TV and Radio Interviews

Logistics and Tips

TV INTERVIEW LOGISTICS – OPTICS MATTER

In-Person

- Wear solid colors, not too bright
- Good posture conveys authority
- Ask them whether you're looking at the camera or at them



Virtual

- Place computer at eye level or above
- Find appropriate lighting
- Neutral background – not distracting
- Good posture conveys authority
- Position yourself at the center of your screen
- Wear solid colors
- Look at the light on your webcam
- Mute yourself when not speaking
- Avoid headphones

TIPS FOR TV INTERVIEWS

- **Communicate everything you want to say in the first 30 seconds**
- Use natural hand gestures
- Don't look up – look down if you need to think
- Drink water beforehand so your voice sounds clear
- Present a calm & authoritative demeanor
- Emphasize numbers
- Smile and nod when being asked a question
- If they ask you if you have anything to add, repeat your key message



RADIO INTERVIEW LOGISTICS

- If in person, the interviewer will explain all logistics
- If it's virtual, use headphones with good speakers to avoid echo
 - Record in a small- to medium-sized room with lots of stuff in it (like a closet or bedroom)
- **Use your notes – you're not on camera!**



KOCHERGA: David Stout is a county commissioner and chairman of the Texas Border Coalition, which includes elected officials and business leaders.

STOUT: We specifically told them that we did not want them to send troops or to militarize the border any further. We said we need humanitarian assistance, not this political game that they're playing.

KOCHERGA: Stout, a Democrat, says the Republican governor has not provided help with the crisis. Many local officials agree. What they really need, they say, is help with things like shelter for migrants in winter weather.

RADIO INTERVIEW TIPS

- Take a sip of water before beginning so your voice sounds clear
- Communicate everything you want to say in the first 30 seconds
- Don't take deep breaths before answering a question – it doesn't sound good on air
- If they ask you if you have anything to add, repeat your key message
- **Speak slowly and clearly** – no jargon



LANDER: The thing is, if you don't take a housing-first approach, you're going to pay much more in other ways. What we found that - was that the average nightly cost of supportive housing using that housing-first model is \$68 a day. But sending someone to jail for the night, which often happens after a sweep, is over \$1,400. So it might sound like it costs money to stand up a housing-first program, but there's good evidence it'll save you money in the long run.

GET IN TOUCH

**HAVE A QUESTION? WANT
COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT?**

EMAIL THE HELP DESK
helpdesk@localprogress.org

STAY IN THE KNOW

**SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAILS
+
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