

# Six Things to Avoid When Talking to Reporters

Avoiding these behaviors will increase your chances of getting your main points into a news story:

1. Using cliches when making your key points. They're boring and not quotable. A cliché weakens your main points so much that they may never make their way into the story.

2. Exaggeration. Instead, create images, use metaphors, sparkle, emote. Stick to what you know and use colorful language, but do not stretch the truth.

3. Slandering anyone. If you say something that is not true and it hurts or injures someone, you are legally responsible. And that legal responsibility can bring with it a hefty financial impact.

4. Reading from a paper when responding to a reporter's question, especially if you are being interviewed live on radio or television. Such behavior sends a message to the audience that you don't know what you're talking about. Instead, know your material and speak from your heart.

There are times, especially during a crisis, when it is appropriate to read a prepared opening statement. Such a

time is at the beginning of a news conference. However, if at all possible, a quick memorization of the opening statement, or paraphrasing of the key points, is better than actually reading the statement, word for word. 5. Asking to preview a story before it's printed or aired. Such a request is insulting to a reporter's professionalism. Instead, you can let the reporter know how to reach you during off-hours, in case there is a last-minute question or a need for clarification or amplification. Make sure you're available and listen closely.

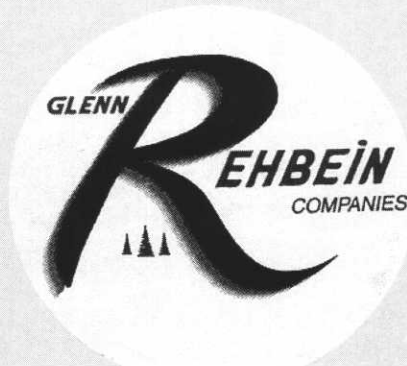
6. Using the phrases "No comment" and "I will neither confirm, nor deny." There are better ways to not comment on something than using a boring cliché: "If I knew the answer to that question, I wouldn't be working this job, but I am and the key point here is (this is where you insert one of your key points)...." or "That's not something I can comment on, but I can comment on (insert a key point here)...." or "I'd have to want to lose my job to answer that question and I like my job. But what I can tell you is (insert your main point here).

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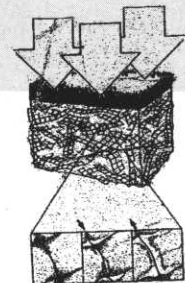
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