Strategically Social - Say What?  
Managing Messaging and Media Interviews

Does public speaking make you nervous? Do you ever wish you knew exactly what to say when asked hard questions? Do you want to get better media coverage for your business and business district?

At Say What? Managing Messaging and Media Interviews learn public speaking tips (including how to stay on message during interviews) and practice interview techniques at this interactive workshop.

Led by Heather Hoell, Venture Portland  
April 17, 2013
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STRATEGICALLY SOCIAL - SAY WHAT?
MANAGING MESSAGING AND MEDIA INTERVIEWS
4.17.2013
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Wilfs
message
Staying on Message

FastCompany.com
By Jennifer Reingold, October 1, 2004

Michael Sheehan's Tip Sheet.

1. **Know your objective, know your audience.** It sounds easy, but it’s really the hardest part of communications, says Sheehan. You must know what you want to do before you can translate that into a clear message -- so take some time to figure out your corporate strategy before, not after, someone asks you to distill it. Then make sure you know who you're talking to and what it is they want to hear.

2. **If it's about a sweater, don't show up with a lamb.** We are overwhelmed by information, so conveying a message that sticks is tougher than ever. If you can synthesize what you want to convey into a few key points, there's a better chance that those points will make it through the clutter. Using a triangle or a box to structure your message is more effective than talking points.

3. **Overdo it.** When first working with a client, Sheehan likes to film them reading the first few stanzas of the epic poem *Casey at the Bat.* Then he asks them which words were most important, colorful, or vibrant, and plays back the tape to show them how even if they thought they were being animated, they weren't. "The key to the voice is overexaggeration," he says. "If you don't feel a little goofy, you're not doing enough."

4. **Make the first impression count.** "When there is a blank slate, the first thing written on it not only has an advantage but its shadow is always there," says Sheehan. "It's much easier to get it right from the start."

5. **No rote repetition.** Partly because of the rise of image consultants like Sheehan, people have become a lot more cynical about what they hear. "The worst thing that someone can do now," he says, "is to look like they're on message. It now alienates and drives people away." An example is Al Gore's infamous "no controlling legal authority" press conference in 1997. He was blatantly on message and blatantly avoiding the issues on the table. You should make your point by responding to questions and finding several creative ways to do so, not by parroting one lousy sound bite by rote.

6. **Sound bites can work.** Speaking of sound bites, Sheehan is a fan -- of good ones, anyway. A good sound bite conveys a message immediately in a colorful way. It's also more likely to be remembered. "So far the most popular sound bite of the year, and I didn't write it so I can't kvell on [boast about] it, was Paul O'Neill's criticism that President Bush was 'like a blind man in a room full of deaf people.' "

7. **Answer the "who" question and the "ooh" question.** Know first who's watching or listening. Then ask yourself what you can do to make them say, "Ooh, that's interesting!"

8. **Tell the truth.** If you try to hide a problem -- or worse, deny it -- you're going to get busted (right, Martha Stewart, Bill Clinton, Frank Quattrone?). This may sound strange coming from the mouth of someone who worked closely with President Clinton during the Lewinsky scandal, but Sheehan says that makes his point exactly. "If you go out there and give false info," he says, "you're going to get clocked."
Biography
Who, Where, Why Important

Crisis/Difficult
Complicated issues you do NOT want to talk about

Accomplishment
What have you done for me lately?

BUSINESS/BUSINESS DISTRICT
TAG LINE

Future/Growth/Economic Development
Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes…
PUBLIC SPEAKING TIPS FOR WOMEN

DO: Own your ideas and comments

DON’T: Minimize With:
• I’m just
• I need a minute
• I’m probably wrong
• Actually
PUBLIC SPEAKING TIPS FOR WOMEN

DO: Punctuate and Pause

DON’T: Make statements sound like questions or replace statements with questions.
PUBLIC SPEAKING TIPS FOR WOMEN

DO: Be Yourself

I keep meeting brilliant women like you, with powerful ideas to contribute, important businesses and organizations to provoke questions to share. But so often, the way they communicate fails to command power. They equivocate, apologetically look away as they speak.

I do this too. We are subtly undermining ourselves with their words. As a result, our ideas aren't having the impact they deserve.

Here are eight ways you might be undermining yourself with your words—and eight ways to stop:

1. **Drop the "just:"
   "I'm just wondering ..." "I just think ..." "I just want to add ..." "Just" demeans what you have to say, shrinks your power. It's time to say goodbye to the justs.

2. **While you are at it, drop the "actually."
   "I actually have a question." "I actually want to add something." "Actually" communicates a sense of surprise that you have something to say. Of course you want to add something. Of course you have questions. There's nothing surprising about it.

3. **Don't tell us why what you are about to say is likely to be wrong.**
   We are still starting sentences with, "I researched this much but ..." "I'm just thinking off the top of my head but ..." "You've clearly been studying this longer than I have, but ..."

   We do this for lots of reasons. We don't want to appear arrogant. We aren't totally sure about what we are saying. Or we are trying to avoid being wrong, and so we buffer the sting of a critical response by saying up front, "I'm not totally standing behind what I'm about to say, but ..." Then, no one has the chance to say back, "Well, I know you strongly believe this, but I entirely dis...

   No matter what the reason, doing this takes away from the power of your voice. Time to change the habit.

4. **Don't tell us you are going to "just take a minute" to say something.**
   Often, in presentations or meetings, I hear you say, "I'd like to ask you to take just a minute to consider this idea" or "Now, I'm going to take just a few minutes to talk about our product." Think about how much stronger it sounds to simply say, "I'd like to tell you about our product."

   Go ahead and only take a minute, if that's appropriate, but skip using the phrase "just a minute" in a talk or presentation. It sounds apologetic and implies that you don't think what you are about to say is worthy of time and attention.

5. **Don't make your sentences sound like questions.**
   Women often raise the pitch of their voice at the end of a sentence making it sound like a question. Listen to your own language and that of women around you, and you are likely to hear the same. Unsurprisingly, speaking a statement like a question diminishes its power. Make statements sound declarative; drop the tone lower at the end.

6. **Don't substitute a question for a statement.**
   You might think you are "suggesting" increasing the marketing budget by saying, "What about increasing the marketing budget?" in a meeting, but your colleagues aren't likely to hear an opinion on this matter as categorical. It sounds like you don't know what you are about to say, and you aren't making your point clearly.

   There are strategic reasons to use a question rather than a statement: to gently introduce an idea to a group that is likely to be resistant to it, for example. But women often turn to questions rather than statements because avoiding conflict, avoiding visibility, avoiding claiming power. We use questions because we have old stories about it being dangerous or inappropriate to state our ideas definitively, and we can't see how sharing our perspective boldly and...
could actually hugely benefit our careers. Time to let the old stories go.

7. **Punctuate and Pause.** Imagine sitting across a table listening to a woman share this: "We are working hard because we want to get the business up in running by 2012, specifically April 2012, which is the target date, and we are optimistic that with the right financing we can get there, and so that is why I've been approaching different investors day..."

You know this type of communication: clauses get piled on top of one another, the speaker interrupting their own thought with digressions.

When we don’t feel we have the right to take up space in a meeting or conversation, or when we are nervous, we tend to talk and never leave a moment without words. Brief pauses between your sentences connote confidence and a sense of holding space in the role of speaker. They allow the listener to absorb what you are saying and give you a moment to gather a deep breath and collect your thoughts.

How does it feel, in contrast, to imagine listening to this: "We are working hard on this. We want to get the business up and running by April 2012. We are very optimistic that with the right financing we can get there. I am approaching different investors every day.”

All that has changed is punctuation, but speaker number two sounds calmer and more on top of her plan. Punctuate and pause.

8. **Keep being yourself.** Women have unique ways of communicating — ways that tend to be more collaborative, consensus-building, and inviting. These new habits are not about adopting an authoritative communication style that doesn’t sit right in your heart; They are about giving up the self-diminishing patterns that stem from being afraid of power, of believing what our inner critics have to say, and as a result, sharing our ideas tentatively.

So, how do you begin changing your speech? Start by increasing your awareness of the unhelpful speech patterns currently use and be mindful of your intention to speak differently.

I love speaking trainer Jeanne Marie Grumet's recommendation to take these changes one at a time. Focus on one thing that stands out to you. For example, for a few weeks you might just work on noticing when you use a question when you have a statement or opinion to share and work on changing that. Then you might shift to noticing your "justs" and eliminate them.

The world needs your ideas. It’s time to start sharing them fully, loudly, boldly, slowly -- without diminishment or apologizing.

**Tara Sophia Mohr** is an expert on women's leadership and wellbeing. Her work has been featured on *The Today Show*, CNN.com, ForbesWoman, and numerous other publications. She is the creator of the free, downloadable 10 Rules for Women Workbook.

Follow Tara Sophia Mohr on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/amasophia](http://www.twitter.com/amasophia)
Practice, Practice, Practice
INTERVIEWS
1. **Get Authorized**
   Ensure you are authorized to speak on behalf of your business or business district. Ensure those that aren’t authorized to speak, don’t.

2. **Respect Deadlines**
   Always ask a reporter about their deadline – and make sure you respond appropriately.

3. **Say What?**
   Have a plan. Know your audience. Create a message box. Identify 3-4 key points; make them, make them and make them again.

4. **Say What You Mean**
   And mean what you say. If you don’t know the answer, say so...and then offer to get back to the reporter.

5. **Practice Makes Perfect**
   Plan your messages in advance and practice, practice, practice! You want to sound natural (not too rehearsed) while you make your point.

6. **Repeat, Repeat, Repeat**
   It takes the average person 7-10 times to recognize a message. You may feel like a broken record but repeating your message is the best way to ensure it ends up in the story...or the customer’s mind.

7. **Use the Buddy System**
   Practice answering questions with a friend. Have a buddy join the interview to help keep you calm and remind you of your messages.

8. **Get out of Trouble Gracefully**
   There is no such thing as ‘off the record’. Don’t ever say ‘no comment’. A well-timed ‘cough’ is the perfect way to break-up a bad quote.

9. **Have Fun!**

10. **Call Venture Portland for Help**
    Staff is available to help with all media relations. 503.477.9678

11. **What if it’s the Middle of the Night?**
    Visit ventureportland.org/membercenter for resources.

When the media calls – stay calm, cool and collected. Make sure you ask the following questions while on the phone, think about your answers and call the reporter back in a timely manner.

1. Can I have your name and the outlet you work with?
2. What is your story regarding?
3. When is your deadline?
4. What is the best way to get back to you?

_Venture Portland is available to assist with all media relations. Contact us at 503.477.9648._
For Immediate Release
Contact: Heather Hoell, 503.477.9648
heather@ventureportland.org

Portland's Neighborhood Business Districts
Localize the Season
Nearly 50 Holiday Events, Local Shopping Deals and Merry Neighborhood Nights Energize the Economy this Holiday Season

PORTLAND, Ore. – November 14, 2011 – Venture Portland is excited to announce approximately 50 holiday events will occur in neighborhood business districts throughout the city between November 17 and February 15. Neighborhood business districts urge Portlanders to enjoy the convenience and merriment that shopping local offers as they Localize the Season.

“Neighborhood business district holiday events are part of what makes our city unique,” said Heather Hoell, Executive Director for Venture Portland. “They offer an ideal way for residents to venture out and celebrate the season while retailers stay open late and provide holiday treats and entertainment.”

Although business district events vary throughout the city, decorated windows, twinkling lights and holiday carolers provide the perfect backdrop for many of Portland’s best shopping deals including late hours and special events for women, families and even pet owners. Neighborhood business districts encourage Portlanders to eat, shop, and celebrate the holidays as they Localize the Season.

For many small businesses, neighborhood business district holiday events provide important incentives encouraging residents to shop local this winter, a critical season for businesses’ financial wellbeing throughout the entire year. Success during the
holiday season will result in increased business confidence and neighborhood job creation.

Many of this year’s holiday events were made possible in part by Venture Portland grants. While the organization awarded $44,000 in grant funds during the fall/winter cycle, it is important to note more than $115,000 in additional private investment will be raised by neighborhood business districts with a portion dedicated for local charities.

About Venture Portland
Venture Portland means business. Through grant funds, trainings, and technical assistance the organization invests in the smart, strategic growth of Portland’s unique neighborhood business districts. Portland’s neighborhood business districts comprise approximately 16,000 businesses and nearly 200,000 jobs. Venture Portland’s board leadership comes from 30 diverse business districts city-wide that collectively represent local, regional, national, and international demand for goods and services. Visit ventureportland.org for more information.

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END OF RELEASE:

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BOILERPLATE:
This text should provide a snapshot of the organization and stay consistent in all press documents.
News Release

Hayden Island Business Alliance (HIBA) Awarded Venture Portland Grant

HIBA has received official notification from Venture Portland that it has been awarded a $3500 Neighborhood Business District Benchmark Grant as part of the organization’s Spring/Summer funding cycle. The purpose of the grant is to purchase and install 21 colorful district branding banners that will be visible from I-5 in key locations throughout the east side of Hayden Island.

The 8’ X 2-1/2’ banners will be installed by September on existing light poles to increase public awareness and visibility of the Island and while enhancing its reputation as a unique destination location to visit, shop, live and play. Hayden Island has a wide variety of businesses (including those in the newly-remodeled Jantzen Beach Center), as well as destination restaurants, hotels, and other recreational venues and attractions.

HIBA will raise at least $3500 in additional matching funds before the end of the summer. Many local businesses have already committed to financially sponsor the banners. **To support the project, contact HIBA at haydenislandba@gmail.com or 503-267-3497.**

HIBA recently joined Venture Portland. Founded in 1986, Venture Portland invests in the strategic growth of Portland’s unique neighborhood business districts, of which Hayden Island is one. These dynamic districts, which together make up a majority of the city’s businesses and nearly half of its jobs, play a vital role in Portland’s economic prosperity and collectively represent local, regional, national and international demand for goods and services. Their goal is to grow business and connect neighborhoods.

HIBA hopes to benefit from the grants, training, networking and technical assistance offered by Venture Portland, while enhancing its connection to the surrounding Columbia River communities.

# # #

HIBA's mailing address: 1521 N Jantzen Avenue, #209, Portland, OR 97217; Other HIBA information: Facebook.com/HIBAoregon; Twitter@HIBAoregon
Hayden Island Business Alliance wins grant to hang banners

By Casey Parks, The Oregonian
Follow on Twitter
on April 16, 2013 at 4:06 PM, updated April 16, 2013 at 4:22 PM

Venture Portland has awarded the Hayden Island Business Alliance a $3,500 neighborhood business district benchmark grant, the group announced. The alliance plans to use the money to buy 21 branding banners.

The group plans to hang the 8’ x 2 ½’ banners across the district in locations that can be seen from I-5. The alliance must raise a matching $3,500 by the end of the summer. The group hopes the new banners will increase public awareness of the area that includes Jantzen Beach, hotels and restaurants.

Since 1995 Venture Portland's grants provided nearly $1 million to fund more than 300 business district projects.

-- Casey Parks

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