



Media Relations Tip Sheet

Media Relations can be a powerful tool to get your business in front of a large number of people at one time. Unlike paid advertising, the general public tends to trust media more because you are not paying for an interview.

Local media are especially receptive to local businesses and product for their content, which makes Indiana Grown members a great fit for media coverage. Here are a few do's and don'ts to help your interactions with the media go well and make the most of your engagements with the media.

Reaching out to Media

DON'T send your message to everyone in the newsroom. This is a great way to get your email banned from their servers.

DO find the contact most likely to cover your story (ex: a reporter who has covered local businesses or food). It helps to pay attention to what individual reporters at the outlet you're interested in are covering.

DON'T make reporters search for why they should cover your story. They are very short on time and will likely ignore you if they have to come up with a "so what" on their own.

DO make your story relevant to current events. If your product is related to an upcoming holiday, local event or the local community, it is much more interesting to newsrooms and more likely to get covered.

DON'T send the press release or photos as attachments. This is a great way for your message to end up in a spam folder.

DO provide multimedia. Media today is extremely visual, and the more assets you can offer in advance, the better chance you have of getting covered. (Dropbox is a good, affordable resource for sending larger files).

DON'T treat relationships with the media as purely transactional.

DO create a relationship with your contacts at a media outlet. If they like you, they're likely willing to have you back.

Setting up the Interview

DON'T demand to know the questions in advance.

DO prepare your media message in advance to avoid any surprises.

DON'T ask for final approval of story before publication.

DO review story, or portions of story, if the reporter asks you to.

DON'T ask for an e-mail interview instead of a telephone or in-person interview.

DO agree to an e-mail interview if that is what the reporter requests.

DON'T request a friendly or sympathetic reporter.

DO let them know if someone from same media outlet has interviewed you in the past, especially if the interview you are doing is a follow-up story to one done earlier.

Doing the Interview (General)

DON'T complain about how you "hate your voice."

DO realize that your voice just sounds muffled because you are hearing it through your skull.

DON'T drink pop, milk or alcohol before an interview.

DO drink and have a glass of room-temperature water available during interviews.

DON'T eat or chew gum during an interview.

DO have a glass of room-temperature water handy during the interview, and take small, quiet sips if necessary.

DON'T think any television interview is too small of a deal.

DO take every interview seriously, and consider it great practice for bigger ones that may come later.

DON'T underestimate the ego of the interviewer.

DO drop their name into the points you are trying to make, especially the most important ones and particularly if the interview is not "live."

Do's and Don'ts – Doing the (Phone) Interview

DON'T just sit in your chair and conduct the interview.
DO stand up and walk around the room while talking to the reporter.

DON'T just stand there.
DO have your notes in front of you.

Do's and Don'ts – Doing the (In-Person) Interview

DON'T have notebooks filled with prepared statements.
DO have a 3"x5" card on hand to remind you of your key message points.

Do's and Don'ts – Doing the (TV Studio) Interview

DON'T alter your look for the television camera.
DO keep a powder compact on hand for television interviews.

DON'T slouch back in your seat.
DO sit straight and lean forward.

DON'T wear white, herringbone, stripes or designs with small intricate details.
DO present yourself professionally.

DON'T keep your head frozen in one place.
DO move your head around naturally as you would in everyday conversations.

DON'T look or talk into the camera.
DO respond to and look at the person asking the questions, just as you would in a normal conversation.

DON'T stick out your tongue (don't lick your lips).
DO drink plenty of water before and during your interview to avoid licking your lips because you are thirsty or dry-mouthed.

DON'T consider your hands during an interview.
DO use them naturally in your speaking patterns as you do in everyday conversation.

DON'T shake hands with the interviewer after the interview has ended and while the cameras are rolling.

DO thank the host or reporter.

Do's and Don'ts – Doing the (Radio) Interview

DON'T just sit in your chair and conduct the interview.

DO stand up and walk around the room while talking to the deejay, even if you are in-studio (remember, no one can see you).

DON'T have notebooks filled with prepared statements.

DO have a 3"x5" card on hand to remind you of your key message points.

DON'T worry or get flustered if the interviewer doesn't look at you or is looking through papers during the interview.

DO assume he/she is listening intently and continue to respond just as you would in a normal, everyday conversation.

Do's and Don'ts – After the Interview

DON'T obsess over what you said and didn't say.

DO prepare in advance so you won't feel the need to do this.

Note: The shorter the interview the worse it went, right? NO, wrong! The shorter the interview may mean the *better* the interview went. It means the interviewer didn't need to keep talking and talking to get something interesting out of you.

DON'T just walk away.

DO thank the interviewer and producer (if applicable) for the opportunity.

DON'T assume this is the end of your engagement with the media. If they know people liked your segment, they're more likely to have you back.

DO share your interview on your personal and business social media pages. Make sure to tag the outlet and interviewer!

Your Messaging

STOP WORRYING ABOUT THE QUESTIONS. You don't have control over the questions, but you do have **complete control** over your answers.

Don't go into a defensive position by worrying about the questions. Enter into your conversation with the reporter with a well thought-out message. You will appear more conversational and less reactive this way. Don't ever tell a reporter, "That's a good question." They think all their questions are brilliant.

ALWAYS BE POSITIVE. When determining key message points, take out all that contain mixed messages or anything negative. Reconstruct any negatives into a positive.

ANSWER BASICS: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How. These points will have to come across in every interview.

TALK ABOUT WHAT SETS YOU APART. What has your business accomplished? How is it impacting the local economy? How is your product different from others? Why should people choose your products over similar ones at farmer's markets or local stores? Where are the ingredients sourced?

KEEP IT SHORT. Even when answering the who, what, when, where, why and how, yes, you need to keep it short ... 30 seconds or fewer.

CREATE YOUR MEDIA MESSAGE FOR EACH SPECIFIC INTERVIEW. Brainstorm all ideas for answers and ideas for segments. Indiana Grown products are interesting, so you have lots of options for segments, from recipes to food demonstrations to other product demonstrations. Coming up with new ideas for different segments will keep you in media members' minds as a good interview.

REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT. Repeat your key messages with every answer. This does not mean you have to dodge questions; rather, you just need to change up your wording in order to convey your key points repeatedly during an interview.

MAKE SURE KEY POINTS ARE INTERESTING ... and not necessarily to you, but to the media outlet and its audience.

AVOID BUZZWORDS AND SLANG, such as "going forward," "and such," "if you will," and "as it were."