

# Chapter 8

## 8 Public Relations: Electronic Media Relations

- Define electronic media relations
- Handling TV interviews
- Video news release
- Satellite media
- Public service announcements
- Video conferences
- Summary

### Objectives

At the end of this chapter students will be able to:

- Understand and define electronic media relations
- Understand how to handle TV interviews
- Understand and explain video news release and video conferences
- Explain how video conference is all about

## 8.1 DEFINE ELECTRONIC MEDIA RELATIONS

Electronic media refers to radio and television. These are the medium used by public relations practitioners in order to communicate with their publics. Televisions and radios are everywhere, which is both good and bad for society. Television and radio is connected with specialized cable networks, offering everything from food and fashion to weather and history and beam non-stop across the land.



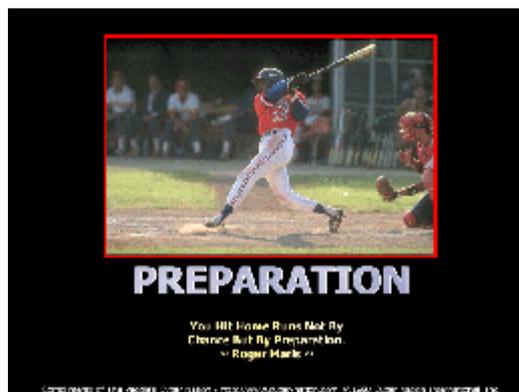
## 8.2 HANDLING TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

Television has become one of the most persuasive methods of communication although it indeed may be dangerous for one's health. Televisions have become a more potent channel of news; executives from all fields are being called on to air their views on news and interview programs. For people who uninitiated and unprepared, a television interview can be a very harrowing experience. Executives who will be attending a television interview must seek advice and guidance from public relations professional on how to act appropriately in front of a camera that never blinks.



The following is guidelines of the do's and don'ts for the executives who may attend television interviews:

- **Do prepare** – Preparation is the key success for the broadcast appearance. A person or executives who will be attending the interviews should know the main points they wish to make before the interview begins. They should list out their point and practice to talk. They should know who their audiences are. They must also know who the reporter is and something about the reporter's beliefs. They should also practice and rehearse answering tough hypothetical questions before entering the studio or interview.



- **Be yourself** – Interviewees should appear relaxed and natural. Smiles are appropriate to hide your nervousness. Nonverbal signs of tension like clenching fists, gripping the arms of a chair or tightly holding one hand with the other should be avoided. Gesturing with the palms opened on the other hand, suggests relaxation and an eagerness to discuss issues. During the interview, giggling, smoking or chewing gum should be avoided as it shows signs of unprofessionalism. Proper posture also must be taken into consideration by the interviewees.



- **Do be open and honest** - Television magnifies everything, especially 'phoniness'. If you are telling a lie it will show. On television, half-truth becomes a half-lie. You must ensure to establish audience credibility early. For example, by telling your experience to the audience it will create credibility of audience to you.



- **Do be brief** – There is no time for beating around the bush on television and radio. Interviewees must be brief and main points must be summarised at the beginning of sentences. Interviewees must use standard language and it must be understandable. Avoid jargon and technical words.

- **Do play it straight** – Natural and relaxed use of appropriate humour may be a big plus in getting a point across. If humour doesn't come naturally, interviewees should play it straight.

- **Do dress for the occasion** – Interviewee must remember that proper dress is important to gain confidence and attention of the audiences. Bold patterns, checks, or pinstripes should be avoided, and this also includes jewellery that shines or glitters. Skirts should nicely fall below a woman's knees. Men's socks should be high enough to prevent a gap between socks and pants.

- **Don't think everything you say will be aired** – A guest may be interviewed for 30 minutes and appear as a 10-a second segment on a newscast. That is why an interviewee must constantly summarize his or her main points.



- **Don't let the interviewer dominate** – Interviewees can control the interview by varying the length and content of their responses. If a question requires a complicated answer, the interviewee should acknowledge that before getting trapped in an incomplete and misleading response. If interviewees make mistakes, they should correct them and go on. If they don't understand the question, they should ask for clarification.
  
- **Don't say "No comment"** – If an interviewee cannot answer certain questions, they should clearly explain why.
  
- **Do stop** – One common broadcast technique is to leave cameras running and microphones on even after an interviewee has responded to a question. Often the most revealing, misleading, and damaging statements are made by interviewees embarrassed by the silence.

### 8.3 VIDEO NEWS RELEASES

New releases in video form, known as video news releases (VNRs), have become standard tools in the practice of public relations. The best VNRs are those that cover "breaking" news – a press conference or news announcement that broadcasters would cover themselves if they had the resources. Such "breaking" news or VNRs are delivered by satellite directly to TV newsrooms. Satellite feeds of unedited footage, called B-roll, include a written preamble-story summary and sound bites from appropriate spokesperson. The TV stations then assemble the stories themselves, using as much or as little of the VNR footage as they see fit.

The second methods of VNR delivery is for stories without a breaking news angle. These "evergreen" VNRs are usually delivered by cassette to broadcasters and are more timeless in terms of content.

### 8.4 SATELLITE MEDIA TOURS

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century equivalent to the sit-down, in-studio interview is the satellite media tour (SMT), which is a series of preset interviews, conducted via satellite, between an organization's spokesperson and TV station personalities across the nation or around the world.

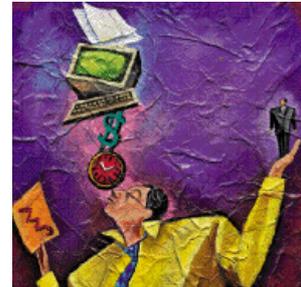
A SMT originates with a subject speaking from one location to another who is then connected electronically from station to station where he or she enjoys on-air and one-on-one discussions. Corporate executives, celebrities and "experts" of every stripe have taken advantage of the privatization of satellites and downlink dishes at local TV stations by conducting these rapid-fire "personalized" television interviews.



Several steps must be taken to make sure the viability of an SMT:

- **Defining objectives** – As in the public relations programs, it requires carefully defined objectives of the organization. The company must then advertise to attract the interested stations. In defining objectives, target audiences and the market to be interviewed must be properly identified. Choosing the best station to air our interview must also be considered to ensure the success of the program.

- **Pitching the SMT** – There are procedures involved in pitching the SMT. The producer must be contacted firstly by letter and then followed by phone to ensure the availability of the organization of the spokesperson. All necessary items such as press kits and background materials should be sent to the stations at least two weeks in advance of the interviews.

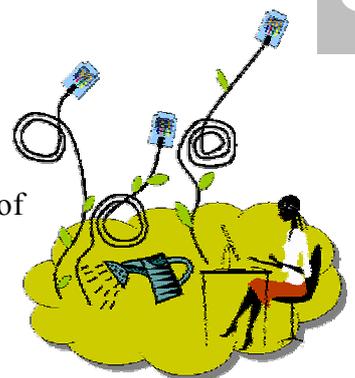


- **Last minutes juggling** – Stations often request time changes. PR practitioner must maintain contact with station personnel, even when placed on a waiting list, so that planned interview can be filled if a station cancels an interviews close to the SMT date.

- **Satellite time** – Satellite time needs to be contracted for well in advance to ensure that the SMT is aired when the organization wants.



- **Availability of dedicated phones lines** – Several dedicated phone lines must be available to communicate with stations, especially in case of interrupted audio feedback – in other words, static





**Spokesman briefing** – It is important to brief the spokesperson to avoid potential confusion on the names and locations of interviewers during an SMT. All names should be written out on large cue cards, which the spokesperson should refer to before the interview. Besides, the spokesperson should become familiar with the earpiece because the director’s voice can be distracting initially.

- **Consider controversy** – Don’t worry about stirring up a storm; it often makes news.
- **Avoid becoming too commercial** – The spokesperson is often responsible to “plug” the organization product or services but don’t overdo it or you won’t be invited back.

## 8.5 PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The public service announcement (PSA) is a TV or radio commercial, usually 10 to 60 seconds long, that is broadcast at no cost to the sponsor. Non-profit organizations are the active users of PSAs. Commercial organizations may also take advantage of PSAs for their non-profit activities such as showing their concerns about the community through blood donations, voter registration drives, health testing and the like.



PSAs can be grouped into three categories:

- **Public affairs** – Provides information about environmental or public policy issues, such as voter registration campaigns.
- **Public relations** – Provides information about free-of-charge government, association, or corporate services such as blood drives
- **Marketing communications** – Provides information about safety, health, or lifestyle issues within a context that allows brand identification and even promotion of products and services in a generic way, such as in the areas of food, fitness, and nutrition



PSAs are generally written in advertising-copy style: punchy and pointed. The important challenge in writing PSAs is to select the small amount of information to be used, discard extraneous information and persuade the listener to take the desired action. The following is atypical 20-second PSA:

Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister asked all Malaysians to volunteer their time for service to others. By giving yourself, you are helping to improve yourself, your community, and doing your part to make a difference in the world.

Pembangunan Belia Wawasan needs your help. Sign up today, and make someone's life a lot more fulfilling – yours.

This message is brought to you by the Advertising Council.

## 8.6 VIDEO CONFERENCES

A new recent technology of the video revolution is videoconferencing, which connects audiences throughout Malaysia or around the world in a satellite-linked meeting.

Video conferences have now become a popular medium to communicate. Videoconferences may be originated from offshore oil platforms, hotel ballrooms, from corporate headquarters or major trade shows. Video conferences can be used for motivation or information purposes. They have the benefit of disseminating a message – internally to employees or externally to the news media, investors or consumers – instantly.

In considering video conferencing, the following factors must be taken into consideration:

- **Originate site** – Videoconferences may originate from a broadcast studio. However, their impact can be increased by choosing a remote location that adds authenticity to the proceedings.
- **Visuals** – Since video conferences are a live TV show, graphic must be taken into consideration to heighten the visual excitement of the presentation.
- **Interactivity** – A video conference may also be enhanced by allowing viewers to ask questions. Two-way audio linkups are now common in videoconferences. Again, these add a note of immediacy and spontaneity that enhances the interest and impact of videoconference.



INTER  
ACTIVE

## 8.7 SUMMARY

The pervasiveness of electronic medias such as TV and radio in society has made it even more important for public relations professionals to be conversant with electronic media. PR professionals have to equip themselves with new technology in electronic media such as videoconferencing, and many other new technologies.

There are several techniques used to handle TV interview that need to be familiarized by PR professionals. The do's and don'ts are:

- do prepare to ensure the success of broadcast appearance,
- do be yourself where the interviewees should appear more natural and relaxed.
- be open and honest because television magnifies everything especially phoniness.
- next do play it straight where natural and relaxed use of appropriate humour can be a big plus in getting a point across. Besides, the interviewees should also be properly dressed for the occasion where bold patterns, checks, or pinstripes should be avoided.
- next, the interviewee must also remember that not everything they say will be aired - where a guest might be interviewed for about 30 minutes and appear as a 10-seconds segment on a newscast.

In 21<sup>st</sup>-century equivalent to the sit-down, in-studio interview is the satellite media tour (SMT) which is a series of preset interviews, conducted via satellite, between an organization's spokesperson and TV station personalities across the nation or around the world. The public service announcement (PSA) refers to TV or radio commercial, usually 10 to 60 seconds long that is broadcast at no cost to the sponsor. Non-profit organizations are active users of PSAs. A more phenomenon of the video revolution is the videoconference, which connects audiences throughout Malaysia or around the world in a satellite-linked meeting.

## 8

## 8.8 QUESTIONS

### Section A: Short answer questions.

1. Why has video become more important for public relations professionals?
2. What are the pros and cons of so-called reality televisions?
3. What are several guidelines to handle a TV interview?
4. Is it a good idea for an executive to be spontaneous in a TV interview?
5. Should an interviewee always try to be humorous?
6. What are the benefits of public service announcements?
7. What is satellite media tour and when does it make sense?