

## Winning Edge #27 – Mastering Your TV Interview

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



In this week's Winning Edge, we are diving into the world of TV interviews and how you can make the most of these opportunities for your campaign. If you get a request for a TV interview, after asking about the standard logistics of location and time of the interview, you'll want to ask two important questions so you can prepare:

1. **Is this a live interview or pre-recorded?** Live interviews are shorter and usually done in-studio. The interview is usually only 30-90 seconds if the reporter is on location.
2. **How long is the interview, and when do you plan to air it?** Most interviews for the local news are short, with segments under 3 minutes. This means you'll likely have less than 2 minutes of total time on camera.

Television interviews often come in two forms: an in-person sit-down interview at a studio or a more informal "man-on-the-street" style interview at a campaign event or function you're attending. Let's break down the strategies for tackling both scenarios with confidence and charm.

### The In-Studio Interview

In-studio interviews typically follow a pre-scripted routine, often part of a series where the news station interviews all the candidates. These segments tend to be short, lasting two to four minutes, and the candidates are asked similar questions, providing an opportunity to deliver concise, impactful sound bites.

#### *What to Wear:*

- Opt for solid colors.
- Men: consider wearing a sports jacket and even a tie.
- Women: choose solid colors without small patterns, which can appear distorted on camera.
- Avoid jewelry that clicks or jangles, as microphones will pick up the sound.
- Expect to be wired with a lapel or lavalier microphone, clipped to your shirt or jacket.

### *How to Prepare:*

- Determine the one point you want your audience to remember, such as your main reason for running or your top priority if elected.
- Pick 4-5 talking points you want to address in your interview. Try to reduce them to 20-30 seconds each. You may not get to them all, but you'll be ready to use them to answer questions.
- If the interview is part of a series, watch the other candidates' interviews to anticipate the questions you'll be asked.
- Practice your answers to feel comfortable and appear natural.
- Stay focused on the conversation with the host rather than getting distracted by the cameras, lights, and the "on air" signal.

### *During the Interview:*

- Maintain warm eye contact with the interviewer and try to sit up or on the edge of your seat to look more engaged.
- If wearing a suit jacket or blazer, sit on the back tail to keep it from bunching up and maintain a fitted look.

### **The Field Interview**

Interviews conducted at events or in the field are more informal, with activity and potential distractions in the background. Reporters will usually find a quiet location with an interesting background element to showcase the setting.

### *Staying on Message:*

- Prepare answers to common questions like why you're running, what you'll do if elected, and why people should vote for you over the incumbent.
- Engage in small talk with the interviewer beforehand to build rapport and get a feel for their style and mood.
- Always assume you're being recorded, even during small talk with reporters. Only if you explicitly state something is "off the record" **in advance** is it actually off the record. However, it's best to avoid off-the-record comments while being recorded.

*Handling Interruptions and Distractions:*

- If distracted or interrupted, stay in character, pause briefly, and then continue with your answer.
- Avoid getting flustered or thrown off; simply gather your thoughts and get back to the interview.

Remember, your goal in both types of interviews is to show that you're a likable, relatable person who voters can trust. By following these tips and strategies, you'll be well-prepared to make a positive impression and deliver your message effectively, whether in the studio or out in the field.

So, as you gear up for your next TV interview, keep these points in mind: practice your answers, choose what to wear wisely, and focus on connecting with your audience. With the right preparation and mindset, you'll nail your interview and win over voters.