

The Red Letter



I Give You My Words

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Media Interviews: Be A Good Scout

The Boy Scout motto is simple: Be Prepared. When the media calls for an interview, be a good scout and you'll turn the interview into a merit badge for your organization.

The Preparation:

- Find out why the reporter is calling you for an interview.
- Write out three brief, positive points about your company, announcement, event, project, etc.
- Craft concise and truthful answers to potential questions.
- Compile background literature/materials to give the reporter.

The Impromptu or Surprise Interview:

- Breathe and take as long as you need to think through your answers before they escape your mouth.
- If the reporter is on the phone, ask if you can call back in a few minutes. Plan your message and call back ASAP.

The Interaction:

- Above all, be honest.
- Use pauses, pacing and redirection to ensure you're sharing control of the interview.
- Assert yourself. You are the expert in this situation.
- If there's a negative, use your answer to bridge to a positive.
- Never speculate. Stick to what you know.
- Avoid hypotheticals so they aren't reported as facts.
- Do not use technical terms, jargon or acronyms. If they can't be avoided, explain what they mean or stand for.
- Do not say "no comment." If you can't answer, explain why.
- If you don't know, say so but offer to find out.
- For TV: limit the length of your answers to 20 seconds, maintain eye contact, and resist the temptation to fill dead airtime.

When it's over, be a good scout: say thank you for the opportunity.

Copywriters' Checklist

Before you send any copy into the world, take a look at this checklist:

Does your copy fulfill the promise of the headline?

Is it interesting and understandable? (*Get opinions and feedback from others.*)

Is it easy to read?

Is it believable?

Is it persuasive? (*Your job goes beyond communicating to selling.*)

Is it concise? (*You only have a few seconds to get 'er done.*)

Is it specific? (*Provide facts, figures, benefits, savings, etc.*)

Is it relevant? (*Speak to your target audience members' self interest.*)

Does it flow?

Does it call for action? (*Tell them about the next step in the buying process, and ask them to take it.*)

In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved. – FDR

The Good Word

There's No Might in Trite

If I've said it once, I've said it a million times – good writing is fresh, strong writing is original.

One of the easiest ways to make it stale is to use tired clichés or trite expressions.

Example:

Trite: "I returned from the hockey game *tired but happy*, and that night *I slept like a log*." Better: "After the Jet's spectacular win, I went home and crashed for 12 hours."

Spend some time on this

sentence and you could actually make it strong.

Point is, if you feel like you're writing something you've heard a thousand times before, you probably have. Change it to something new so your audience doesn't feel like they've heard it all before, too.