

Guidelines for Media Interviews

The Federal Board of Revenue



Implemented by

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



As a federally owned enterprise, we support the German Government in achieving its objective in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Published by

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices

Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme

Tax Reform Component

F 7/2, Street 11, House 6

Khosar Road, Islamabad, Pakistan

T +92 51 2608 988/989/990

F +92 51 2608 987

www.giz.de

Responsible

Catherine Isabel Froehling, Head of Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme

Dr. Amna Khalifa, Component Leader, Tax Reform Component, Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme

Authors

Guardian Management , Suite No. 8, Mezzanine Floor, 80 East, Malik Complex, Islamabad, Pakistan

Janine Baudach, Communications Advisor, Tax Reform Component, Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme

Humaira Zahid, Advisor, Tax Reform Component, Support to Good Governance in Pakistan Programme

Photo credits

Mr. Tariq Bashir

Layout and design

PrintMatic, Islamabad

Flat 103, First Floor, Azeem Mansion

87-East, Fazal-ul-Haq Road, Blue Area

Islamabad-Pakistan.

Printed by

PrintMatic, Islamabad

Flat 103, First Floor, Azeem Mansion

87-East, Fazal-ul-Haq Road, Blue Area

Islamabad-Pakistan.

November, 2013

The views expressed in this publication are those of the consultants and do not necessarily represent those of GIZ and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

On behalf of the

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Contents

Introduction	1
What can you Gain?	1
What can you Loose?	1
Questions to ask if you are Uncertain About Taking the Interview	1
Rules for Interviews	2
Deadlines	2
Newsworthiness	2
How to Handle Interviews	3
Preparation	3
Deadline	3
Understand the Topic	3
Background Materials	3
Delivering Your Message	3
Confidence and Composure	3
Location	4
Before the Interview	4
During the Interview	4
Relax and Have fun!	4
Body Language	4
Be in Control	4
Answers	4
Try not to Ramble	4
It's OK not to Have an Answer	4
Be a Good Listener	5
Remain Calm	5
Nothing is "Off the Record"	5
Mention FBR!	5
Concluding the Interview	5

Getting Your Point Across	6
Tips for Television and Radio	7
Responding to Audience Questions	7
Tips – Newspaper Interviews	8
Additional Tips	9
Considerations	9
Communication Tips	9
Possible Questions	9
Things not to do	10

Introduction

Due to the nature of the work that FBR is engaged in you will usually get overshadowed by sensational news reporting. You will have to strategize about how to promote your organisation using the media. Media Interview is a very effective media tool and could be favourably exploited by FBR.

There are various types of interviews which you may have to take part i.e. live, pre-recorded, over the phone, in the studio.

What can you Gain?

Let's look at what you could gain from agreeing to do an interview for the mass media:

- Thousands of new people would find out what you stand for, and what you do.
- It is a chance to mainstream your issues. Very often, organisations like FBR operate quietly in the background when instead the public should know what they are doing to bring about positive change.
- You get a chance to influence people's opinions, feelings and actions.
- For a short time investment you have potentially big rewards.

What can you Loose?

Let's look at what you can loose from doing an interview:

- If you are not prepared or are not informed about the media or are not sure of your facts you could do your organisation more harm than good.
- If the journalist or producer is bringing you in to set you up in some negative way then it could be bad news. This is why you need to understand vested interests and also know more about the programme or newspaper requesting an interview.

Questions to ask if you are Uncertain About Taking the Interview

- What is the subject and focus of the interview, and why did the reporter contact you?
- Is the subject currently in the news? How controversial is the subject?
- Who is the reporter?
- What news outlet does the reporter work for, and who is its audience?
- Where and how will the interview be conducted (e.g., in person, on the phone, radio, video), and how long will the interview take?

Rules for Interviews

There are some rules that apply to interviews for newspapers, radio, and television. The general rules are:

Deadlines

- The mass media operates around strict deadlines. Respect the deadline. If you don't, you may lose your opportunity to be heard.
- A morning newspaper has a late evening deadline whereas an afternoon paper has an early morning deadline. A daily newspaper operates under different deadlines to a weekly newspaper. Television and radio interviews, unless live broadcasts, need to be done several hours before the programme is aired or screened. Breaking news in the electronic media usually needs to be in an hour before the programme.
- Ask what the deadline is for the article or programme that you are being interviewed for.
- Journalists also work on features – sometimes over a few weeks, for investigative pieces, months even. But in this time their story focus may change several times. This means although you were interviewed, your quote may not fit in with the final story and gets dropped from it. If this happens to you don't be disappointed or angry. Certainly do not phone to complain. It is simply the way things go sometimes.
- If you think you were dropped because you may have said something that put the journalist off interviewing you, then reflect on it and try to learn lessons from it. You may need to make a casual call and fish around a bit – unless the direct approach is better.
- If you think you were dropped for political reasons, then do try and find out in a constructive way. It is part of the learning and strategising for your organisation.
- Nurture the relationship you have with the journalist and offer to help them in whatever way you can. This could come in handy when you are implementing your own organisation's media strategy.
- Each interviewer has an angle. This is a journalist's term for their focus for the story or programme.

Newsworthiness

Generally you are being asked for an interview so that you can add something that is newsworthy or of interest to readers, listeners or viewers. The media will be after something that is:

- news
- presenting a new perspective
- important
- interesting
- relevant to readers', viewers' or listeners' lives

Bear the profile of the readers, listeners or viewers in mind at all times so that you relate your issue to their lives. You can suggest a new angle for the story – journalists often appreciate this.

How to Handle Interviews

Preparation

When you are approached by the media for an interview, ask questions before agreeing to participate. Find out what the goal of the interview will be, in order for you to set some objectives for yourself. What is the story? What would they like from you?

Before the interview, determine which person is best suited to be the interviewee. Generally, senior members of the staff like the Chairman or Members of FBR are most suitable for representing the organisation as a whole. When a reporter seeks a point of view, they may also approach the person responsible for media relations. Discuss this internally.

Your goal is to develop a relationship with the reporter and to help them get the story right. Remember: this is an opportunity, in a sense, for publicity whether it becomes good or bad publicity is up to you.

Keep the following in focus when preparing for a media interview:

Deadline

Ask the reporter when his or her deadline is. Remember, for radio or TV, deadlines are often within a matter of hours; deadline for print can range from hours to days. Meeting a reporter's deadline is key to maintaining a good relationship – and assuring that your story is told.

Understand the Topic

Before the interview, ask what the story is about and what exactly the interviewer wants to discuss. Develop a good understanding of your interview topic. Then, take time to prepare three key points worth emphasizing during the interview. If the topic is controversial, think about the most difficult questions you might be asked and prepare some answers.

Background Materials

Have background materials (facts or statistics) available for members of the media, particularly on a complex topic. Reporters will appreciate the additional information when writing their story. If time permits, offer to fax, e-mail or mail background materials in advance.

Delivering Your Message

Be sure to practice delivering your message in a clear and concise manner. Short answers provide better sound bites for radio and television and better quotes for print. Remember to emphasize your key points and reinforce them with examples. Review your talking points just before the interview or consider asking a colleague to discuss the topic with you to help you warm up and focus your answers.

Confidence and Composure

Practice your confidence and composure. An interview is your chance to tell the public something interesting about FBR. Your energy and enthusiasm about the subject will capture the reporter's interest.

Location

Locations can vary depending on topics. An office setting provides for a more intimate atmosphere. In some cases, doing the interview in a library, conference room or educational setting is best, as the reporter can "see" the topic in action. Conducting the interview outside on a nice day can also be a consideration. In any instance, make sure the area is free from clutter.

Before the Interview

- Know your purpose. Prepare two or three essential points that you want to get across during the interview.
- Support your points with facts or anecdotes from your experience.
- There is no substitute for preparation. Study your subject and conduct mock interviews as practice.
- Consider your interview an "enlarged conversation" and speak as naturally as you would to another person.

During the Interview

Relax and Have fun!

It's normal to be nervous. Remember, an interview is really just a conversation with another individual. A good suggestion is to act as if you're talking to a co-worker or a friend. Just be yourself! Relax, have fun and smile!

Body Language

Body language can be stronger than a thousand words. For television, try to be somewhat animated and enthusiastic in your responses, while using your hands to gesture. This will make the "conversation" appear more natural. Also look at the reporter or camera person while being interviewed, not the camera.

Be in Control

Always allow yourself to be in control of the interview. Remember to emphasize your key points and reinforce them with example materials. Examples provide validity to the story. Additionally, repeating your key points will help the reporter better understand the topic.

Answers

Provide short, but complete answers. Following this advice often helps you stay on topic. Be sure to get to the point quickly; short statements are preferred as they allow for easier editing.

Try not to Ramble

Don't say too much. Make your point, and move on to the reporter's next question. And, pause prior to beginning a new point.

It's OK not to Have an Answer

It is OK not to have an answer for every question. Ask the reporter if time allows, "Can I get back to you with the information?" The reporter will appreciate your honesty. If you do not know the answer to a particular question, never speculate. Speculated comments can be interpreted as truthful and could find their way into print, on radio or on television.

Be a Good Listener

Remember to always be a good listener. How well you listen to questions is as important as how well you answer them. Never hesitate in asking the reporter to repeat a question. Making sure you answer the question correctly and properly is very important.

Remain Calm

Always remain calm during an interview. Never become defensive towards a question. Once again, it is OK not to answer the question. However, never respond with, "No comment." A reporter will assume you are trying to hide something and probe deeper into the subject. Try to return the conversation to positive dialogue.

Nothing is "Off the Record"

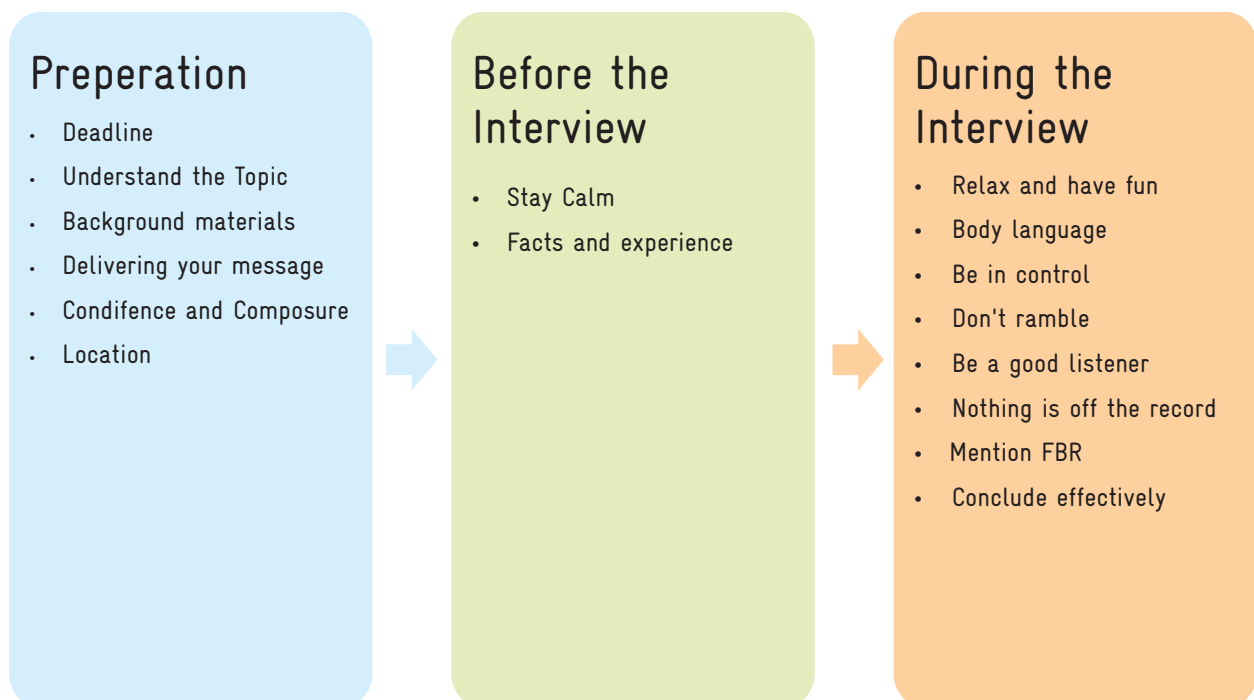
Assume that nothing is, "Off the record." No matter how informal the setting, reporters will take for granted that everything said to them is on the record and quotable. Although many reporters may honour this request, not all of them will adhere to it. If you do not want people to know about something, do not say it.

Mention FBR!

If appropriate, mention FBR throughout the interview.

Concluding the Interview

Once the interview has concluded, it is OK to ask when the story will air or be printed. Often reporters are reluctant to tell you when an interview will appear, usually because they are unsure. Timing is usually up to the editors or news directors.



Getting Your Point Across

- Be assertive – in a pleasant way – so that the conversation focuses on subjects you want to talk about.
- One way to do this is to respond to a narrow question with a very broad answer that encompasses the facts or opinions you need to get across.
- Listen carefully to the question. If you consider it difficult, pause before you answer to give yourself time to formulate a response. If you don't understand a question, ask that it be repeated.
- Be careful not to repeat an interviewer's words, unless they reinforce what you wish to say. If an interviewer poses false premises in asking a question, correct him/her firmly but politely.
- Don't feel obligated to accept unfamiliar facts or figures.
- Use your time to set the record straight or present facts. You might say, "This is a common misperception. Here's why..."
- Deflect questions you do not wish to answer by introducing something else of interest. In this way, you may redirect the interview to the subject you wish to convey.
- Don't try to answer hypothetical questions; they tend to obscure your true position. Turn the tables by clearly stating your general position and then offering your own example.
- Use short words and simple, declarative sentences. Avoid scientific terminology. Be descriptive, using images that the listener can picture.
- Use analogies whenever possible to simplify and dramatize your main points. Where appropriate, relate personal experiences or illustrations of your work to support your statements. Telling something about yourself will "humanize" you to the audience.
- If you use quotations, keep them short. If you can't recite the quotation verbatim, don't use it.
- If you don't know the answer to a question simply say, "I don't know, but I'll find out the answer and get back to you." If you have a legitimate reason for withholding certain information then politely say it's confidential or proprietary.
- Use the Inverse Pyramid in structuring responses. Start with a general statement that sums up your position or philosophy succinctly and accurately. In the second part of your answer you should narrow down your response by giving the specifics of why you feel the way you do. This approach is particularly valuable for radio and television. If a producer decides to cut your five minute taped interview down to one minute for the evening news, chances are he/she will use your general statement.

Tips for Television and Radio

- Treat your host and the audience as you would be friends. Be friendly, spontaneous, and responsive.
- Know the length of your interview before you go on. If you have only a brief interview, condense your answers citing your main points quickly. Think in terms of outline rather than exposition.
- Before the interview begins, try to learn something about your host's likes, interests, and prejudices. This helps you involve him/her more personally in your conversation.
- Don't think of your host as an adversary. With rare exception, he/she will want you to look good so that he/she looks good. Relax, but stay mentally alert.
- Most interview programs will have the host or someone from the production staff "pre-interview" you before you go on, if only for a minute. This will establish what is expected of you, the direction the interviewer intends to take, and how much time you will be allotted.
- If no one goes over your presentation with you, ask if some time could be made available for this purpose.
- It's perfectly all right to consult notes during the course of the radio interview. Put them on index cards – sheets of paper rustled next to a microphone sound like a barn fire.
- Radio interviews can sometimes be casual to the point of the host forgetting to tell you that you are on the air. As soon as you are seated in front of a microphone, ask when the interview will actually begin.
- On television, look your interviewer in the eye. Ignore the technicians on the set and look at the camera only when you want to drive home a special point directly to the viewing audience.
- Defensive body language like wringing hands, folding arms across the chest, clenching fists, or narrowing eyes should be avoided. Gesture naturally, and vary your gestures.
- Men are advised to wear calf-length socks that no bare skin shows when legs are crossed. If possible, men with heavy beards should shave just before air time, since stubble is exaggerated on camera.
- Women should wear solid colours and avoid: Large or tiny patterns; Horizontal or pin stripes; Flashy or dangly jewellery (some jewellery reflects light or makes noise); Black, white or red clothing (cameras have trouble picking up these colours); Bright red lipstick or overtly shiny lip gloss.
- Makeup (men and women— if offered say yes, it will reduce glare)
- Both men and women should wear professional attire as casual attire may give the impression that you do not care or are lacking credibility
- Avoid wearing anything with a logo.

Responding to Audience Questions

- ? Many radio and television programs use question and answer call-in formats to encourage audience participation. You will find most of the questions that arise are easy to handle.
- ? Calls are screened by the station to eliminate those that may be abusive or irrational, and the host is likely to be helpful if you get a difficult caller.
- ? You should be able to anticipate many queries. Write out expected questions and your answers before the time of your interview.
- ? Since the call-in segment usually follows an interview, it's good to introduce some new information in your responses.

- ? On television, body language is important. Don't cling to furniture or cross your arms tightly – you want to convey an air of openness and accessibility. Even if a question is irrelevant, appear to be concerned about what the person has to say.
- ? If the same question is asked more than once, patiently answer it again.
- ? When someone asks several questions at once, you are free to choose the one you'd like to answer and ignore the others.
- ? If the question is one you'd rather not answer directly, use it to lead into a point you do want to make.
- ? If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Cite a possible source of the information or offer to get the information for the questioner.

Tips – Newspaper Interviews

- ? Never speak off the record; assume that everything you say will be reported, whether it's before, during or after an interview.
- ? Make sure that what you tell the reporter is what you want to see in print. If you are unhappy with the way you have phrased something, stop and rephrase or clarify your original statement.
- ? If you realize after the interview that you misstated a fact or phrased something poorly, call the reporter to correct the error.
- ? A newspaper reporter will not allow you to review copy before it is printed. You can, however, extend your influence over the article by inviting the reporter to call you for more information or clarification.

Additional Tips

Considerations

- ? Communicate only information that is approved for external distribution. Always tell the truth.
- ? Know to whom you are speaking. Get the person's name and telephone number, if necessary.
- ? Do not be intimidated. You may tell a reporter that you need to clarify an important matter before you can answer questions.
- ? Talk from the public's viewpoint. Avoid jargon. Speak within the audience's frame of reference.
- ? If the questions are not within the framework of approved statements or within your area of expertise, find the appropriate technical advisor or spokesperson.
- ? State the most important fact at the beginning. Place your own headline on the answer.
- ? Attack problems in your answers, not people.
- ? Do not repeat offensive or negative language. Do not let other people put words in your mouth.
- ? Direct questions deserve equally direct and forthright answers.
- ? Do not exaggerate the facts. Listen to how your answer "sounds" when spoken.
- ? Ignore cameras and microphones. Talk to the reporter.
- ? During videotaped interviews, it is all right to stop your statement and start over.
- ? Do not say "no comment." Explain why you do not have an immediate answer.
- ? Keep your composure, even if a news reporter gets snappy.
- ? Be prepared to provide sufficient evidence for statements you make.

Communication Tips

- Before you begin to speak, smile at the interviewer to establish a rapport.
- Use vocal variety. Let your voice and your delivery reflect the full spectrum of emotions and points of emphasis.
- Use gestures that complement the expression of your ideas. Avoid distracting, meaningless movements.
- Maintain eye contact throughout the interview and keep an "open," friendly face.
- Communicate total enthusiasm and involvement in your subject.

Possible Questions

- What happened and where? When did this occur?
- What actions is FBR taking to control the situation?
- Why did this situation occur? (Do not Speculate)
- Tell me about your organisation?
- Will this situation have national consequences, or will its effect likely be limited to a single sector or industry?
- How much money is this going to cost the taxpayers?

Things not to do

- Do not allow media to videotape important documents.
- Do not answer speculative questions or give opinions concerning real or hypothetical ("what if") situations.
- Do not use the expression, "No comment."
- Never lie to the media.
- Consider everything you say to the media as "on the record." Never make "off the record" comments.
- Don't lose your temper when media representatives ask questions you consider inappropriate or foolish. Such questions are usually rooted in ignorance rather than in malice.
- Don't repeat a negative phrase in response to a media representative's negative question

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Support to Good Governance in Pakistan
Programme

F 7/2, Street 11, House 6
Khosar Road, Islamabad, Pakistan
T +92 51 2608 988/989/990
F +92 51 2608 987
www.giz.de