

Being interviewed by the MEDIA

101- guide from a Senior PR Consultant - H.M



OUR GOAL

- To build awareness of the Lebanese Revolution through earned media and social conversation
- To spotlight WHY it's happened and highlight the peaceful demands of the Lebanese people around the globe
- To offer credible positive news stories that can support us in owning the media narrative around the revolution.

THE STORY WE WANT TO TELL –Key Messages

As an example... Lebanese in London community ...

- Lebanon has witnessed peaceful protests since Thursday October 17, 2019 which were sparked by additional tax measures imposed by the current government.
- This has developed since, into a broader movement championed by the youth, inside and outside of the country who are calling for a fresh start and the appointment of a technocratic government as well as new parliamentary elections under a new law.
- Whilst additional tax measures imposed by the current government led people to the streets, the issue is far bigger and deep rooted.

EXAMPLE KEY MESSAGES

- **until today, Lebanon still has no reliable supply of electricity, no public transport, an acute environmental crisis due to lack of waste management, and lack of basic social services or healthcare to the poorer members of society.**
- Under the administration of the existing political leaders Lebanon and its citizens have continued to suffer from the lack of basic rights and public services such as healthcare, education, infrastructure etc and today ranks as one of the most indebted nations in the world.

EXAMPLE KEY MESSAGES

- Despite goodwill from international donors and community, the current administration has failed to deliver over decades any meaningful improvement in the state of welfare or infrastructure of the citizens
- **Government debt estimated at 155 percent of gross domestic product**, with corruption at all levels of government protected by a sectarian-based system of political alliances.

ONE BIG TAKEAWAY: IT'S NOT ABOUT THE QUESTIONS

“Does anyone have any questions for my answers”

- *U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger*

“I think I heard someone ask me about...”

- *Charles de Gaulle*

REPORTERS WANT

- A story
- Accurate information
- Clear, concise statements
- Not to be used for blatant promotion
- A story that has not been told or taken from a fresh perspective

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

- Many people do interviews without really thinking why
 - What's your objective?
 - Who are you trying to reach?
 - What would you view as a good outcome?

6 LITTLE TAKEAWAYS

Pressing Your Advantage

- It's an interview, not a deposition: You decide what to say and how to say it
- It's your interview, not the reporter's: You have the expertise
- Reporters are conduits, not the audience
- Have 2 or 3 messages about the revolution : The questions are platforms for you to get your message out there
- Repeat them often
- Conclusions first, evidence later

IT'S AN INTERVIEW, NOT A CONVERSATION OR A DEPOSITION

- Go from A to C, not A to Z
- The more you ramble, the more control you lose
- No requirement to answer the questions literally
- Message delivery, not responsiveness, is the key
- Speak to the reporter but address the audience
- Message clarity, not reporter happiness, is the goal

IT'S YOUR INTERVIEW – Take Control

- Use your language, not theirs
- Assert the positive and don't repeat negatives
- Stay on message to resist digression and irrelevance
- Don't follow the interviewer, lead the interview



REPORTERS ARE CONDUITS, NOT THE AUDIENCE

- Convincing the reporter is good, convincing the reader/viewer is better
- Interviews are not debates; stay on message
- Be reasonable in arguments and demeanor
- Don't take questions personally or let them get in the way of your story

WHY MESSAGES MATTER

- You know too much, the audience knows too little and it's hard to know what the reporter knows
- Messages keep you focused and disciplined
- We think 5x faster than we talk and forget 90% of what we hear in a week
- Good messages encourage the listener to hear, understand and retain your thoughts

HAVE 2 OR 3 MESSAGES...AND REPEAT

- Decide in advance what is most important to convey
- Colorful language, apt metaphors, interesting points
- Repetition is redundant – and effective
- The more you say it, the more important it becomes and the better it sounds
- The more you say it, the more likely they will get it
- Quotable language helps you write/edit story

WHAT MAKES A MESSAGE EFFECTIVE

A great message has four characteristics. It is:

1. Clear – it's understood by your audience(s)

- Keep it brief; use strong and simple language; keep it relatable

2. Credible – it's believed

- Use facts/proof points and rely on third-party validation

WHAT MAKES A MESSAGE EFFECTIVE

A great message has four characteristics. It is:

3. Persuasive – it changes thinking

- Make an appeal to the heart and the mind; make it relevant to the audience

4. Actionable – it motivates a response

- Make a clear request to do something, why people should take action and the steps to take action

THE INTERVIEW

Your First Answer

- Whatever the question, give your “elevator” speech
 - Your best chance to establish context
 - Your best chance to get all messages in
- Take control from the start

The Other Questions

- Tie it to one of your key messages and address the reporter’s subject
- Remember to be positive!

THE INTERVIEW

The Mission Is Transition

- Find common ground
 - Pick the word you want and run with it
 - Pick the thought you want and expand upon it
 - Pick the question you want and answer it
- Acknowledge the question, but move quickly, credibly to your message
 - Focus on transition
 - View each question as a 'topic area'

THE INTERVIEW

Bridging

- ‘Bridge’ with phrases like:
 - “That speaks to a bigger point...”
 - “It’s important to consider...”
 - “What this is really about is...”
 - “I can’t discuss that specifically, but I can tell you...”
 - “That’s an interesting point, but I don’t agree because..”

THE INTERVIEW

Flagging

- Underscore most important points
 - What's obvious to you may not be to others
- Stress key takeaways with phrases like:
 - “The essential point to remember is...”
 - “The most exciting thing is...”
 - “When you focus on...”
 - “What this boils down to is...”

THE INTERVIEW

Hooking

- End answer with hint of something intriguing/useful
 - “and that is what I am hoping to achieve by participating in...”

IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT THE WORDS

- Be Prepared
 - Internalize your message
 - Avoid being blindsided
 - Deliver with confidence
- Be assertive and open, not defensive
 - You have, or should have, answers for virtually everything
- It's caring, not acting – and you do it every day
 - The reporter/audience will see through fakery

IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT THE WORDS

- Use your voice
 - Stress the words that matter
 - Turn up the volume
 - Sharpen the inflection
- Use your body
 - Lean into the statement
 - Use hand gestures (point a finger, move your hands)
 - Make real eye contact

INTERVIEW RULES: DO'S

- Stay on message
- Be assertive and positive
- Be enthusiastic
- Put things in context
- Support your claims with data
- Connect the facts in your answer to your broader themes
- Speak in layman's terms
- Stick to what you know
- Read the morning papers

THE MOST COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES

- **Talking too much** – rambling confuses and distracts
- **Talking too little** – all answer, no message
- **Talking in jargon** – you’re talking to generalists
- **Reporter paraphrasing** – don’t let them interpret
- **Speaking for others** – represent yourself, not others
- **Resisting public facts** – explain, don’t deny, them
- **Accepting a faulty premise** – deliver your message
- **Answering hypotheticals/speculation** – no reason to do it
- **Displaying irritation** – mostly counterproductive
- **Being sarcastic/ironic** – never translates in print
- **Saying “no comment”** – there’s (almost) always an answer