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# Top 5 tips on how to do better than Prince Andrew in his disastrous PR interview

What was supposed to be an interview to end all speculation has, in fact, done the opposite and has fanned the flames to supernova proportions, writes Zaib Shadani, Shadani Consulting

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Prince Andrew's BBC Newsnight interview was like watching a live action PR masterclass in 'What not to do' during an interview. Image: Youtube/BBC Newsnight

Prince Andrew's [BBC Newsnight interview](#) was like watching a live action PR masterclass in 'What not to do' during an interview.

Undoubtedly, the most significant one-on-one with a senior royal since Princess Diana on Panorama (1995), the Prince Andrew interview raised more questions and controversies than it did to placate the rumours and gossip that have been following him for months.

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The second son of the Queen of England (and reportedly her favourite), Prince Andrew's dismal attempts to defend his relationship with disgraced financier and convicted sex offender, Jeffrey Epstein, has not only done severe damage to his reputation, but the blows keep coming as multiple businesses, like KPMG, Standard Chartered and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, have cut ties and publicly withdrawn support for the prince.

What was supposed to be an interview to end all speculation has, in fact, done the opposite and has fanned the flames to supernova proportions.

Two particular moments from the 60-minute interview stand out as acutely cringeworthy and have been widely condemned as lacking perspective or remorse: The first was when Prince Andrew referred to Epstein's behaviour as "a manner unbecoming" – to which an incredulous Emily Maitlis responded: "Unbecoming? He was a sex offender." And the second was when he stated that he did not regret his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, as it had "seriously beneficial outcomes" for him.



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While the missteps kept coming, it was the complete absence of sympathy for Epstein's victims, juxtaposed with Prince Andrew's insistence on underscoring his friendship with Epstein that were the hardest to comprehend. A close second were the bizarre alibi of eating at Pizza Express and his inability to sweat, due to a medical condition.

By the end of the interview, Prince Andrew had come off as defensive, unconvincing in his answers and, most of all, unrepentant of his friendship with Epstein. Launching dozens of memes and the trending hashtag of #PizzaGate, the blowback will be felt by Prince Andrew for years to come.

The PR learnings from this disastrous interview are many, but here are the top five tips on how to correctly prepare for an interview, so that you can deliver your message in a powerful way.

## 1. Anticipate the questions - especially the hard ones

As evidenced by Prince Andrew's answers and reactions, where he seemed edgy and caught off guard by some of the questions, one should always try to anticipate a reporter's questions.

Prepare questions in advance that include a wide spectrum, ranging from the basic and unexpected, all the way to the sensational. This is the foundation for all media training, where interviewees are introduced to the hard questions that may be asked, so that they can familiarise themselves with what to expect and can practice their facial reactions, body language and answers.

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## 2. Prepare your messaging

It doesn't matter what the question is, if the messaging is strong, any question can be answered. What are you trying to achieve through the interview and what are the top three points that you want to leave the audience with?

This question unfortunately, remained unanswered during Prince Andrew's interview as he struggled to deliver any key messages, and, moreover, ended up calling into question both his credibility and reputation. Strong messaging is the cornerstone of all media training and the anchor which grounds all spokespersons.

## 3. Choose your words with care

Interviews are a great opportunity to share perspective and views on a matter, so try to convey your points in a short and succinct matter. With a television sound bite running for an average of 7-9 seconds, there is no room for long winded answers, so make sure you leave the interview having delivered some strong sound bites.

When in doubt you can also rely on key phrases that underscore a point, for e.g.: "What I really want to leave the audience with is..." or if you would like to avoid a question: "I'm not able to answer that, but what I do know is..."

## 4. Maintain control of the conversation

While it may be hard to believe that you can control the narrative and steer the interview, the mark of a seasoned spokesperson is the ability to stay on topic and on message.

"Bridging" is a technique that allows one to move from a difficult or uncomfortable question to a prepared key message.

When a reporter moves away from the subject you want to discuss, you can bring the conversation back via 'bridge' phrases like "What is important here..." "Let's look at it from this point of view..." Bridging is very useful when it's important to reiterate your position on a subject, but one must always acknowledge the question of the reporter, before seeking a 'bridge', to give it context.

## 5. Be genuine and accountable for your actions

Audiences can sense it when you are insincere and are simply 'mouthing the words', so it's important to be honest and truthful. Especially when trying to present 'your' side of a story, it is critical to be genuine, acknowledge the responsibility of your role in the situation and offer to help in any way that you can.

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