

## Plan and Prepare to Make the Most of Media Opportunities

By Susan Wilson Solovic, CEO [SBTV.com](http://SBTV.com)

A television appearance. A radio interview. An article in a magazine. Every business owner understands the value of positive media coverage. There's no better way to build your brand. It's much more credible than paid advertising because it's coming from an unbiased, third-party source. That's why companies spend a lot of time and effort trying to capture the media's attention.

There's a lot of information available to small businesses on how to write and distribute press releases. But there isn't much that explains what to do once a reporter actually calls. What would you do if Oprah called your business? You certainly don't want to blow your opportunity. Here are some tips that can help you make the most your 15 minutes of fame.

**Never take a "cold" call from a reporter.** Find out exactly what the interview is going to be about, how it is going to be used, and what questions or topics will be covered.

**Find out the reporter's deadline for the story.** Then arrange a time to actually conduct the interview. This allows you the time you need to plan and prepare. It's a good idea to jot down three or four key message points you want to make during the interview. And this may sound ridiculous, but actually practice saying them. Your mouth has memory and when you rehearse the language you want to use, the less likely you'll stumble.

**Avoid using slang, industry-specific jargon and acronyms.** You want your message to be communicated with clarity. And be succinct. That's particularly true when you are doing a television interview. Most television segments are around two minutes in length. Even if you aren't doing a live interview, a rambling answer is fraught with disaster. The producer and editor may select a portion of your answer that doesn't incorporate your key message.

**Don't be fooled by a reporter's silence.** Sometimes when you have finished answering a question the reporter won't respond immediately. A lot of people who are uncomfortable with long pauses in a conversation feel compelled to continue talking. That's when you can get yourself into trouble by saying something incorrect or foolish. Keep in mind, you have your key message points and when you are finished you are finished.

**Always assume your microphone is on.** You've probably seen a few public blunders with that one. And nothing is ever "off the record." Off the record means different things to different journalists so if you aren't comfortable sharing the information, don't.

**"No comment" is never a good response in an interview.** It is best to either answer the question or explain why you can't. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it, and offer to do some research to find the answer.

Media coverage can give your business a big boost, so plan and prepare to make the most out of your media opportunity.

**Susan Wilson Solovic** is CEO of SBTV.com – Small Business Television and author of "The Girls' Guide to Building a Million Dollar Business." Her experience has taken her from the newsroom as a television anchor and correspondent, to the boardroom as an executive in a Fortune 100 company, to a successful entrepreneur, speaker and media personality. She sits on the board of several influential women's business organizations and is a regular contributor to broadcast media and print publications on the issues facing small business owners today.