

Radio Tips and Tactics

Preparation

- To get a sense of the host's style, listen to the show before you go on.
- What's the format of the show? Live? Live-to-Tape? Call-In? One-on-one interview? Debate? Is it liberal? Conservative?
- If you can't listen to the show because you're outside of the market, find out as much as possible from the Web or from the show's producer.
- Find out who the other guests may be and do some opposition research if they will be representing an opposing point-of-view.
- Always choose an in-studio interview over a telephone interview, if you have a choice. The quality of the interview will be better, you'll be less likely to be cut off in mid-sentence, and you'll have an opportunity to establish a rapport with the host.
- Bring along a blank tape and ask one of the studio technicians to record the program for you. It's sometimes difficult to get one after-the-fact.
- If you have a chance, practice by taping yourself, so you can rehearse important things like voice inflection and speech cadence.
- Print out any "cheat sheets" that you need for reference. The beauty of radio is that nobody can see you, so you can use notes to help you make your points.
- For call-in shows, notify supporters, friends and co-workers about the program, so that they can call in with supportive questions.

In the Studio

- Ask the producer what the best position is for you in relation to the microphone.
- Maintain eye contact with the host or the engineer while you are on air, so that you can time your comments. Don't lose an opportunity to make a strong closing point because you're out of time.
- For call in, use the listener's name in your response. This is an excellent way to establish a rapport with the listener and your audience.
- Refer to the station's call letters, the show or the host by name – it's always a sign of a seasoned pro.
- Assume that everything is being recorded, so don't make any off-the-cuff remarks.

On the Phone

- If you must participate by phone, call from a landline, not a mobile phone or cordless phone.
- Disable call waiting.

- Have the phone number of the studio on hand in case you get cut off.
- If you must use a cell phone and you're calling from a car, pull over and park – both for safety reasons and to help you concentrate on your message.
- If you're doing a live interview by phone, turn off the radio in your home or car to prevent feedback.

Your Message

- Make sure to get out your key messages in your first answer – you may only get that one opportunity.
- No matter what happens, stay calm and on message.
- Treat the host and listeners, even those hostile to you, with respect. This will usually disarm their hostility. If hostility continues, "I'm sorry you feel that way," will often win you points from the audience.
- Radio audiences change every 15 minutes; if you are on a one-hour show, repeat your messages often.
- Avoid sarcasm; it doesn't translate well on radio – or in other media for that matter.
- Mention your organization or campaign by name, saying it at least twice. Don't use the acronym of your organization, rather say your org's full name. Don't count on the host to mention it for you.

Speaking Tips

- Don't speak too rapidly; in fact, speak more slowly than usual. It will be the perfect speed for radio.
- Avoid popping your "Ps" or smacking your lips into the microphone.
- Smile, it will actually "show" in your voice.
- Ask the production staff for water, and drink periodically during the show (away from the microphone).
- Speak in short sentences and pepper your remarks with sound bites.
- Use appropriate vocal variation. To avoid sounding monotone, try punching, or emphasizing one word or phrase in each sentence.
- Use humor as appropriate, but only if it comes naturally to you.
- If possible, stand rather than sit (during phone interviews). It will give your voice more energy.