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Work Session I: Crisis Communications and Reputation Management for Attorneys and Their Clients

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Media Relations & Crisis Communications
The Rules of the Road

What You Should Know & Expect

Rule 1 Before you start the interview – what's the topic?

Rule 2 Who will interview you and who do they work for?

Rule 3 Where will the interview run – in the "breaking news" section? Business? Metro?

Rule 4 Will the reporter be talking to other people for this story?

Rule 5 You can have some control over where the interview takes place.

Rule 6 You can keep the interview orderly – even an ambush interview.

Rule 7 You don't have to answer every question you're asked.

What the Reporter Expects

Rule 1. They expect to be treated courteously.

Rule 2 They expect reasonable access to news scenes.

Rule 3 They expect that you prove all your claims.

Rule 4 They expect a regular flow of information during breaking stories.

Rule 5 They will decide who they talk to and who they don't.

Rule 6 They will call it as they see it.

Rule 7 They will demand speed.

"I want it – and I want it now !!"

Rule 8 They will demand directness.

You to me; not mediated by another - and I expect to interact with you directly.

Rule 9 They will demand transparency.

If I find out you are hiding something, I will never trust you again.

Hennes Communications Pre-Interview Checklist

Reporter_____ Media Outlet_____

Reporter's Telephone Number_____ Reporter's Email & Twitter Handle_____

What is the topic/angle_____

When will story run: _____ Is this story for: ___front ___metro ___business ___lifestyle ___sports
Do you need just a few short quotes: ___yes___no Or is this a longer interview: ___yes___no
Is anyone else being interviewed: ___yes ___no How much time do you need for the interview: _____
Are you sending a photographer: ___yes ___no May I provide visuals: ___yes ___no
How knowledgeable is reporter_____ Has reporter/outlet done anything else on topic: ___yes ___no
Does media/reporter have an apparent point of view: ___yes ___no
Who will be interviewing me?_____

What is your deadline?_____

Desired Headline_____

Key Message #1_____

Supporting Statement_____

Key Message #2_____

Supporting Statement_____

Key Message #3_____

Supporting Statement_____

The Most Difficult Questions You May Be Asked

Question_____
Response_____
Question_____
Response_____

Bridging & Steering Phrases	**For TV Interviews**
"The real issue is…" "Let me add…" "It's important to emphasize…" "It's important not to overlook…" "The most important point to remember…" "Another question I'm often asked…" "That deals with one aspect of a larger issue…" "It's too early to talk about that until all the facts are in, but I can tell you…" "I'm not sure about that, but what I do know is…" "Let me put this into perspective…" "I'm glad you asked me that…people have that misconception, but the truth is…" "Here's what we did and what we're going to do about it…" **Speak Slowly !!**	Live or taped? Satellite remote? Audience call-ins or emails? If live, how long broadcast? What's the format? Interviewer/guest or interviewer and 2 guests? Are visual props OK? Will video clips be inserted? Can I review them first? Website to see clip:_____ **For Radio Interviews** Location (media market):_____ Interviewer's Name: _____ Show Contact:_____ On-Air Producer:_____ Contact Tel #:_____ Hotline/Studio #:_____ Backup Tel #:_____ Call-In # for listeners:_____ Website to listen live:_____ Website to grab audio clip:_____

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Reporter's Terms

The Basic Rule: Everything is on the record unless **both** parties to the conversation agree that it is not. You must negotiate anything else first.

You can agree to make something off the record or any of the other permutations below - only if you do so **before** the comment is made.

On the record means the speaker may be quoted directly.

Just between us has no real meaning. Do not use !

Off the record means you may not use the information at all, either in the newspaper or in further reporting. Period. It is important to get the reporter's agreement he/she will honor this **even in the event of a lawsuit, subpoena or otherwise ordered by a court**. Do not confuse "off the record" with "not for attribution." Caution – some reporters will decline to hear the information so as not to hamper their ability to pursue the story in other ways.

On background or not for attribution both mean you may print the quote, but you cannot attribute it to me ("a source familiar with the situation said…"). Be sure to agree on attribution to be used by reporter ("an agency executive…a former employee…a member of the board, etc."). It is important to get the reporter's agreement he/she will honor this **even in the event of a lawsuit, subpoena or otherwise ordered by a court**.

Deep background refers to information that may be reflected in a story but is not attributed in any other way. Often, reporters will use deep background to verify other information and increase their understanding of a story, without citing it specifically.

Check with me before you use it means only that. You have the right to correct errors and misunderstandings, but not to withdraw statements that you "don't like."

You must be very careful about negotiating these rights and especially about going on and off the record or not for attribution repeatedly within a single conversation.

REMINDER: Reporters may have their own definitions that are different than these.

There's only one way to guarantee that it won't show up in print, on television, radio or on the internet – don't say it.