



TRAFALGAR COMMUNICATIONS

How to be a terrific podcast guest

By Donna Papacosta
Trafalgar Communications
Trafcom News Podcast
905-844-7645
donna@trafcom.com

If you've written a book or an ebook, or are a consultant or speaker, chances are you've already been a guest on a podcast or will be soon. Before saying "yes" to an interview, it's important to think about how to put your best voice forward, so that your interview goes well, and word gets out that you're worthwhile inviting as a podcast guest.

Please allow me to share some tips gleaned during more than five years of conducting podcast interviews and being a guest myself.

Do your research

Scope out the podcast first, to be sure it's a good fit for you. Some people will encourage you to agree to every interview request, but if you're getting a lot of them, you want to be sure that each interview is an effective use of your time. Listen to the producer's last podcast, and check out his web page to see what kind of image he is putting out there.

Ask the host what the angle of the interview is, and about the intended audience. If your market is large corporations, and the podcast is geared toward home business, you might want to take a pass.

Ask for question areas in advance, but don't expect to get every question in writing. Allow for spontaneity. Do take the time to think about your answers, but don't write out all your answers with the expectation that

you're going to read them during the interview. Unless you're a trained voice actor, reading can be the fastest way to ruin an interview.

Keep relevant facts and figures at your fingertips so that you sound like the expert you are.

Sounding great

Don't talk too fast. Sometimes when we're excited about a topic, we talk too quickly. Slow down. And remember to breathe.

Get the technology out of the way early in the game. When you're booked as a guest, confirm the date and time (including time zone). Ask whether the interview will be conducted in person, by phone or via Skype. If it's in person, be sure you show up on time, just as you would for a radio or TV interview. If it's by phone, try to use a landline, not a mobile phone.

These days, the majority of podcasters will use Skype for interviews. Unfortunately, some podcast guests may not be familiar with Skype, and attempt to "try out" Skype at the time of the interview. This will not end well; trust me. So, if you're not accustomed to using Skype, take the time to install it and experiment with it with a friend, colleague or family member first. Learn how to fire up the program, plug in your headset and/or microphone, and turn off notifications so that you don't hear annoying beeps during the interview.

Chances are that the podcaster will *not* ask you to record your own portion of the interview, unless you're a podcaster too, and she knows that you are comfortable with this. If someone asks you to do this, and you don't know how, just say no. Let the podcaster handle the recording.

Get the gear

If you're going to be doing multiple interviews, it will be worth your while to buy a headset and microphone (\$100 or so). This will vastly improve the sound quality of your interview. Even better would be a separate microphone and headphones. Even a USB microphone would be a step above a one-piece headset/mic combo. The worst audio quality will result from using your built-in microphone. If you must use it, learn to use it properly. Sit close enough so that the mic picks up your voice.

No matter what kind of microphone you choose, learn to exploit it. A typical newbie mistake is to breathe too heavily into the mic. Many podcasters have learned the hard way to NOT huff and puff into the mic. If you position the mic properly, you'll get a more pleasing sound.

Keep in mind that if you do *not* use a headset, the podcaster's voice will come out of your speakers and will be picked up as an echo. This does not sound good.

Ambient noise

If you have a noisy fan or air conditioner in the room, turn it off for the interview.

If you have a dog, baby or cockatoo, do not do the interview with them in the room, unless they're part of the interview (suppose you're an animal trainer). I recently conducted an interview in which I kept hearing an odd metallic sound. As it turns out, the guest's golden retriever was lounging under her desk, and every once in a while would scratch, creating a jangling sound with her chain. The guest was shocked when she realized that this noise was being picked up and could be heard in the interview.

Tell your stories

Using a story to make a point can be very effective. But do be sure that your stories don't run too long. Check with the podcaster; how much time do you have?

Pauses please

The interviewer might ask for pauses between questions and answers, which makes the editing process easier. So, after you say something, don't be afraid of the silence, which will be edited out. When I do interviews, I usually warn the guest in advance about these pregnant pauses.

Followup

Ask when the podcast will be published. Don't be shy about linking to the interview from your own website or blog; the podcaster will appreciate it.