



intermedia

COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING

Introduction

These notes cover the core learning points of Intermedia Communications Training's Media Expertise workshop. You will find them useful background reading after the course, and for review before important media interviews. We created this material during our careers as practicing international journalists, and designed the course to help you give journalists what they need in order to tell your story well. We also teach you special techniques to protect you from falling into the traps journalists sometimes set for unwary interview subjects.

The structural models contained in the course are also available as Apple and Blackberry Apps, if you want to carry an electronic synopsis with you. Please search for them under *Intermedia Media Pro*. For additional information, please consult our web site, www.IntermediaCT.com, our blog, messagecraft.Wordpress.com, and our Twitter account, @MessageCraft

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ANSWERING QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY

Honest Direct Answer: Starting with a direct answer makes you credible to your audience. It tells them what direction your answer will take. Avoid Jargon. Speak in the everyday language of your audience. Useful words to start with:

"Yes..." "No..."

Message: Next, briefly explain the role or goal of your organization, project, or report. This is where you deliver your core message. Prompt yourself with:

"Our role is..." "Our goal is..." "Our main objective is..." "Our report's key finding is ..."

Specific Proof: The best way to convince your audience is with examples, details, concrete facts, numbers, stories and analogies. Use word pictures to create a vivid image your listeners will remember. Prompt with:

"For example..."

Audience Connection: Explain how the issues you are talking about affect peoples' lives. Why should they care about your information? Prompts:

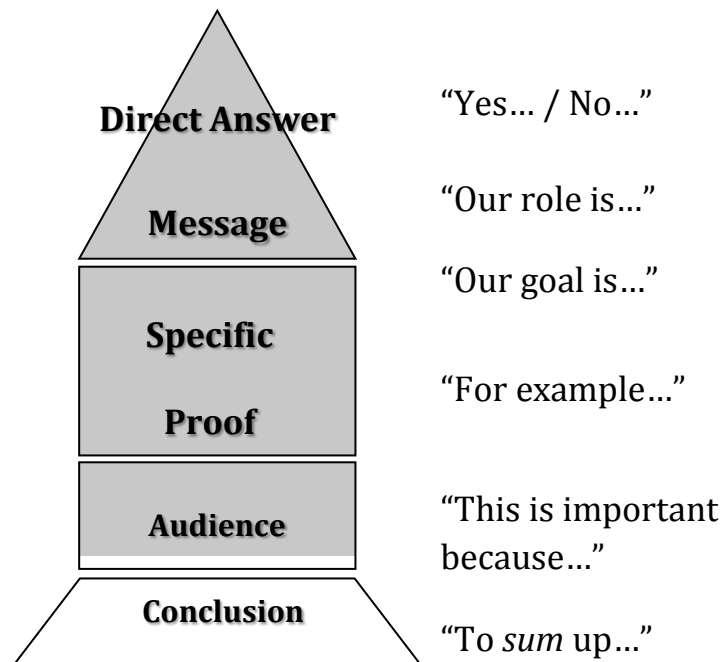
"This is important because..." "What this means to your audience is..."

"Why does this matter to the citizens of this country? Because..."

Conclusion: End with a short, punchy statement that reinforces your main message. This signals to your listener that you are concluding your answer. Prompts:

"In conclusion..." "To sum up..." "Finally..."

The Rocket Model



Remember:

- Don't start with background information.
- If you do slip and say a jargon term, follow it up with an explanation.
- Don't use the "**trust me**" approach.
- Eliminate conceptual language, especially overused terms such as "sustainable" or "capacity building." These empty 'tune-out' words weaken your message.
- Be **concise**. Your message gets diluted the longer you go on.
- **Shorter sentences** are easier for audiences to absorb than longer, convoluted sentences. Listeners need a pause to understand your words.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Loaded Questions are difficult or misleading, and they can leave you looking defensive. Here are the four most common types of difficult questions. If you use these specific techniques to defuse each one, you can get back in control.

Hot and Red questions have high emotional content. They can be delivered with anger or other strong feelings, and can lure you into an emotional reaction. Ignoring them can make you look callous, guilty, or defensive.

Cool and Blue questions have low emotional content. They are not particularly difficult, but can be lost opportunities for taking control, if not done well.

HOT AND RED	COOL AND BLUE
<p>TRUE AND NEGATIVE (hot emotion/legitimate concern)</p> <p><i>Re-word the Question</i></p> <p><i>Cool it Off</i></p>	<p>GENERAL QUESTIONS (low emotion)</p> <p><i>Focus the Question</i></p> <p><i>Take Control</i></p>
<p>FALSE AND DAMAGING (hot emotion/no truth)</p> <p><i>Tough Denial</i></p>	<p>MISINFORMED (low emotion/no truth)</p> <p><i>Correct the Mistake Gently</i></p>

True and Negative: Hot emotion, legitimate question.

Reword the question to cool down the emotion.

Answer real issue hiding behind explosive language.

Helpful phrases: *"Your question is..."*

"I hear your concern. You're concerned that..."

"You are pointing to the serious issue of..."

"You are asking..."

"Essentially, what you are asking is..."

"Should we be working with this company? Yes, and here's why..."

False & Damaging: Hot emotion, false charge.

Firm denial (avoid repeating the charge).

Follow with convincing specifics.

"That is NOT true. Here are the facts..."

General Question: Focus on a specific topic, and take control.

"Our priority right now is..."

"The report focuses on several main topics. Let me talk first about..."

Misinformed: Correct Gently. Take control.

"You'll be pleased to know just the opposite is true..."

"Actually, what we are doing is..."

QUESTIONS *NOT* TO ANSWER

“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”

--Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-philosophicus

Do your best to give honest, direct answers. If you decline to answer a legitimate question, journalists will broadcast a “no comment” answer in the worst possible light. For example, “When asked if he received kickbacks, the mayor replied, ‘No comment.’”

There are, however, some questions you should not answer. In such cases, **avoid saying “no comment.”** This is a “trigger words” phrase to journalists. It means you know something that would get you in big trouble if you said it out loud.

Instead, skillfully deflect these questions, then take control by introducing a topic you *want* to talk about. The goal is to move the conversation forward. Use a **bridging technique**: Relate your new topic to the general issue the journalist raised. Find a key word in the question – “AIDS” or “corruption” – that connects the question you want to avoid to your preferred topic.

Here are four types of questions *not* to answer, and techniques for handling them:

Misdirected Questions: Journalists sometimes ask questions outside the scope of your area of responsibility. They do this to trap you in a difficult situation, or they may have made an honest mistake about your range of expertise or authority. In these cases, **redirect the question** towards the appropriate source. You can say, “I’m not familiar with the details on that issue, but I would be happy to arrange for you to speak with Ms. X, who can best answer that question....”

Q: Is it true that the Ministry of Education is planning a 10% cut to rural school expenditures?

A: That question can best be answered by the Education Minister herself. I can tell you what our organization is doing to boost rural primary education in the country. For example...

Personal opinion: Journalists sometimes ask for your “personal opinion” to trap you into saying something that conflicts with your official position. Don’t do this. When speaking to a

journalist, you are *always* a spokesperson. If asked for your personal view, respond with your **personal commitment to your organization's goals.**

Q: The Finance Minister has just been fired. You two did not get along at all. Personally, aren't you glad he's gone?

A: Personally, I am committed to supporting the national economic agenda to spur growth, create jobs, and improve the business climate, and we're looking forward to working with whoever is minister towards those goals. For example, one of our priority areas is...

Hypothetical questions: Avoid speculating about the future with the media. Otherwise, when events turn out differently, your words will come back to haunt you. The media delights in using old quotations or TV clips that show you contradicting your current course of action. Of course, making reasonable predictions based on data is part of many jobs, and promising to take certain actions is the role of leaders. To minimize the risks, **stick with present facts and commitments.**

Q: If the current crisis leads to violence and civil war, how would your organization respond?

A: Look, I can't speculate on such a highly hypothetical scenario. Our efforts right now are focused on the top priority of...

Blame: It's a common media tactic to entice an interview subject into blaming another party for some problem or misfortune. Blame generates conflict, and serves the media better than it serves your organization. **Brush aside blame, and keep going by focusing your answer on the solution to the problem.**

Q: Who is most to blame for the recent oil spill – the greedy oil company who tried to cover it up, or the government for its lax regulations?

A: Our role is to help clean up this spill and make sure both government leaders and oil company executives know what it's going to take to make sure this never happens again. Here's what the situation is now...

To Review:

1. **MISDIRECTED:** “That question should be addressed to _____. What I can tell you about is...”

“I’m not sure of the details on that, but I can speak in depth about...”

2. **PERSONAL:** “Personally, I’m committed to...”

“Personally, I can say...”

“Here’s what we believe...”

3. **HYPOTHETICAL:** “That’s a hypothetical question. What the data shows now is...”

“You’re inviting me to speculate on a scenario we don’t see as likely. Here’s what we know right now...”

4. **BLAME:** “We’re here to focus on solutions. Looking ahead, what we see is...”

“What’s most important now is...”

BODY LANGUAGE

Reinforce your message with the right body language.

Eye Contact: Eye contact establishes credibility and raises your level of authority with interviewer and audience. Avoiding eye contact in some cultures can make you look nervous or aloof. During an interview, look at the questioner, never the camera. During a public talk, try to make eye contact with everyone. In cultures where sustained eye contact may be considered rude, look towards the face of the person you are speaking with. Just don't stare incessantly into their eyes. You may look away occasionally, but never up at the sky or ceiling, as if you are searching desperately for an answer.

Open Body Language: Arms and hands should stay apart, and be used to gesture naturally. This open body language communicates candor, comfort, and confidence. Arms crossed or hands folded can communicate aloofness or insecurity, and diminishes your authority.

Alert Posture: Stand tall and sit up straight. This puts energy into your delivery. Do not slouch or lean to the side, as this can make you look awkward on TV. When standing, stand straight with both feet planted on the ground. Do not weave or lean against anything, as this will diminish your look of authority.

Relax: Take a deep breath before the interview begins. Swiveling your chair, tapping your feet, or bouncing your legs can leave the impression you are nervous.

Vary your Speed and Tone of Voice: Speak naturally, as if engaged in an interesting conversation. A dull monotone bores people, while unrelenting intensity can tire an audience very quickly. Drink something warm, such as tea, instead of cold water. Warm liquids will relax your vocal cords and give your voice more resonance. Do not drink coffee or highly caffeinated beverages; they will dehydrate your mouth.

Dressing for TV and Public Appearances

Dress to suit the event: In most professional contexts, a jacket and tie for men and business outfit for women is best. For non-news, non-business events, you may dress more casually if appropriate. Ask the producer, if you are not sure, or watch the program in advance to see how other guests dress. If you'll be interviewed at a development or project site, more casual clothes that fit the occasion will help make you a congruent part of the picture. If you'll be on with other panel members or guests, take a moment to think about how they usually dress, if you know them. For instance, if the other panel member you may be debating likes to appear in a wrinkled safari shirt when talking about poverty, you don't want to stand out by dressing expensively. On the other hand, in some contexts, you will signal disrespect for your audience if you do not dress your best. Think about these things ahead of time.

Wear eye-catching colors: For presentations or talks, hold the audience's attention with clothes that are interesting to look at. Vibrant hues for women, bold ties and pastel shirts for men work well. Do stay away from outfits that are garish, however.

Hair and make-up: Before you go on camera in a studio, your face needs a make-up base and powder, or the bright lights will make you look either too shiny or washed out.

It's okay to bring your own make-up if you prefer, but be prepared to have it applied for you if that is the protocol. For women, do wear some lipstick and blush even if you do not ordinarily wear make-up, TV will wash you out otherwise. Choose natural shades and stay away from any color that is too bright (no hot pink or fire engine reds). Once the make-up is on, do not touch your face.

Last minute appearance check: Have someone you trust check you for an unruly lock of hair, smeared lipstick, or crooked tie before you go on. Keep a comb handy.

What Not to Wear on TV

White, black, bright red: White and red can look like a solar flare on camera, and dark colors swallow light like a black hole. Because white gets brighter on TV, it can also make you look broader.

Glasses, chunky silver and gold jewelry, dangling earrings, large shiny buttons: These catch camera lights and put a glare on the screen. Wear contact lenses or non-glare glasses.

Pinstripes and patterns: Small intricate patterns and pinstripes create light interference patterns on TV sets, causing your clothing to swirl and jump in a most distracting way.

Do Wear: rich colors such as emerald green, deep ruby, royal blue, chestnut brown, and purple, or pastel colors such as pale yellow, pink, lavender, light green, light blue.

Reading Journalists' Body Language Cues

When two people speak, a rhythmic pattern of body language takes place called *synchronization*. Journalists use this form of non-verbal communication to set the pace and tone of an interview. The back and forth is like a tennis match--and journalists are instinctive professionals at this. Watch for:

An Increasing Pace of Rapid-fire Questions: You will tend to pick up the pace too, which keeps an interview from dragging. But don't go so fast you start answering without thinking. Be prepared to take a pause and slow the pace down if you need to.

Nodding or tilting his/her Head to one side: The interviewer is interested and wants you to continue and elaborate.

Wandering Attention: When an interviewer shifts position, averts eyes, or falls out of synch with your body language, these are signs that he/she has heard enough. You will either get another question quickly, or the interview is about to end. Sum up your point and stop talking.

Non-verbal Communication in other Cultures

A body-language mistake can do irreparable harm when visiting other cultures, especially in the media. For example, imagine a foreign investor trying to set up a joint venture in Thailand. He appears on a Thai TV panel and casually crosses his legs. He has communicated rudeness and contempt, since showing the bottom of one's foot, or pointing with it, is considered one of the most offensive of insults in many Asian cultures.

How can you quickly pick up cultural cues and avoid this kind of non-verbal disaster? People have a natural tendency to *mirror* the body language of others. It's how we learned our non-verbal cues as children. When you deliberately cultivate this skill in other cultures, it speeds up your learning.

Watch and learn: Watch people closely. Watch local movies or TV. Spend lots of time with people. Try mirroring their body language in informal social settings. It is best if you have someone from the culture who can answer your questions about non-verbal cues to avoid.

Notice the differences: Watch for cultural differences in eye contact, facial expressions, head movements, gestures, body movements, posture and stance, proximity and orientation, bodily contact, timing, voice tone, and energy level.

Be particularly careful with hand gestures. What signals an "okay" or "thumbs up" in some cultures can be a very rude gesture in others.

Asymmetrical exceptions: Be cautious with mirroring. For example, a foreign man mirroring a Thai woman's body language would appear ridiculous. Differences in gender, status, ethnic background, occupation, and religion must be taken into account.

Make the effort and win good will: People will appreciate your efforts to adapt yourself to their culture if you ask questions and are eager to learn, and they'll be tolerant of any understandable errors.

WORKING WITH JOURNALISTS

WHAT A JOURNALIST NEEDS

News: What is *new*, unique, and unexpected. What do you have to say that has not yet been reported?

Accurate Information: Precision makes journalists respected and credible. Come to your interview prepared with accurate facts, numbers and details.

Simplification: Journalists must explain complex issues briefly. When necessary, especially for TV, use a shorter version of the Rocket Model:

1. Direct Answer
2. Example
3. Conclusion

Good Quotes: Numbers, details, colorful anecdotes, and word pictures are treasures to a reporter. Prepare good quotes in advance, and say them clearly in an interview.

Conflict, Crisis, Catastrophe: Drama sells. It draws people because it affects us emotionally. You do not want to sell bad news – but you can be an informed source explaining how to resolve a crisis, or provide new insights into a controversy or conflict.

Celebrity: Whenever high-ranking officials or well known individuals visit a country or town, the visit is news. If you are well known, use your celebrity to highlight an important message or project. Project managers can also be celebrities. For example, when visiting a remote rural area, inform the local radio stations or local press.

THINK LIKE A JOURNALIST

An Angle or Approach: Some reporters start researching an issue with the approach, or angle, already dictated by an editor. Before an interview, you should ask a reporter what approach or perspective he/she is taking. They may not tell you about a *negative* approach – but you may get some insight based on the answer.

A Strong Beginning: While working on a story, a reporter searches for the most impressive detail, compelling quote, or emotional image as the opening of the story, or program. If you can come up with a good way to begin the story, you have helped the journalist and helped yourself – because you have placed your perspective at the start of the story.

A Good Ending: Journalists struggle to write that last paragraph. Deliver your best, strongest conclusion at the end of the interview. Look to the future, or mention an upcoming event connected with the story. This means the audience will hear *your* final words at the end of the article.

A News Peg, or related story: Look for opportunities to connect your message to the news of the day. If you are looking for more media attention, call journalists and offer your perspective on a topic if it relates to an important issue the media is covering, or an anniversary. For example, World AIDS Day may allow you to speak on a new aids project recently launched... Earth Day will have journalists searching for related environment stories.

GROUND RULES FOR MEETING THE MEDIA

- **On the record:** This means your words will be aired or quoted and you will be identified. To be safest: assume that whenever you speak to a journalist, you are *on the record*.
- **On background:** You can be quoted or paraphrased, but will not be named. Before you speak, agree with the reporter exactly how your words will be attributed, for example, as “an expert familiar with the details.”
- **On deep background:** The information you give can be used by the journalist, but without quotes and no attribution to any source.
- **Off the record:** What you say off the record is not for publication at all; this information is provided only for the journalist to better understand the issues.

Remember:

- ***Not all journalists follow these rules.*** In many countries, journalists ignore, or are not taught these rules. If in doubt, consider yourself on the record.
- Any confidentiality with a journalist must be made ***before you speak***. You can never offer information, and then say “oh, that’s off the record.”
- Only go on background/ off the record with journalists you know and trust.
- Background/off the record are tools for cultivating relationships and building trust with individual journalists you respect.

Ask for the interview topic in advance: When you agree to an interview, ask what topics will be discussed and what approach the journalist plans to take. In countries with well-developed media, *do not insist on written questions in advance*. It shows lack of trust. In some countries,

journalists do not mind giving questions in advance, so do *ASK*, but do not *INSIST*.

Fact checks/Quote checks: Never ***demand*** to read and approve a journalist's story before publication. Instead, offer to be available for a *fact or quote check*. The journalist may then call you before the story appears to confirm your quotes and facts are accurate.

Respect deadlines: Ask about journalists' deadlines in advance of an interview. Return calls promptly, and deliver any background material as promised. You will win their professional respect.

Provide Supporting Material:

- *Print reporters:* Bring a fact sheet, and a few pages of relevant background material. Do not however, bring piles of paper. They will be less likely to read *any* of it if there is too much.
- *Radio reporters* need *sounds* to take their listeners into the story. If they can't go to the site of a story, offer any video tapes that might have sounds they want to use. Even the voice of another colleague will offer some variety.
- *TV* is driven by *pictures*. Facilitate camera crews getting to the site, or offer footage from your video library if you have it. Suggest doing interviews out of the office with a background connected to the story, for example by a beach for a story on water pollution. Refrain from doing TV interviews in your office, sitting behind your desk. For one thing, it is difficult to remove camera crews once they are in your office, and secondly, this makes you more likely to look like a bureaucrat. If you cannot go outside, at least do the interview in a conference room or a place in which you can look more casual. Remember, you are part of the picture, so dress appropriately.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, BECOMING A “SOURCE”

The best way to make allies with the media is to cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual trust. Become a reliable source. When a journalist trusts you, he or she will be less likely to surprise you with a negative story. Also, when a journalist gets your story out to the public, they are furthering your organization’s strategic communications goals. Treat each encounter with a journalist as the beginning of a potential long-term relationship.

After an interview, invite follow-up

Make sure the journalist has your card. Offer to be available for future interviews. Suggest other topics on which you could be an informed source. After the interview airs or the story is printed, send a quick e-mail of appreciation if you feel the journalist did a good job.

Become a quick-quote expert

When working on a story, journalists seek to include several informed opinions. Let them know you are available for quick quotes on your topic areas. They will call and just ask you for a sentence or two. Do not be pressured to give a quote right away on the telephone if you are not prepared. Tell the journalist you will call back, ask about their deadline, then spend a few minutes crafting just the right quote for the audience.

Be available to speak “on background” or off the record

This gives journalists inside information that better informs them. These relationships are very important for a reporter. You should only go on background or off the record with a journalist you trust. **Never** tell a journalist something that would be disastrous if it appeared in print with your name attached. We know spouses who are married to journalists who tell us they often watch what they say at home!

Be friendly and respectful

It’s a simple fact that if a journalist likes you, he/she will be more likely to give you favorable coverage. Be friendly, learn their names, and treat them as professionals. Some journalists

have told us they wrote deeper investigative stories that ultimately uncovered scandals, simply because an interview subject was arrogant or rude to them at first meeting.

Know when to say “No”

If you believe a journalist has deliberately misrepresented you in a story, you are under no obligation to agree to future interviews. See below, *media troubleshooting*, on how to handle this. Before an interview, do not tell a journalist that you will refuse to talk to them in the future if you do not like the finished story. That will sound very hostile and combative, and will betray an unprofessional attitude towards the media.

MEDIA TROUBLE SHOOTING

You are misquoted or quoted out of context: Minimize the possibility of being misquoted by using a small tape recorder during interviews. If an error appears, telephone the reporter first. If he/she will not fix the problem, call the editor. Explain the misquote and ask for a printed correction if the mistake is serious, or ask that they print your letter to the editor to present your case accurately. If no corrective measures are taken and the story is very damaging, you can take legal action, though in many countries, this is not an option. Keep in mind that carelessness and poor communication account for most misquotes.

You expect an “ambush” interview: You come out of a meeting, and cameras and microphones surround you. But the time is not right to answer all questions. What do you do? If you are authorized to speak, prepare a concise statement before you leave the meeting that delivers what you have to say at that moment, even if it is only “negotiations are continuing.” When the journalists ambush you, give your prepared answer *regardless what questions are asked*. If you can, say when more information will be released, then leave. A single short statement gives the media less to choose from, so your prepared message has a better chance of being quoted. Always be prepared for an ambush interview.

You do not know the answer – but you should: If a journalist asks a question you are not familiar with, do not pretend you know the answer and start talking in a vague manner. Instead, say “I am not familiar with the details on that, and I would be glad to get back to you with that information.” On a live program, you can say, “I am not familiar with the details of that, but I *can* tell you about ...” Then continue with a topic that, hopefully, is related to the question.

STRATEGIES FOR IN-COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES

If you are a designated spokesperson, such as a resident representative or director of a national or state office, use these additional strategies to build media relationships.

Informal monthly media breakfasts: Invite key journalists covering the issues of your organization. Prepare a short presentation on a newsworthy topic as a starting point, and invite questions on a wide range of topics. This gives journalists a chance to write about your organization even if you’re not “breaking” news, and it signals that your organization is open and friendly to the media.

Invite journalists to conferences and seminars: If you are sponsoring or organizing workshops or seminars, extend invitations to key journalists. Note that participants should be told if journalists are attending a seminar, as their presence does mean the event is “on the record.” If you cannot open an event to the media, a closing press conference could be held afterwards.

Project site visits: Journalists love site visits. Arrange for transportation and meals while they are on the job. Note that you should not restrict who they interview or what to photograph.

Write editorials, commentaries, and opinion pieces: Get to know editors of major newspapers and magazines, both print and online. When there is a news story connected to your organization’s work, offer to write an opinion piece or editorial. It is a great way to raise your

organization's public profile, and establish yourself as an expert.

Reward good reporting, but do not play favorites: While you may develop relationships of trust with some journalists, it is important to maintain fairness in dealing with the media. If you only give access to a select few, the rest will resent you. Make sure major news stories are announced widely with press releases and that press conferences are open to all.

HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE/PANEL DISCUSSION

PREPARATION – Meet before the event

Define your message: Agree on your key messages. Prioritize by choosing one main message, plus two or three secondary messages. Write them down. Plan your press conference/panel discussion around these messages.

Consider your audience.

What makes your messages compelling *from their point of view* (not yours)?

Consider the news value of your event

Is it local, national, or international in nature? What angles might the media cover? What current news issues are related to your topic? What negative issues could skew the conference away from your message? A panel should consider whether or not the media will be present. Also, what is the message you want the audience to take back to their constituencies?

Length: 45 minutes is usually enough for a standard conference, including a 5-10 minute introduction. For panel discussions, you can allow an hour, with a 15 minute introductory presentation. The shorter and more focused the presentation, the better.

Note: Be sure the panel's schedule allows time to talk with journalists/audience members one on one after the official event ends.

AT THE EVENT

Hand out a fact sheet containing the key messages, facts and numbers, and panel member names and positions. Keep it to a few pages; if given too much, journalists will read none of it. If launching a report, hand out a short summary, with the full report available at the back of the room. Give fact sheets to reporters while they are waiting for the conference to begin. This helps them prepare questions. For panel discussions, a short fact sheet is helpful for the audience – including those who arrive late and might miss the presentation.

The moderator - usually a public affairs person in your organization, or possibly a panel member - introduces the panel members, explains the ground rules, watches the time and picks the questioners. Avoid embarrassment by giving the moderator a page with your name, title and any information needed to introduce you.

Opening statement: For press conferences, one panel member, usually the most senior, delivers a prepared statement on the topic. Try to keep it under 5 minutes. It's boring for journalists if every panel member delivers a long preamble. For panel discussions, each panelist should make a short presentation. Keep them as brief as possible, so the focus can be on interaction.

Question format: Take questions one at a time. This allows for dynamic back and forth between panel and audience. Do not take several questions and then answer them all at once. This breaks the flow, is deadly boring, and results in some questioners feeling ignored.

Who answers what? Decide in advance how you will answer questions on which topics. This avoids confusion amongst the panel and awkward pauses during the event.

Give concise answers: Keep answers brief, aim for no more than 2 minutes.

Answer using all the steps of the "rocket model." Each questioner or journalist may get to ask only one question, so focus on giving each person a full rocket answer.

Work as a team to give a complete rocket answer: If the person answering the question misses a step in the rocket, work as a team to fill in the blanks. Listen for the structure of your colleagues' answers so you know what to add.

Stick to your rules: If one questioner gets away with asking three or four questions, others will try to do the same, and complain if they don't get equal time.

Put the audience first: Keep the attitude that you are there in order to fully answer their questions and satisfy their concerns. In a panel discussion, make sure you address the interests of each questioner's constituency.

Handling off-topic or highly technical questions: If these require long answers of little general interest, give a quick answer, and offer to be available afterwards for a longer, more detailed response to that questioner.

Hijackers, interlopers and arguers: Sometimes audience members try to take over a discussion. They want to turn the event into a platform for spouting their own ideas. Handling these tense situations calmly and with authority can win you the audience's approval. The best strategy is: after a minute or so, interrupt politely, thank the person for their perspective, and say you want to make sure everyone in the audience has time to participate in the discussion. Then, briefly respond to the concern or issue the person has raised.

Ending the conference

Announce that you will take one final question. After you answer it, give a conclusion for the whole press conference, summing up the main message you wish to deliver. For panels, it's professional to sum up the discussion, especially if you include comments made by the audience, not just the panel members. Then thank the journalists/audience for attending.

Post-conference questions: Allow time at the end of the press conference or panel discussion for journalists/audience members to approach you one on one. Be sure to allow time in your schedule for this. Usually, these one on one short Q&A's are what the journalists will use – the sound is better, and it makes the journalist look like they got an exclusive. So be sure and say your message clearly during these important few minutes. You are not obliged to answer any more than 1 or 2 questions; this is not a pre-arranged interview. Of course, you may go on longer if you like.

DESIGNING A CLEAR MESSAGE

Great communicators craft their messages carefully to make them simple and memorable. In order to motivate your audience and inspire them, you should prepare your messages ahead of time. You want to design a message that will resonate with that audience. Here is a worksheet outlining the points to consider when crafting your messages:

1. Get to the Core of your Message

Write down your main message:

- Underline jargon/ abstract concepts. (like sustainable, capacity-building)
- Replace with concrete language. (development that lasts; teaching new skills)
- Delete what is not essential.
- Break it into short sentences.
- Make it memorable

2. Now, ask yourself: Is this message relevant for my Audience?

Your message should connect with the audience. Think about these things:

- Why should the audience care about your message? How does it affect their lives?
- Does this message appeal to their interests, especially *higher* values such as: national identity, concern for their children, collective future?
- What power does this audience have to affect the outcome? Are we all in this together?

3. Finally, Make the Message Stick

Follow your message with supporting information that is new, unexpected, visual.

Your goal is to create clear impressions the audience will remember. Use:

- Precise facts and unexpected numbers
- Human stories
- Descriptive examples

INTERVIEW PREPARATION WORKSHEET

Interview Topic/Angle:

Media Outlet:

Length of Interview:

Draw your M.A.P.

1. Your Message:

2. Links to your Audience:

(benefits, concerns, connection)

3. Specific Proof /Word Pictures:

(make your message convincing to your audience:

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Answering Questions

DO give direct answers.

DO use examples to make your point, make them relevant to your audience.

DO tell briefly how your organization fits into the picture.

DO keep answers concise; aim for 60- 90 seconds.

DO use short, simple sentences and everyday language; avoid jargon.

DO speak in positive terms ("We're effective" rather than "We're not incompetent")

DON'T say "no comment." Journalists will conclude you have something to hide.

DON'T be evasive. If you can't give a direct answer, briefly explain why and move on.

DON'T repeat a false allegation; the negative impression sticks. ("I am not a crook!").

DON'T argue or blame others; stick to the facts and focus on solutions.

DON'T answer questions outside your area of responsibility. Redirect journalists to the right person, then keep going with a related topic.

Dealing with Journalists

DO prepare for interviews in advance.

DO help journalists get a good story; what can you say that is news?

DO ask journalists about their deadlines and respect them.

DO build relationships with journalists you trust.

DON'T speak "off the record" with a journalist you don't know.

DON'T offer a "personal" opinion in conflict with your duties as a spokesperson.

DON'T ever assume that a microphone is off.

Body Language

DO make eye contact, project your voice, sit up straight, and gesture naturally.

DO stay relaxed, sincere, and empathetic.


DO wear blue, pastel colors or jewel tones like emerald and ruby.

DON'T cross your arms or fold your hands in front of you.


DON'T wear white, black, bright red for TV interviews; avoid stripes and busy patterns.

Slide 1


Intermedia Power Point Notes



1. Answering Questions Effectively
2. Difficult Questions
3. Questions Not to Answer
4. Working with the Media



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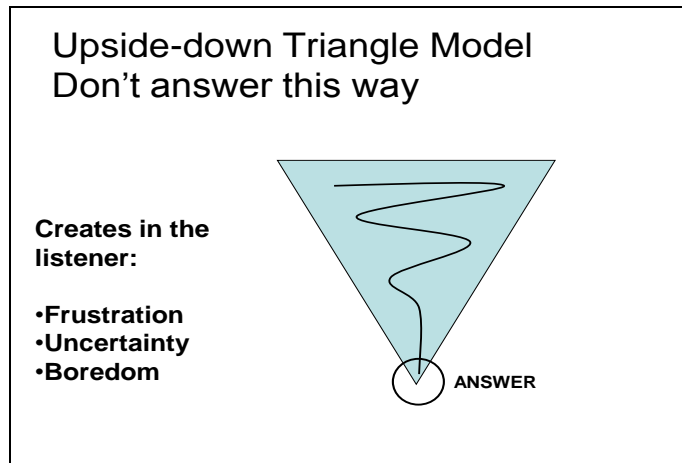
Slide 2

Answering Questions Effectively

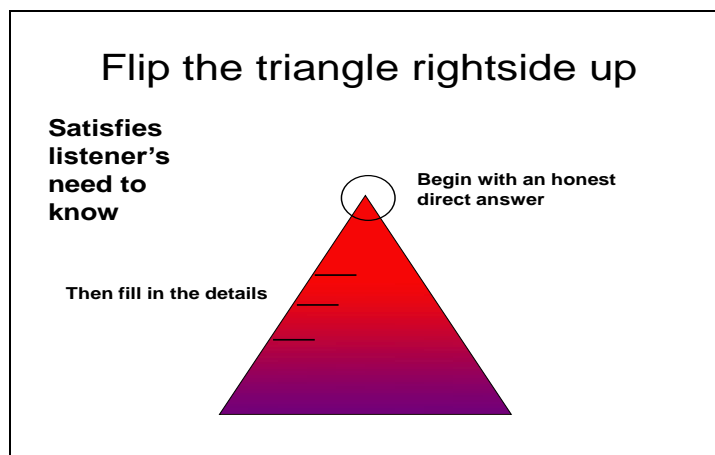
The Rocket Model helps you:

- Organize your answers
- Think on your feet
- Package your answers as good quotes
- Keep your audience's attention
- Be persuasive and memorable
- Sound authoritative and confident

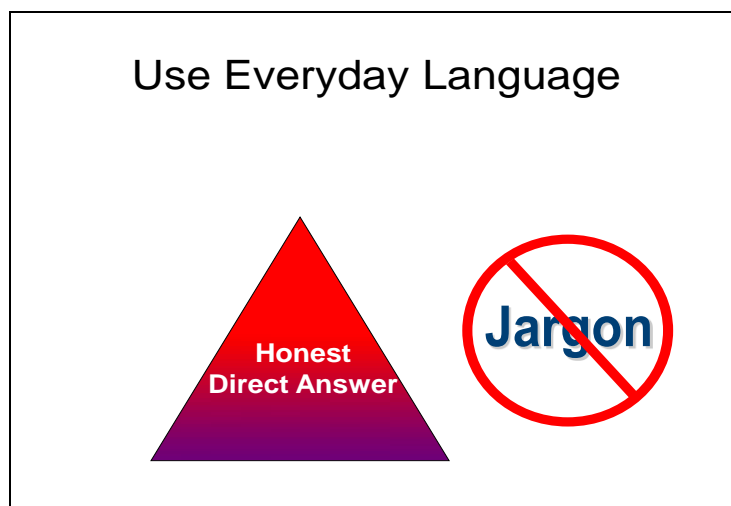
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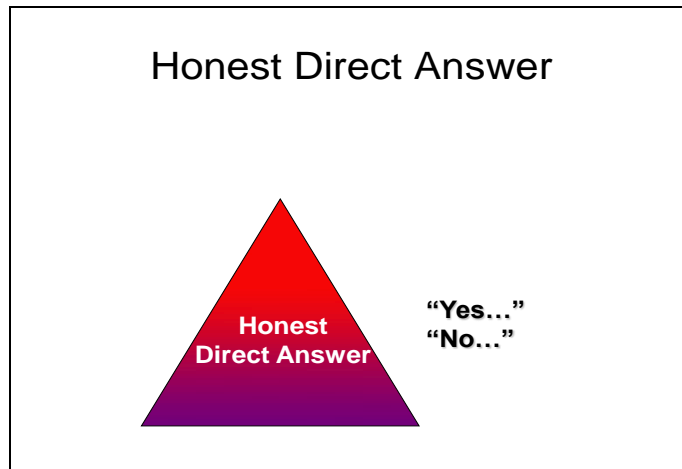
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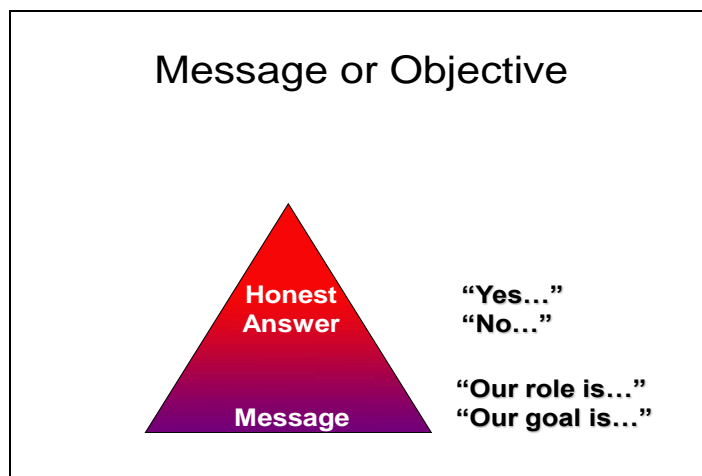
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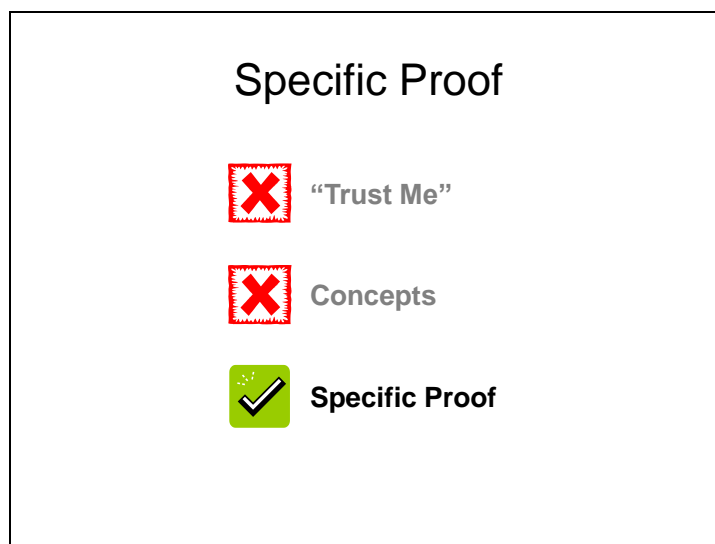
Slide 6



Slide 7



Slide 8



Slide 9

Specific Proof

1. Examples
2. Stories
3. Analogies / Proverbs
4. Facts & Numbers

Slide 10

Specific Proof



“Yes... / No...”

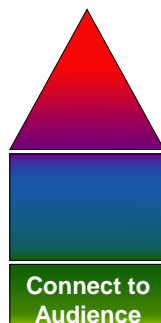
“Our role is...”

“Our goal is...”

“For example...”

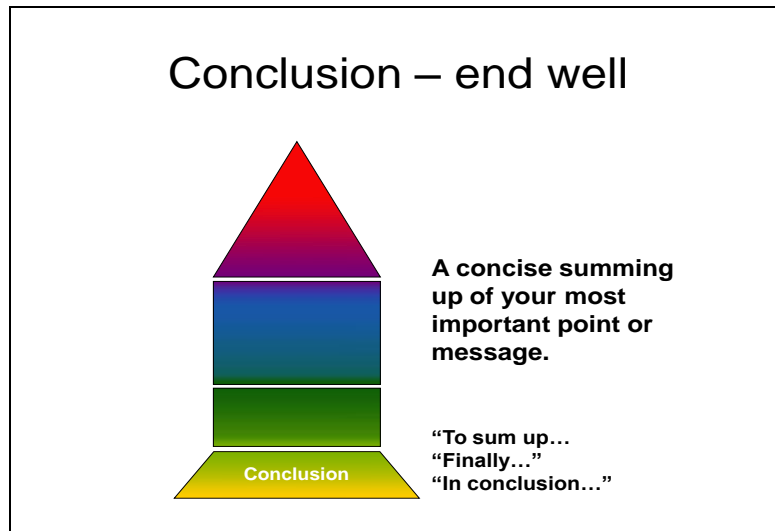
Slide 11

Connect to Audience

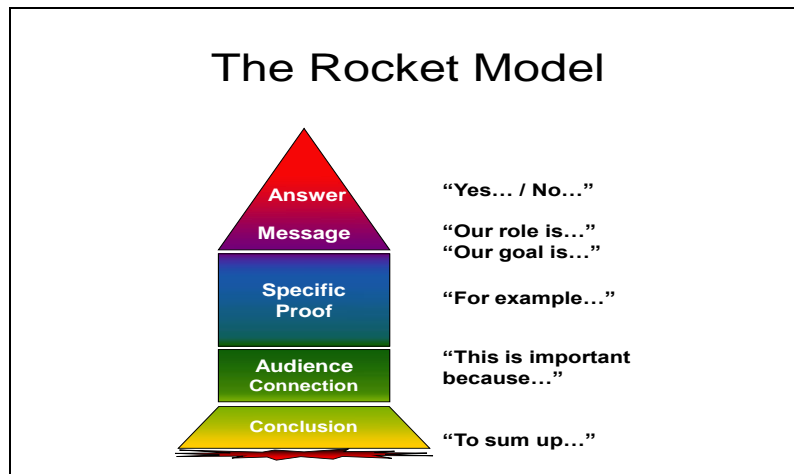


“This is important because...”

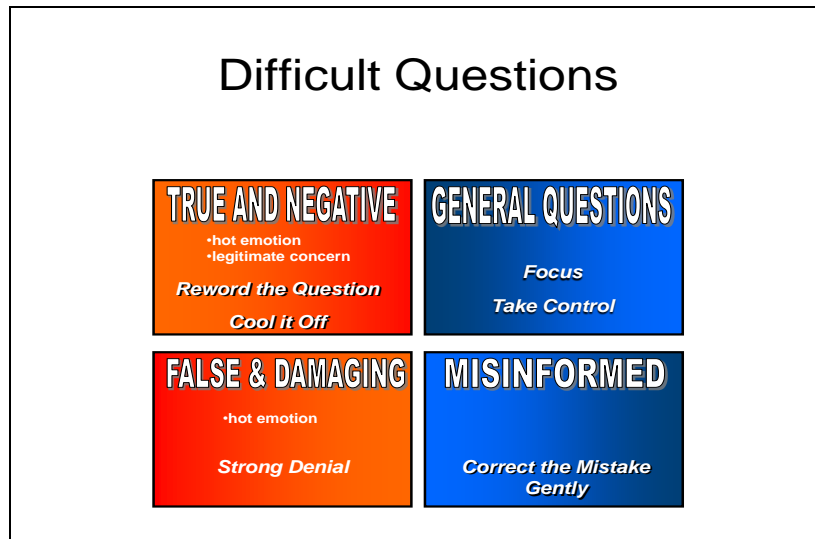
Slide 12



Slide 13



Slide 14



Slide 15

True and Negative

Phrases for Rewording:

- “You’re asking...”
- “The question is ...”
- “I understand your concern. You are concerned about...”
- “You want to know...”

Slide 16

False & Damaging

Helpful phrases:

- “That is not true...”
- “Those allegations are false.”
- “I disagree.”

Slide 17

General Questions

Helpful phrases:

- “While we are doing quite a lot on this issue, our first priority is...”
- “Let me tell you about the most innovative project we are launching...”

Slide 18

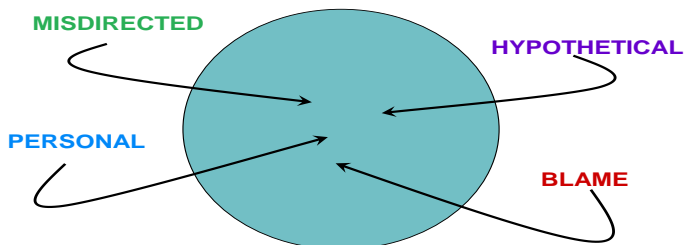
Misinformed Questions

Helpful phrases:

- “You’ll be happy to know just the opposite is true...”
- “Actually...”

Slide 19

Questions not to Answer



Slide 20

Questions Not To Answer

1. **MISDIRECTED:** “That question should be addressed to _____. What I can tell you about _____ is...”
2. **PERSONAL:** “Personally, I’m committed to...” OR: “Personally, I can say...”
3. **HYPOTHETICAL:** “That’s a hypothetical question. What the data shows now is...”
4. **BLAME:** “We’re here to focus on solutions. Looking ahead, what we see is...”

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Working with Journalists

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What a journalist needs:

News:

What’s NEW:

- what is unique, unexpected, the first, the last, the biggest, a new perspective

Slide 23

What a journalist needs:

Information:

- Accurate facts and numbers.
- The latest figures
- The latest study

Slide 24

What a journalist needs:

Simplification:

- Make complex issues easy to understand.
- Use relevant analogies

Slide 25

What a journalist needs:

Good Quotes:

- Short and dynamic
- Word pictures.
- Prepare quotes in advance, practice
- Say quotes clearly in the interview.

Slide 26

What a journalist needs:

What's Next:

- Look to the immediate future
- Implications?
- Opportunities/risks?

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Print interviews

- Ask about the angle
- Bring/send a fact sheet
- Photos/graphs
- Don't speak too much.
- Watch your body language
- Suggest others for the article.

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Radio interviews:

- Before the show, ask "how long should my answers be?"
- Have a *conversation*, not a lecture.
- Use *word pictures*. Radio is the most visual medium.
- Use short sentences.
- Bring sample questions

Slide 29

TV interviews

- Watch the show in advance
- Rehearse your main message out loud
- Short and simple answers
- Say the host's name
- Body language conveys credibility
- Speak with energy and passion.
- Be yourself

Slide 30

Before an interview ask:

- What is the **topic** of the interview?
- What's the **angle** for the story?
- Who is your **audience**?
- **Who else** will be interviewed?
- What **length** will the finished show/article be?
- **When** will this article/show appear?
- What is your **deadline?** (for print)

Slide 31

On the record/off the record

- **On the record:** your words will be quoted and you will be identified.
- **On background:** You can be quoted or paraphrased, but will not be named.
- **On deep background:** Your information can be used without attribution.
- **Off the record:** Information is not for publication. You provide it to help the journalist's better understand the issues.

Not all journalists follow these rules.

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Interview Preparation

Draw your M.A.P:

Message

Audience

Proof/Pictures

Intermedia Communications Training Courses:

Offered globally:

Media Expertise

Master Communicators

Leadership Communications

Issue Experts

Communicating with Authority

Communicating with Authority (for Women)

Presentations, Public Speaking, Working with PowerPoint

Customized Programs

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