

Communicating with **NANCY STERN**

COMMUNICATION PLUS

When The News Media Comes Calling

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A little preparation can go a long way toward avoiding "foot in mouth" disease."

—Jody Hammond
NBC & CNN
News Producer

Just about anyone who has been in the public eye has a story of the media interview that went south. "I talked to that reporter for an hour and all they used was a ten-second sound bite!" or, "He said he wanted to ask me about X when that was just a way to get in the door so he could talk about Y." Chances are, the reporter came armed with questions and if he really did his homework, knew what answers to expect. You should be just as prepared. Media training can't make the tough questions go away, but it can give you the tools to control the interview. Here are some tips:

- Anticipate the toughest questions and prepare/rehearse your answers in advance. Know going in what YOUR goal is for the



interview. Are you releasing new information or reacting to an event or story that's already out there?

- Be able to cover key points in a conversational manner. Don't memorize. It will sound like it. Collect information from the reporter before the interview:

What is the deadline?

What is the story about?

What is the hook/interest angle?

How do I fit into the story?

What do you want? Quote? Statement? Interview?

Who else have you spoken with? What did they say? (This will also give an indication of where the story is heading. Are the other interviewees credible?)

What documents do you have/need? Does the reporter have

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Preparing for the Media Interview (cont.)

a document you haven't seen? Have him/her fax or e-mail a copy before the interview.

- Be sure to find out when the story will run and how long it will be. (There's a big difference between a minute-thirty TV news story, and a long, background article in the morning paper.)
- Have a mini-tape recorder handy. Tell the reporter that you'll be taping the interview, so you have a copy of what is said. This lets her know you're not a rookie.
- Clarify what she's going for. *"I think what you're asking is..."* It's O.K. to admit you don't understand the question or can't predict the future. If you find the interview veering off-course, bring it back on track. *"You said we'd be talking about X and I'll be happy to answer your questions about that."*
- Don't say *"off the record"* or believe something will be *"off the record."* There's no such thing as *"off the record."*
- Use simple terminology. If the subject is complicated, and the reporter is not up to speed, provide a simple verbal primer on the topic before the interview begins or give the reporter a handout of key information.
- Practice. Attend media training. See yourself on camera so you know what the audience will see.

Don't deliver canned responses to questions. Be descriptive, provide anecdotes, and sound conversational.

The simple strategy of "tell 'em what you're gonna to tell 'em, tell 'em, and then tell 'em what you told 'em" is great when it comes to the media interview. That leads to another tip. Know when to stop talking. Many a damaging sound bite has been uttered when the interviewee's guard was down, after he/she thought the interview was over.



Email Your Questions to Nancy@nancystern.com

Q

What can I do if I want to steer the interview in a different direction?

A

You can use a technique we call **block and bridge** when a question comes up that you can't or don't want to answer. First you "block" by saying something like, *"This is an important point because..."* Then you "bridge" to the message you want to get across by saying something like, *"What we focus on most here at XYZ Corporation is providing the best possible products. . ."*

You can weave your message into any answer seamlessly, no matter what the question so long as you are staying focused on your intention. If you lose focus you'll become awkward and could end up looking like a politician trying to avoid the subject of your last illicit affair.

Bridging provides you with a way to take charge of the interview and communicate a few key points that are accurate, clear and concise.

Bridging also allows you to answer the reporters' questions but focus on the most critical information you want to get across in the interview.

*Be a Good Listener.
Don't interrupt
the interviewer.
Practice
STAR Power.™
Stop, Think,
Acknowledge &
Respond.*

Media Myths

- The media is out to get you.
- Reporters always have hidden agendas.
 - They will look for ways to misquote you.
 - They want to make you look and sound stupid.
 - They will take what you say out of context.
 - The interview is a conversation.

on the spot

media training & coaching

www.onthespotmediatraining.com



Because how you say what you say, matters.™

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Whether you're experiencing change, managing people, connecting with customers and co-workers, or making presentations, getting your message across effectively is vital to your success.

Nancy Stern custom designs keynotes, breakouts and educational programs to enhance communication effectiveness; to help increase productivity, profitability and peace of mind; and to impact the bottom line where it matters most—with results.

Programs & Topics Include:

- How You Say What You Say Matters™
- Leadership Dynamics™
- Connecting with Customers™
- Turn Conflict into Cooperative Conversations™
- Powerful Presentations
- Facilitate to Motivate and Manage Conflict™
- Maximize Meeting Results™
- Improv(e) Innovation at Work™
- You Can't Leave Home Without You™
- Communicate with Impact!™
- Gender Jive™
- Improv(e) Your Life™
- Facing the News Media
- Shift Happens: Managing the Dynamics of Change
- Team Building for Creativity, Productivity and Peace of Mind

Why Nancy Stern?

Nancy Stern, MA is the president/owner and senior consultant of Communication Plus, a consulting firm in San Diego specializing in leadership and employee development. Since 1972, she has taught thousands the art and science of effective communication. She is a former columnist with the *San Diego Daily Transcript* and has taught at the University of California San Diego and San Diego State University Management Development Center.

She inspires managers, employees and individuals of all ages through the

simple, yet powerful, lesson that *how you say what you say, matters™*. Personal experiences form the foundation of her programs, creating presentations that are personal, professional and practical. The result: Improvement of the "whole person" and therefore, the "whole organization."

She is an EMMY award-winner, who produced and appeared in the national PBS television series *Communicating With Nancy Stern* (1990-95) and she is the coauthor of *101 Stupid Things Trainers Do To Sabotage Success*.

Nancy holds a Master of Arts degree in Communication Education from Michigan State University and is a member of the American Society for Training and Development and the National Speakers Association.



Nancy Stern