



Getting Your Message Across

The ultimate guide to communication

Sample Extract eBook

Wilf Voss

GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

Originally published in Great Britain in 2008

Extract eBook published in Great Britain in 2009

Copyright © Wilf Voss 2008

The right of Wilf Voss to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988.

www.gettingyourmessageacross.net

Introduction

Are you confident that you are always delivering important messages in a way that has impact and gets your message across effectively?

In a world where professionals are suffering from 'information overload' it is becoming increasingly difficult for an organisation to ensure that they are effectively engaging with their clients, contacts or members.

Getting Your Message Across provides tools and techniques for anyone who has to present an important message to ensure that they get their message across highly effectively. This eBook provides a small sample of the content contained within 'Getting Your Message Across' which has a wide coverage relevant for meetings, presentations, press and public relations. The book is built on many years of practical experience and aims to share professional techniques which can be employed by any professional who needs to communicate effectively.

If you find that the content of the eBook is useful you may wish to consider buying a copy of Getting Your Message Across. The book is available from most online and retail book sellers (ISBN 978-1-4092-2233-0)

You can also find more information about our training and consultancy services at www.gettingyourmessageacross.net

SECTION 4 – The Confident Presenter

4	The Confident Presenter
4.1	Introduction to presentations and events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the reason for events • What is the general audience expectation
4.2	Overcoming fear or stage-fright <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that you always have the confidence to deliver at your best
4.3	Having the confidence to present <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques to reduce pre-presentation nerves
4.4	Breathing Exercises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrating on breathing and not your nerves
4.5	Mind changers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smile and the brain smiles with you! • Using music to drive your mood
4.6	Preparing to succeed (Positive thinking in practice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with doubt • Transferring belief
4.7	Becoming an ‘Alpha Presenter’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding pack mentality with presentations
4.8	Section Review

4.1 – Introduction to presentations and events

What comes into your mind when you think of a presentation? Is it excitement, anticipation and interest?

Unfortunately the answer is very likely to be none of the above. Over time many of us have become subjected to poorly created presentations: pages of bullet points on the projector screen; a speaker who didn’t hold our interest; need I go on? Technology such as PowerPoint has allowed us to create excellent presentations; however it also allows us to create the complete opposite.

We need to understand that presentations are more than electronic files: we actually need to understand a bit about the psychology of presentations and learn some secrets which are more common in film and theatre.

Before we look at the presentation tools, we need to look at the presenter. There are two major failings which are identified by people when they see a 'poor' presentation: the presenter and the presentation. We will start with the presenter and how you can become confident, believable and a truly powerful presenter!

4.2 – Overcoming fear or stage-fright

Does public speaking make you nervous? This is a serious question which you may think has two answers:

- Yes – I am not happy giving presentations in public.
- No – I am a confident presenter.

There is of course a third response, which is that you have some nerves before a presentation but you do not let them hold you back. The nervousness you feel comes from the fact that you are stepping up in front of an audience (often of your peers) and therefore you will need to put your head above the parapet. You may perceive that there is a high risk of failure ('what if they don't like me?') and you may not feel confident that you know what to say.

I would be lying if I could tell you how to completely conquer stage fright. In fact we really don't want to get rid of our stage fright or presentation fear. This is because to do so runs the risk of making your presentation dry or over-rehearsed. In fact if you talk to famous actors they will often tell you that they still have some controlled nerves there before they go on stage, despite the fact that this is their 'day job' and they are very experienced.

It is controlled nerves which will give you an edge and allow you to give amazing presentations. I have given many thousands of presentations to large and small audiences around the world and I can assure you that the day I do not feel that tingle of nervous excitement before I speak is the day I will give up, because I know that is the day I will not be ready to shine on stage.

This book will give you tools and techniques which will allow you to manage any pre-show nerves, and also prepare for anything that may happen during a presentation.

4.3 – Having the confidence to present

There are a number of techniques to build and support your confidence. The most important one is to ensure that you are fully prepared for your presentation, ensuring that you have confidence in your subject and what you are going to say (we will cover this later in this book). Once you are confident in your subject you are a long way towards giving a confident presentation. To help you further you can use two additional techniques:

- breathing exercises
- mind changers

4.4 Breathing Exercises

It is important to remember the following:

- Your breathing will affect your voice and projection - learning to control your breathing will allow you to improve the projection and clarity of your voice.
- Your breathing can be affected by nerves.
- You can also control your nerves by controlling your breathing.

You have to consider, how often do you think about breathing? It is an automatic function which we never have to think about; it just happens.

Try the following simple breathing exercise:

- take a deep breath in through your mouth
- breath out SLOWLY through your nose (mentally count the seconds that it takes you to breath out)
- concentrate on your breathing and repeat this at least five more times.

There are two benefits, firstly you will get more oxygen into your lungs and therefore feed your brain, and secondly the act of concentration allows you to think about something other than your nerves. Distraction is a good technique; we use it with children and it still works with us as adults. Force yourself to take a moment and think of something else. This is a simple technique that can be carried out anywhere and at anytime.

4.5 – Mind changers

The second simple technique is the use of mind changers. These are two simple tricks which you can use to up your energy and make you feel better. They may sound very simplistic, however, I can promise you that they are very powerful and can work a treat!

First of all, smile. Even if you are feeling like you really don't want to (in fact, particularly if you feel like you don't want to). Then use a mantra: tell yourself out loud that you are great and that you can succeed in your presentation. Repeat it a few times, be confident and really speak out.

There are two techniques at work here. The acts of smiling (and other emotions) are handled by a lower, more primitive part of our brains. If you physically smile the lower brain tells the upper brain that you are happy. It can help you improve the way you feel. If you support this with the second technique, a strong vocal message, it becomes a very powerful, mood changing tool.

Another thing to use is music. We will see later how we can change an audience mode with music, and it can work for you as a presenter also. Think of your favourite upbeat track, how does it make you feel when you hear it on the radio? Think of a track that you would sing along to in the car or shower (or tap the steering wheel if you are not the singing sort!)

Pick a track that appeals to you and makes you feel happy (I use 'Can you feel it?' by the Jackson Five, however you may have better musical taste!). Good music is great for changing your mood. Look at a good movie; they will use slow mournful music when the action is sad or downbeat. (How does this make you feel?) In the same way, happy upbeat music can make you feel great.

Load up your MP3 player or put a CD in your car and make sure you are musically charged up before you go to your presentation.

4.6 – Preparing to succeed

Before you start any presentation you need to ask yourself if you have any doubts about it. This is important because if you cannot convince yourself, you will not persuade your audience. Before you start speaking you must believe in what you are going to say...

This is the transfer of belief. An audience can detect (from your vocal tone and body language) when you do not believe in what you are talking about. This can seriously affect the acceptance of your presentation.

You need to eliminate any doubts you may have about your presentation, so you need to be sure of the content and subject area. Think about the old saying ‘Believe you will fail and you will.’ This is true for presentations, but can also be paraphrased as ‘Doubt your content and your audience will also doubt it.’

4.7 – Becoming an ‘Alpha Presenter’

In the animal kingdom, pack animals (such as dogs) have a leader called the Alpha animal; this is the animal who leads all of the other animals in the pack. The same should be true in presentations. You as the presenter should be the leader when you are speaking and be seen to be the leading individual. In this way you have control of the audience and also their respect. You should ask yourself, do you have an alpha role when you are presenting? Do you allow the audience to take control of your presentation or do you have full control? When you consider your presentations you should remember that you should:

- have control of the room – this means that if you are speaking you should look to ensure you are the only one speaking. If audience members are talking, pause and see if they stop. (If not, see the techniques for dealing with difficult people later in the course)
- be in control of your content – you demonstrate that you clearly have belief in your subject
- be in control of your confidence – you should ‘own the stage’, this means that you do not seem timid or apprehensive about your presentation. (The audience can smell fear!)

If you think of yourself as an Alpha Presenter you will be able to bring together the management of pre-event nerves and belief in a whole attitude.

4.8 – Section Review

You have undertaken the first step of becoming a perfect presenter, so to recap:

- the presenter is key to the presentation
- whereas we cannot completely remove stage-fright we can control it and use it to our advantage
- thinking about your breathing can reduce your nerves and give you time to think and be calm
- be ready to change your mind by smiling and positive vocal phrases
- use upbeat music to move your mind to a more positive state
- get rid of doubts; have confidence in yourself and your presentation
- be in control – you are the Alpha Presenter

Now, let's move on and look at the presentation itself.

SECTION 5 – The Three Ps

5	The Three P's
5.1	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The secret for presentation success
5.2	Getting the preparation balance right
5.3	Understanding your audience's needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do people expect from the presentation • What do they want from the presentation • What can you deliver?
5.4	The crucial questions you must ask to meet an audience needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they want? • What do they know?
5.5	Are there any questions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be questions? • Can I answer them?
5.6	Dealing with questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to effectively answer questions from the floor
5.7	Understanding your audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the audience dynamic
5.8	Scripting Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you need is not a script...
5.9	Creating Cue Cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of cue cards • Level of content required
5.10	Rehearsing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to rehearse

5.1 Introduction

In this section we are going to introduce the Three Ps. They are:

- Preparation
- Preparation
- Preparation

This will seem obvious, however a lack of effective preparation will be the downfall of any presentation. The key word is *effective* preparation. This is ensuring that not only have you prepared a set of slides, but that you are aware of the audience, the environment and your message. Once all of these elements are in place you will have been well on the way to winning over the audience before you have even stood up to speak!

In this section we will take you through the methods you should employ when preparing for a presentation.

5.2 – Getting the preparation balance right

On the last we introduced the Three Ps and I told you of the importance of preparation; however there is a caveat. You do need to get the balance right for your preparation. You may not believe it, but you can be too prepared for a presentation with the result that you come across as stilted or over-rehearsed.

You should ensure that you have taken your preparation steps and that you have rehearsed your presentation, however you should resist the temptation to be so prepared that you know your content and your presentation so well that you seem to be reciting content from memory with no concern for the audience.

You are looking for a stage when you are comfortable with the content and the presentation, you know how you will present and you are aware of the aims and objectives and the points you wish to make. This is the stage to stop. Take a break, you are ready to go!

By all means keep the ideas fresh in your mind, but don't keep going over the presentation again and again; you need it to be fresh for your audience. The impression you want to give is that this is the first time you have shared your presentation with anyone (even if you have given the presentation many times before).

5.3 – Understanding your audience's needs

The first step in the preparation for any presentation is an understanding of what the audience wants to get out of it. It is important to note that this may not be what the title of the presentation you have been given is. You need to ensure that you know as much as you can about your audience before you stand before them. So, for example:

- **Who are the audience?**
 - What is their level of experience and knowledge? – It is vital to ensure that you do not stand up and tell them what they already knew or bamboozle them with content which is too complex.
 - What is the dynamic? – Are the audience going to be senior directors or shop-floor staff? You need to consider your content and language to meet the needs of the audience.
 - Where have they come from? – Is this a single company or team or is this a public forum? If they do come from one organisation you can make sure that you use some of their house language (the internal terms and phrases each organisation uses) to show affinity with them.
- **What do they expect from the presentation?**
 - Do their aims and objectives match the ones you have set for your presentation?
 - What is their expectation for the presentation? Are they expecting a staid and boring speech, is this what you should deliver?
- **What do they want from the presentation?**
 - Do they have specific items of information which are key to them and which they simply must know about? So many presentations I have seen have a presenter giving reams of information which people gloss over when all they wanted was x.

- **What can you deliver?**
 - This is the final vital point. Are there items which the audience would like to have but you just cannot deliver? Perhaps something has not been decided upon or finalised.
 - It is important, where you can, to not just ignore these items. Be honest if you cannot talk about something; at least tell the audience this and the reason why. Tell them when they will get this information.

5.4 - The crucial questions you must ask to meet an audience's needs

The previous set of questions allowed us to discover who the audience were and what they expected and wanted from the presentation, however there are two other major areas you need to review. Firstly, what does the audience already know?

There is no point in boring your audience by telling them information they already know, however you would be amazed how many times presenters do not ask this simple question. In fact by asking who the audience is you should have a much better idea of their knowledge level.

Of course, this is sometimes not as simple as yes, they have knowledge of some area or no, they do not. You may find that you have a mixed audience or, worst still, people who turn up at the last minute knowing nothing about what you are talking about!

So how can you cope? Try this three-step plan:

1. **Know the audience** – Find out who the audience will be, then ask the organiser or even some audience members what they know already.
2. **Be prepared** – Just in case, it is worth the effort to have a couple of 'background slides' which quickly cover the background to what you are presenting. You can quickly introduce these as a set of 'as you know already' facts or go into more detail if required.
3. **Read the audience** – Watch the body language. Are they bored or disinterested? That is the time to move on!

5.5 - Are there any questions?

Are you ready to answer questions about your presentation? There are three things you need to consider:

- **Do you feel ready to give an authoritative answer to a question which may come up?** – Did you need to get permission or authority to detail any of the content within your presentation? Do you have the knowledge and permission to answer the sort of questions which may come up?
- **Is it the right forum to ask for questions?** – You need to consider if it will be logistically possible for questions to be handled. For example, a large auditorium may require a number of people with radio microphones to ensure a question is audible to the audience. Is this in place? Equally, what is the expectation for the event - if you ask for questions from the floor will every speaker be expected to do the same?
- **Will there be any questions?** – There can be a horrible silence which follows a call for questions and none of the audience want to say anything (known in the trade as a ‘tumbleweed moment’!). The response to this is to be confident and state that you must have covered the content well.

Asking questions can be a simple and useful way to involve the audience and create a more interactive presentation. If you have answered the questions above you should be ready for questions. The next step is being able to deal with them effectively.

5.6 – Dealing with questions

Effectively dealing with questions can provide an excellent element for a presentation, however there are a few hints and tips which will allow you to ensure your Q&A sessions go smoothly:

- **Use a roving microphone** – In all but the smallest rooms you will find that it is useful to employ a person (or people) with a roving microphone. This will allow the entire audience to clearly hear the question from the delegate.
- **Use a roving microphone effectively** – Be aware that you need to ensure that your microphone wrangler keeps some control over the microphone. It is preferable that the mic is controlled by a sound engineer (who will fade up the mic when the delegate asks a question). If this is not possible ensure that they switch the mic on before handing it to the delegate. It can be embarrassing if the mic does not work and can affect your ‘Alpha Presenter’ position.
- **Beware ‘mic grab’** – mic grab is when a delegate takes the microphone and will not hand it back, determined to ask more questions or worst still to try to argue

with you as the presenter. We will deal with difficult people later in the book, however the best policy is for the mic wrangler to take back the microphone when the question has been completed or to hold the microphone for the delegate. Everyone with a question should be given their chance to speak so it is important to firmly, yet politely, ensure that individuals do not take over.

- **Repeat the question** – repeating the question confirms that you have understood what the delegate is asking and ensures that the entire audience has also clearly understood. The delegate may not have spoken clearly and even though you may have heard you must stop the questions becoming a one to one conversation.

You should have factored time into your presentation for questions; do not allow the session to overrun. At the required time thank the audience and offer to take any further questions ‘off-line’ after the presentation.

5.7 - Understanding your audience

We know who your audience is, we know what they want, however there is one more thing which you should be aware of and that is the **audience dynamic**.

The audience dynamic refers to your audience's mood and body language during your presentation. It is important to watch for changes in the audience as you speak. You will be looking for signs that they are bored or irritated:

- **Are they becoming bored?** – yawning, shuffling papers or reading something else, basically not paying attention to you or the presentation
- **Are they becoming irritated?** – crossed arms, whispering or talking between delegates, people walking out

The signs will usually start subtly and then increase. The challenge is to do something about the changing dynamic when you first see it. If it is boredom, is this something to do with you? (Ouch – but we have to consider it!) Try picking up the pace; perhaps try asking a question of the audience with a show of hands or similar to get them interacting.

If it is irritation, and this is generally rare, you need to weigh up what may be causing the issue. Were there any items you were aware of in your preparation which may cause an issue with the audience? Again you may do well to move on in your content or, if the issue is not going away, to close the presentation early.

Generally good preparation will prevent these issues, however you are ready if you have an unexpected issue.

5.8 - Scripting Techniques

Unless you are a very rare speaker, and you really know your subject inside out, you will need to prepare some form of script for your presentation. Scripts:

- ensure you cover all of the content you intend to within a presentation
- give you structure and a running order for the points you are going to cover
- act as an aid to your memory while you present.

The only thing a script is not is a script.

Okay, that is a weird statement, however when you present you should be spending your time interacting with the audience; you cannot do this and read a script. The audience will soon guess you are reading the content word for word and will often wonder why you didn't just send the copy to them and save the time of attending the presentation!

You need to know enough of your content and your presentation to be able to have a few words which you can say about each slide somewhat 'off the cuff'. You have two ways to remember what to say: the content of your slides and your cue cards.

5.9 – Creating Cue Cards

On the last I told you that you should not have a script; what you need to develop is a set of simple cards which cover the main points you want to cover on each slide:

The cue cards should be quite small (A5 index card or less) with clear text. The contents should not be a full script for the slide, but bullet points or facts which you wish to ensure that you cover at this point in the presentation.

Write the cards out clearly (or print using a nice large font you can glance at quickly) and then punch a hole in the top left hand corner and attach them together with a treasury tag. Attaching them together is important – just think what would happen if you dropped them and got them out of order!

You should then place them in front of you (or hold them in your hand) and practice glancing at the contents. This, with the pictures or text on the slide, should be all you need.

5.10 – Rehearsing

A good rehearsal can be a great way to ensure that you are comfortable with your presentation and script. There are two main types of rehearsal: mirror and in-situ.

Mirror Rehearsals

They are called mirror rehearsals for the simple reason that you should find a mirror (full length is best) and practice giving your presentation. You should ensure that you are comfortable with the content (cut and change as required – it is easier here than on stage!) and also that you are interacting with the audience.

Make sure that you are looking up and keeping eye contact with the audience (you, in this case). You should ensure you are not just reading your cue cards. If you are, you need to ensure that you practise using them until they are second nature.

Note – you can replace the mirror with a video camera if you wish, however this can lack the instant feedback you get from looking yourself in the eyes.

In-situ Rehearsals

This is the ultimate luxury, but one you should try to afford yourself. This is to get to the venue early and have a chance to practice on stage with the live presentation.

Mirror rehearsals are great for practice at home before the event; you should ensure you are happy with the content and that you know what you will be speaking about. In-situ rehearsals give you an opportunity to ensure you are comfortable with the venue and equipment. Where will I be standing, how do I move on slides, where do I walk on and off the stage?

Combining the two types of rehearsal will ensure you have both the presentation content and the technology under your control and you will be ready to knock them dead!

5.10 – Section Review

In this section we have started to build our effective presentation. We have:

- learnt the value of preparation, without preparing too much!
- found out about the needs of our audience: who they are and what they want to hear
- asked the crucial questions about the presentation: we know the audience, we are prepared and we read the body language for any issues
- learnt when to ask for questions and how to deal with them
- understood the difference between a script and cue cards
- understood how to rehearse.

SECTION 11 – Press Interviews

11	Press Interviews
11.1	Introduction
11.2	Preparing for press interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your subject • Know the angle • Be ready for possible traps • Be concise, be ready with your ‘killer quote’
11.3	Being a good interview subject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be concise • Be accurate • Be ready with your ‘killer quote’
11.4	Negative Press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to turn a negative to a positive • Creating a risk register
11.5	When ‘No Comment’ can work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to give a positive response to a situation
11.6	Section Overview

11.1 – Introduction

The printed media can be a vitally important outlet for information for your organisation. There are many types of media within the press arena, for example:

- national newspapers
- regional newspapers
- trade press
- magazines

Each type will have different requirements and characteristics and, if you have the opportunity, it is worth you taking the time to review samples of each before you give an interview in order that you have a better idea of what is required.

If you are willing to work with journalists and give them what they need you are more likely to get a more positive response and be contacted again to support other pieces they

may be working on, so following some of the next simple techniques may prove to be very useful.

11.2 – Preparing for press interviews

It is important to state that you need to be fully prepared before you undertake a press interview. You should ensure:

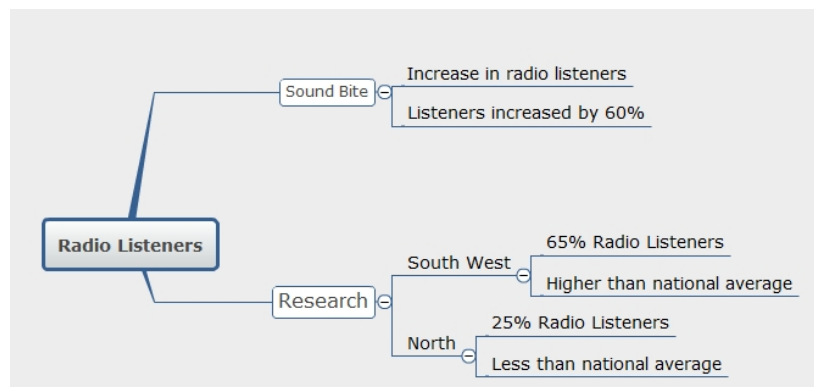
- **I know the subject** – You are ready to answer questions about the subject matter which is being requested. Do not fall into the trap of accepting the interview if you are not fully versed in the subject and, importantly, the company line.
- **I know the company line** – What is the accepted and agreed position on the subject that is being requested? In the case of negative press this could be a damage limitation exercise. If it is a story following one of your own press releases you need to ensure that you follow the objectives which were set out for the release.
- **I have permission to speak** – Are you authorised to make a comment on behalf of the organisation on this subject. There can be serious ramifications for your career or the organisation if you give an interview without permission

In addition to these you need to know what angle the journalist wants. This can be very difficult as often they will not wish to reveal what the story is in detail, and you need to be aware of any traps there may be if the journalist wishes to make the story more newsworthy by turning the subject matter to their advantage. Generally you will not encounter any issues, however be aware of any unexpected questions and be ready to politely close an interview if you feel that it is going in a direction which you are unhappy with.

11.3 - Being a good interview subject

Now that you are fully prepared for your interview, you should have the information you need at your fingertips. It is useful to have prepared a sheet with any of the major facts and figures for the piece written down in order that you can accurately reference information.

Personally I use a mind map whenever I am preparing an interview. A mind map has an advantage over a list in that you can quickly flit between subject areas as the interview progresses.



There are two major factors to bear in mind when you are being interviewed for any media: be concise and be accurate. With the exception of major magazine pieces, you will generally have more content than there is space to include in any article and so you need to be sure that you deliver information in a way which will allow you to get all of the important points across. Using your mind map (or whatever tool you wish to use), make sure you have a short statement for each major area. Remember the journalist is likely to write and edit as they require so get your major point out first and then provide any supporting information to follow this up.

Being accurate is vital. As soon as you go into the public domain you run the risk of legal action and damage to you or your organisation's reputation if the information you provide is inaccurate. Be totally sure of any information you have, ensure that you have sources (for example for quotes or research) and be sure to provide these for possible inclusion.

11.4 – Negative Press

Unfortunately there will be times when you are subject to negative press; as the old saying goes, ‘good news does not sell newspapers’. Dealing effectively with possible negative press is vitally important as a good response can actually turn around a negative to a major positive. For example, think of the story of a customer who bought a salad which contained a live frog (in fact a Google search shows that there are many times when this happens!). If the press run the story consider the difference between a response of ‘no comment’ to the more clever response that ‘this shows how fresh the salad is, and that we use no pesticides on our salads’. It is an extreme example, but you can use even negative press to your advantage.

Before you are called by a journalist to comment on a negative story, or have to respond to a published story, you should be aware of any issues that could occur and have some responses ready. You can do this by creating a ‘risk register’ detailing possible issues which could affect your business. For example, if you were an awarding body running public examinations, one risk could be as follows:

Risk	Actions	Press Response
Loss of examination papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify loss • Cancel any affected exams • Apologise to candidates • Reissue papers 	‘We take security of examinations very seriously and therefore have postponed the exam and will issue new papers to ensure that there can be no possible breach. We can only apologise to candidates who have been affected.’

The response above demonstrates the serious nature of the problem and acknowledges that you take it seriously. Having a list of most of your possible problems listed, with both actions you will take and the public response, will save you when a call comes from a journalist either out of office hours or when they are about to go to press and you do not have time to do much else.

11.5 – When ‘No Comment’ can work

There are times, of course, when you cannot respond. As we stated earlier, you should not try to respond to a press article without the full information; don't be too quick to give a response unless you actually know that there is an issue. For example, if you take the lost examination paper situation, you should ensure that this has actually happened before you respond. Make sure this is not inaccuracy on the part of the journalist (do they have the right organisation?) or is it something from a disgruntled customer or competitor. Be sure that you are aware of the problem and it has been proven. If you cannot, you should be open and say ‘we will investigate any breach of security very seriously’. Note in this line you did not confirm or deny that anything had happened, but you have given an assurance that you will deal with anything firmly. Do not confirm something that you are not aware of or seem unsure of what is happening (for example, ‘we are not aware of any breach’), which may make the organisation seem to be inefficient or unsure of what is happening.

There are times when you cannot give an opinion or response. This will be particularly important when you have possible legal issues. If there is any possibility that comments may affect a court case or police investigation then you need to be ready to state that you cannot comment at this time for legal reasons.

The bottom line is to not just hide behind ‘no comment’, which can seem to a reader to be a refusal to respond to the issue. Many times a ‘no comment’ response happens just because an organisation does not have a system for responding effectively to the press. Make sure you have clearly published press contacts, and be ready to be responsive, and in most cases you will have the opportunity to give your side of the story.

11.6 – Section Overview

In this section we have learnt about press interviews and how to ensure you get your message across. We have:

- shared techniques to ensure that you are prepared for your interview
- learnt how to be a good interview subject
- learnt how to deal with negative press
- understood when to use ‘no comment’.