

Know Your “Rights” in Interacting with Media

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Often organizations seem daunted by working with the media to conduct an interview. Engaging in a discussion with a reporter should be beneficial to both parties, no matter what the topic is about. We counsel clients that how you approach the interview usually sets the tone and end result.

What can make the experience less daunting is recognizing that you have rights when interacting with the media. When a reporter calls you, you have the right to:

- **Know the topic of the interview.** It's basic: what does the reporter want to discuss?
- **Know the angle of the story.** Sounds similar to the point above, but it's not. The topic could be about the latest video game. The reporter's "angle" could be how the video games today are becoming more violent in nature. Knowing the angle makes a big difference in how you approach the interview. NOTE: Media cannot make specific promises or commitments about a story outcome, but if you have a better understanding of their initial request, it will prepare you more for the interview.
- **Know who else the reporter is talking to.** Is the reporter talking with "Moms against video games" or perhaps your competitors?
- **Know who is conducting the interview.** The person who calls you may be an assignment editor and the reporter may be someone you have or have not worked well with in the past.
- **Know where/when the interview will take place and how long the reporter expects to take.** Ensure you have enough time for the interview and know if the visuals aspects of the interview provide a proper background for the discussion.
- **Know when the story will run.** This allows you ability to watch the newscast or read the paper to ensure if any damage control needs to happen that you are on top of it.

While none of these rights guarantee that you will like the end result of the interview, they will help you ensure you are prepared for the discussion.