

March/April 1988

**TO: Executive Addressed**

**FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman**

**RE: Profile of a Good Answer**

Bad news is the result of bad answers, mistakes, or poor preparation. Even the worst story can be told in a positive way. The secret is not in anticipating the questions (which is the easy part), but in spending your time constructing good answers and then rehearsing them.

After all, the purpose of a media interview is to achieve communications objectives by getting our messages through the reporter to the audience. Here is a list of attributes against which you can test and check your answers to see if they communicate your messages in important and newsworthy ways. You are more likely to be quoted accurately and positively if your answers have:

- A communications objective (for targeted audiences)
- Packaged or bundled information (one to three plain language messages)
- A pyramid-like structure (communications objective comes first, then support information)
- Story-like construction (beginning, middle, end, punch line, moral, etc.)
- Information about people
- Benefits rather than features
- Power words (which build value) rather than color words (headline grabbers)
- Non-technical language
- "For examples"
- Bridges
- Sixty to 120 word length
- Few negative words
- No disparaging language

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