



CONTACT WITH THE PRESS

Tracking them down – Interview techniques – Follow up

Meeting the press

It is always best to wait until you have something to say before contacting your local media. So, once you've identified the story you want to tell, written your press release, and arranged for any photographs to be taken, it's time to get on the phone. One-to-one voice contact is preferable for establishing an initial rapport. If the person you want is not around, email first and try and setup a phone call.

Introduce yourself, explain what you are doing and ask if you could have a quick meet (your place or mine?). If the answer is negative, don't be put off, remember that, like you, they are busy people. Say you'll email over a release (and pic?) and perhaps have a chat later.

One to one interview

If they are happy to meet up, try and get them along to your depot because that's an ideal opportunity to show off your fleet. From there either do the interview in your office (don't sit behind your desk....) or go off-site to a restaurant for lunch or a nearby pub if that seems preferable.

Assuming this is your first contact with the reporter or blogger remember that half the job is to get on good terms with them for the future, as well as getting over your story. You are trying to establish yourself as a possible source of future coverage.

Then when it comes time to slide the press release over the table preface that by reiterating what it says in the headline and the first paragraph. Don't confuse the issue with a lot of extraneous detail, but just walk through the basic story, answering questions transparently.

Whilst it is true that anything you say during the interview could appear in print, we are not exactly dealing with a red hot controversial news story here and you are not going to be given the third degree. If a question comes up to which you don't know the answer tell them you will get back with the detail.

Follow-up

If more information is required be sure to provide it quickly and accurately. In any case it will be worth just one follow-up call to 'see if you have got everything you need' but never ask when the story is going to be used, that's being pushy.

Longer term, if you are interested, it would be worth suggesting that the interviewer(plus partner) might like to 'experience the product' by taking a tour with you, or even just taking part in one for a couple of days. This could appeal to a travel blogger, and many publications have travel sections and could send a feature writer.

A broadcast interview

Whilst it is unlikely that you are going to be interviewed live, on-air, even maybe on TV, during your early career as a local business person and travel industry pundit, but it may well come to pass. If it does – you do need to know what you are doing. So, you have been invited to do an interview, what do you do next. (Apart from panic?)

1. Before you say Yes and go on

When you first get the invite you will be very flattered. Fame at last! But that fame won't last very long if it turns out to be the wrong sort of programme for you. Before you agree to go on, do some homework and find out more about the subject matter, the style of the programme and the interviewer. An internet search including You Tube should reveal a lot. You'll probably be happy to go on, but find out what sort show it is, does it reach the right market for you, and what the general interview style? Eg. Stay clear of any 'holiday disaster' shows.

2. A topic checklist

When accepting and talking to the production people try and find out:

- It is live or recorded?
- If TV how much of you is being shown. At a table or sofa?
- If it's a programme – not just a one-to-one – who else is on?
- Can you have a general guide as to the topics to be covered – so you can be prepared.
- If TV – dress code?
- State upfront if there are any subjects or angles that you will not talk about. Just in case...

3. Let's get physical

There's no denying that a broadcast interview, especially live, can make you tense. Thus:

- If TV try and smile most of the time, unless that would be inappropriate re the topic.
- Breathe deeply and slowly beforehand relax yourself.
- Your mouth is likely to be dry. Sip water and breathe through your nose.
- Hands – keep them calm, don't flap them around.
- Eyes – look at the interviewer.
- Posture – sit upright.

4. It's *your* interview – take control

Whatever happens don't feel pressured into discussing anything you are not happy about.

- Keep it simple. Cover the facts and then STOP!
- Be professional, alert, helpful and positive.
- If the questioning or the subject matter is going off-course use phrases such as;
 - "It's not why you asked me to do the interview, however...."
 - "I am here to talk about X, but I can find out and get back to you.2"
 - "I'm sorry, this isn't my area of expertise..."

5. Key points to remember

- Mention your company name with phrases like:
 - "At CTA Holidays we would always...."
 - "Our policy at CTA Tours is..."
 - "The key thing for CTA Travel is..."
- There's no such thing as 'off the record' and you never know when a microphone is live.
- Try and have fun – you might turn out to be a natural!