



Міністерство та Комітет
цифрової трансформації
України

Getting Business Benefit from Big Media Exposure

Winter 2023

Version 1.0

Agenda

- Basic concepts – what you need to know
- Crafting your overall messages
- Preparing for the interview
- During the interview
- After the interview
- Avoiding temptation
- Summary

BASIC CONCEPTS

Let's Talk About (Big Media) Journalists

- What they want:
 - ✓ A fresh story or angle – that their competitors do not already have...
 - ✓ And that will impress their editors and colleagues
 - ✓ Get them great **placements** and visibility
 - ✓ The facts – accurate, explained and contextualized in an easy to understand, compelling way
 - ✓ Your co-operation- to get the above two things
- What they **do not** want:
 - ✓ “No comment” – walking away from talking to you emptyhanded
 - ✓ Ignorance – your wasting their time talking about things you obviously don't know about
 - ✓ Ignoring their needs – they have deadlines to meet, information they need to bring their editors



Let's Talk About (Big Media) Journalists

- What they are:
 - ✓ **Powerful** – they are the gatekeeper to what their editors (and ultimately the public) get to see
 - ✓ **Influential** – even a fairly small mention in an important international publication can generate substantial opportunity
 - ✓ **Biased** – whether it's political bias or some other kind, clinical objectivity cannot be assumed
 - ✓ **Under pressure** – big media is a highly competitive business; there are many fewer professional reporters than was once the case
 - ✓ **Human** – can have good days and bad days like anyone else, and want to advance their careers
- What they generally *are not*:
 - ✓ Deep subject matter experts – their *métier* is journalism, not the different topics they cover
 - ✓ Your friends – they may want to build longer term relationships with you, but most often as a source rather than as a genuine friend

Let's Talk About Journalists

- What they will always have:
 - ✓ The last word
 - ✓ The power to distort, spin or misinterpret with little oversight
- Substantial control of the raw story content, but...
 - ✓ Little or no control of headlines
 - ✓ Or of the editing process – what content gets left on the chopping block
 - ✓ Nor of how much space they get
 - ✓ Or *where* they get it (e.g. home page online, front page of newspaper section vs buried N many links down or in a middle page)



CRAFTING YOUR OVERALL MESSAGE

What is Positioning?



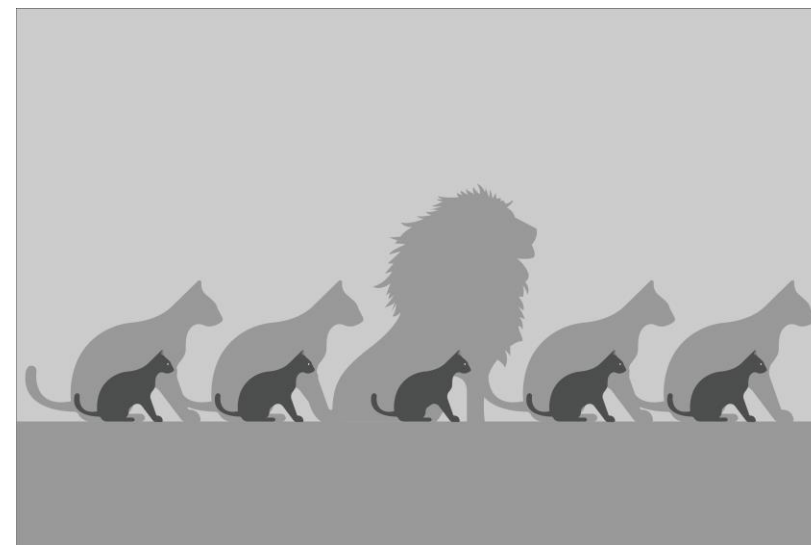
- "Positioning" refers to staking out your (hopefully) unique position in the market
 - ✓ By adding enough qualifiers you can usually claim a unique position – for example "the lowest cost loitering munitions in Ukraine with a payload capacity > X" = in Ukraine, we are the least expensive way to create a big BOOM
 - ✓ Positioning often includes attributes like size / power, cost, target users, target usages, speed, quality (e.g. ease of use, safety or durability)
- A good way to think about it is that it's like occupying a position in part so as to deny it to others who might want it
 - ✓ For example, you want the booth in the best location at the tradeshow so that the most attendees will see your booth – and not that of your competitors

Determine Your Positioning

- You cannot be everything to everyone – *do not try!*
- Success in media comes from having an authentic, distinct, and interesting identity, along with the ability to communicate very effectively in your subject areas
- You will never be alone in your category
 - ✓ Think of alternatives your customers can choose among as defining an ad hoc category
- But you can still meaningfully differentiate yourself from others in your category. This is called **positioning**.
- Positioning should not change frequently

Categories

- Journalists and others will categorize you, whether you like it or not
- But you can try to sell them on your version of the breakdown of your market. For example:
 - ✓ You can create a subcategory based on an important capability or distinction
- You will never be alone in your category...and you do not want to be:
 - ✓ Where there is obvious opportunity, there will be competition
 - ✓ Where there is no competition there is not (yet) a market
- Unless you define an emerging category, with your company as its pioneer.
Risks:
 - ✓ “*Early/emerging*” can quickly turn into a perception of “*lost*”
 - ✓ The first pioneer who attracts any attention usually ends up with many arrows in their back as the status quo fights back



To Best Position, Ask Yourself Hard Questions

- In what way(s) am I *realistically* – or can I be – different from other companies in my category? For example:
 - ✓ We communicate complex ideas very effectively to the average person
 - ✓ With well-executed graphics, videos, visualizations, text, etc.
 - ✓ We have available – and provide – valuable data to reporters that others do not
 - ✓ We get newsworthy information faster than others do
 - ✓ Our spokesman has some unusual desirable property for the category
 - ✓ For example, speaking colloquial American English really well
 - ✓ Business-wise, we do interesting things that others in our category do not
 - ✓ We are in charge of something larger than ourselves, like an association, standard committee, etc.
 - ✓ We have accomplishments that others do not **AND** that the average person can be made to understand
 - ✓ We have (or will have) game changing technology, likewise



While Keeping in Mind....

- Success is very often – and quickly – copied by others
 - ✓ If no barriers stop or slow them down
- Sustainability of differentiation a key consideration
- Ideally therefore, the “secret sauce” should be something that it is core to your company, your identity, your founders
- Good positioning rarely lasts forever... but it can last a long time, if properly selected and consistently executed
- Lying or gross exaggeration may sometimes be tempting but you must resist the temptation
 - ✓ A journalist who feels tricked can do you a lot of harm
 - ✓ However, slight exaggeration is called marketing
 - ✓ Speculation is fine if clearly presented as such



Project confidence

- Positioning isn't only about the here and now, *but also about the future*
- Talking about your aspirations is critical. It tells the reporter important things about you and your company
 - ✓ Reporters understand that there are no guarantees in life, only intentions – which themselves can change over time in unforeseen ways
- Sometimes, a compelling vision can itself become a big story
 - ✓ For example, building the first “transformer” drone capable of multiple modes of locomotion
- **IMPORTANT:** Reporters understandably don't want to write about a company that they are afraid won't last
 - ✓ They want to be seen as choosing winners



Positioning Your Products

- Experienced reporters all understand that no product is the best in every regard – for example, more features almost always equates to more cost.
 - ✓ Different products are also typically optimized for somewhat different use cases, assumptions, and/or customers
- Therefore, never say “*our product is best*” but rather “*our product is best FOR...*”
 - ✓ *Payloads less than X*
 - ✓ *Reconnaissance*
 - ✓ *For stealth*
 - ✓ *Bang for buck*
- If you have a “**secret sauce**”, lead with it



Talking About Competitors

- Be prepared with a list of companies you consider competitive
 - ✓ Remember: competitive = customer might buy it instead of your product
- Position yourself against them if appropriate in the context
 - ✓ Often the reporter will just ask to see if they get a real answer, unless your market is their beat
- In almost all cases, you should avoid saying anything directly negative about a competitor
 - ✓ In fact, it's often good to say something *positive* about a strong competitor as it projects confidence
 - ✓ The few exceptions include the case in which bad things are already known about the competitor, or where there is a public dispute

PREPARATION

Initial Preparation

- Be sure you understand the context in front of you – what the reporter and his/her bosses are looking for from you. Simply ask.
 - ✓ The particular story they will be looking for most often will be related to a **news hook** for which you can provide a valuable perspective, *not* a story about your company. *This is almost always the case with smaller companies.*
 - ✓ Know the interest area of the reporter – what kinds of things does he normally write about? The publication?
 - ✓ There are several possible reasons why a reporter is contacting you; a story is not always imminent
- Determine your **specific** objectives according to the situation
 - ✓ You maximize your gain by optimizing your message to the current context



News Hook Example

- Was it a submersible drone that hit the Russian bridge to Crimea?
- Front page story about important real-world event, with interesting technology angle
- Reporters want credible, authoritative, clearly expressed information:
 - ✓ About the technical possibilities
 - ✓ About whether or not it was indeed done by a drone
 - ✓ And if so, what type of drone exactly?
- **IMPORTANT:** News hooks have finite lifespans. Most become stale quickly, so reporters will reach out to sources they already know to be good to get insight as quickly as possible.

Intersecting your story and THE story

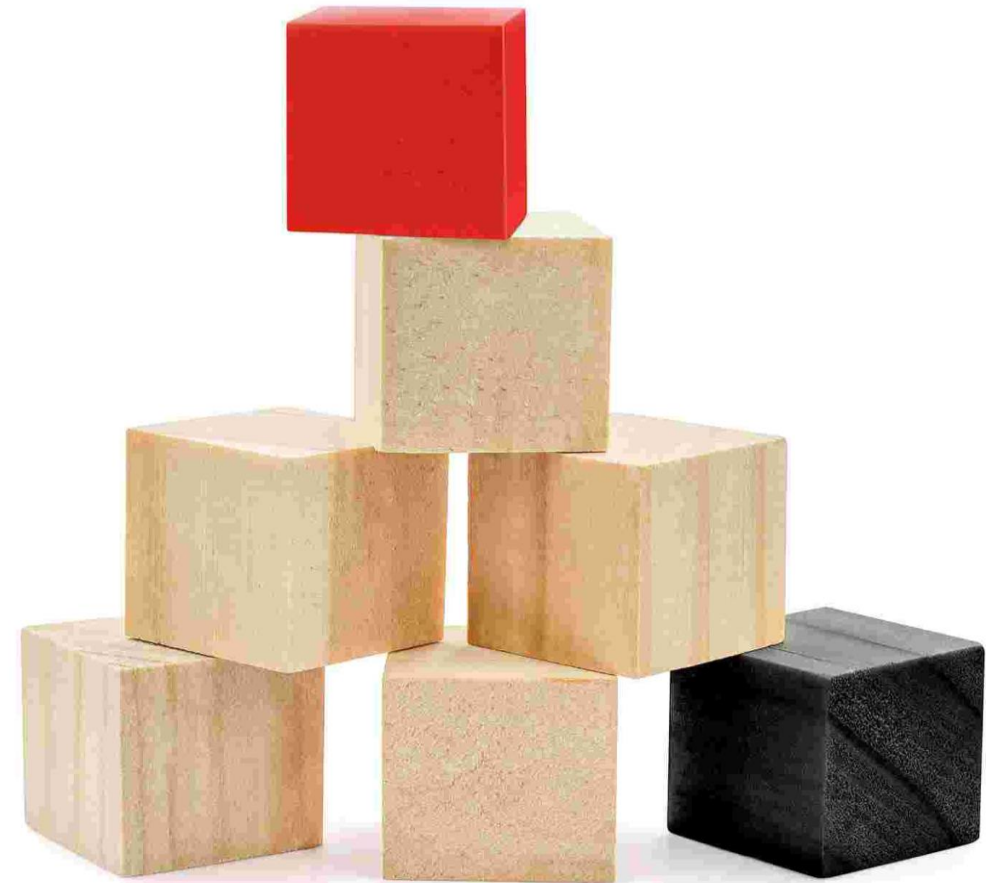
- Best case: you or your company are directly involved in the news hook story
- Even if not you can very often find some connection:
 - ✓ Personal connection to a location
 - ✓ You have given thought to this type of event
 - ✓ Your product(s) could have helped...
 - ✓ Or a future product will in such cases
 - ✓ You had a similar experience
 - ✓ If not you, one of your staff or family

Possible Reporter Motivations

1. To learn about a new area – for example, if recently reassigned
2. To acquire deep background – necessary process when investigating a complex and/or developing story, or series of stories
3. To build relationships for future – ambitious reporters try to build up personal networks in any subject area in which they are interested.
4. For a possible non-event-driven interest story – all media need a supply of *non-news-hook* stories for slower news days.
5. Short term story related to a news hook – most common
6. Preparation for a potential future story – for example, “Drone Valley”
7. Research for a series of related stories – very large news hook with many interrelated aspects of interest to the public

Keep your expectations reasonable

- Only 1 of the 7 logical alternatives can possibly involve a story about you
- And only 2 lead directly to a quote, mention, TV/radio appearance etc.
- Individual stories get delayed for many different reasons – superseded by larger stor(ies), journalist or editor reassigned, editor priorities change, etc.
 - ✓ Know that delay often means death
- But remember that each big media appearance can generate significant business benefit



Example Interest Areas of a Journalist

- Technical and military innovation
- Investment opportunities in advanced military tech
- Mapping your respective market sector
- Your company's particular challenges and plans
- Your prognosis for the war, an eventual ceasefire, etc.

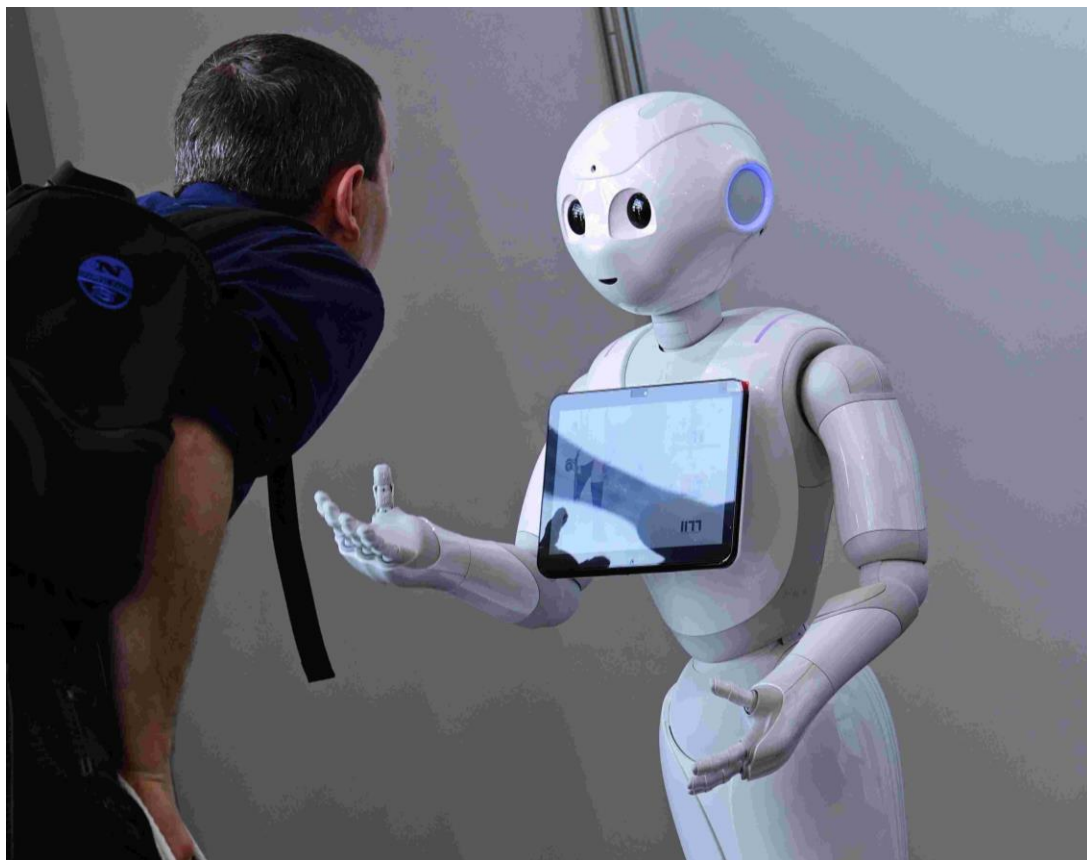
What Value You Get

- Worst probable case:
 - ✓ Experience talking to reporters – it’s like anything else: most people improve with practice
 - ✓ Build a positive relationship with a reporter that may bear fruit later
 - ✓ You can often learn useful things from talking to good reporters
- Best case:
 - ✓ You get quoted or mentioned in one or more stories
 - ✓ Which then are picked up by other publications
 - ✓ You become the default “go to guy” for stories in your area of interest
- Realistically, the maximum amount of time you will ever spend talking to reporters is limited. So it’s nearly always a good use of time for what you get in return.

How to Optimize?

Scenario	Objective
Reporter education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frame the reporter's understanding such that he understands why your differentiation – what you do – matters• Build the relationship
Deep background	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strive to become an important source: Provide value to the reporter by offering access to others in your network who will provide complementary perspectives while reinforcing your core positioning
Building a personal network	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similarly, but focus on the upwardly mobile people who share your general philosophy and are relevant to the reporter's interest
Interest story	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain why specifically you and/or your company would be interesting to their audience
News hook story (any size)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present yourself as a highly credible and authoritative source• Inform yourself to the extent possible about the particular news hook• Get quoted or mentioned: have soundbites ready that help secure this outcome
Pursuing story about possible future event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep an eye on movements related to the possible event of interest – remain informed• Pass interesting, non-confidential items to the reporter

Talking Points



- You should always have 3-5 key points that you would *ideally* like to get across during the interview:
 - ✓ Fewer than 3 looks like you have nothing interesting to say
 - ✓ More than 5 won't be remembered – and certainly won't survive the editing process
- However, you should never try to insert a talking point in the conversation when it would be a real non-sequitur.
 - ✓ Journalists want to feel that they are **engaging in an authentic conversation with you**, and not that anyone who walks through the door will get the same auto-responses
- The selection of talking points is bound to the **context of the interview**. For example, you may always want to talk about your latest product release, but it may have nothing to do with the story that the journalist is pursuing.

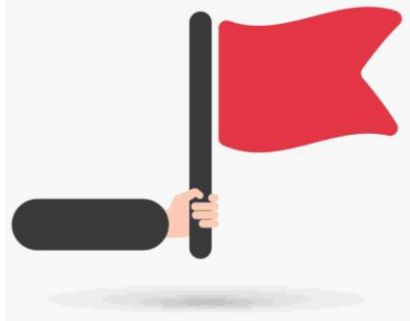
Make the Talking Points your Friends

- Think of the talking points as "Island of Safety":
 - ✓ Get very comfortable with them. Commit them to memory and return to them to the extent reasonably possible.
 - ✓ Saying something twice if the second time is clearly to indicate emphasis, is totally fine
- Each talking point should be a well-articulated thought
- No talking point is complete without supportive information such as concrete examples, anecdotes, historical comparisons, statistics, analogies – or a good soundbite.
 - ✓ A touch of humor is helpful in the vast majority of story contexts



A little Repetition is Okay – Two Strategies

- Flagging:



- “I’ve said it before...”
- “Let me emphasize that”
- “Don’t lose sight of the fact”
- “It’s important to understand...”

- Bridging:



- “That is an interesting question. Let me remind you though...”
- “What’s important to remember, however...”
- “What I really want to talk to you about is...”
- “That’s not my area of expertise, but I can tell you that...”

About Soundbites

- A great one can last for decades – literally – and can have real impact
- It does the work for the reporter of capturing a complicated subject in an easy to understand, memorable way
 - ✓ And better yet, generates lots of clicks as people view the article or transcript so as to grab the soundbite
- For example, this one is now easily recognized all over the world:

*“The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride.”
– President Volodymyr Zelenskiy*

- Truly great soundbites are rare, but even good ones may help ensure that you get quoted



Anticipate the Questions



Prepare for the worst case, just in case:

- Almost everyone has a question or two they just really do not want to be asked. For example:
 - ✓ “Didn’t your product just finish in sixth place in such-and-so well-known contest?”
 - or
 - ✓ “Why did you settle the lawsuit if you are saying that you didn’t do anything wrong?”

Remember:

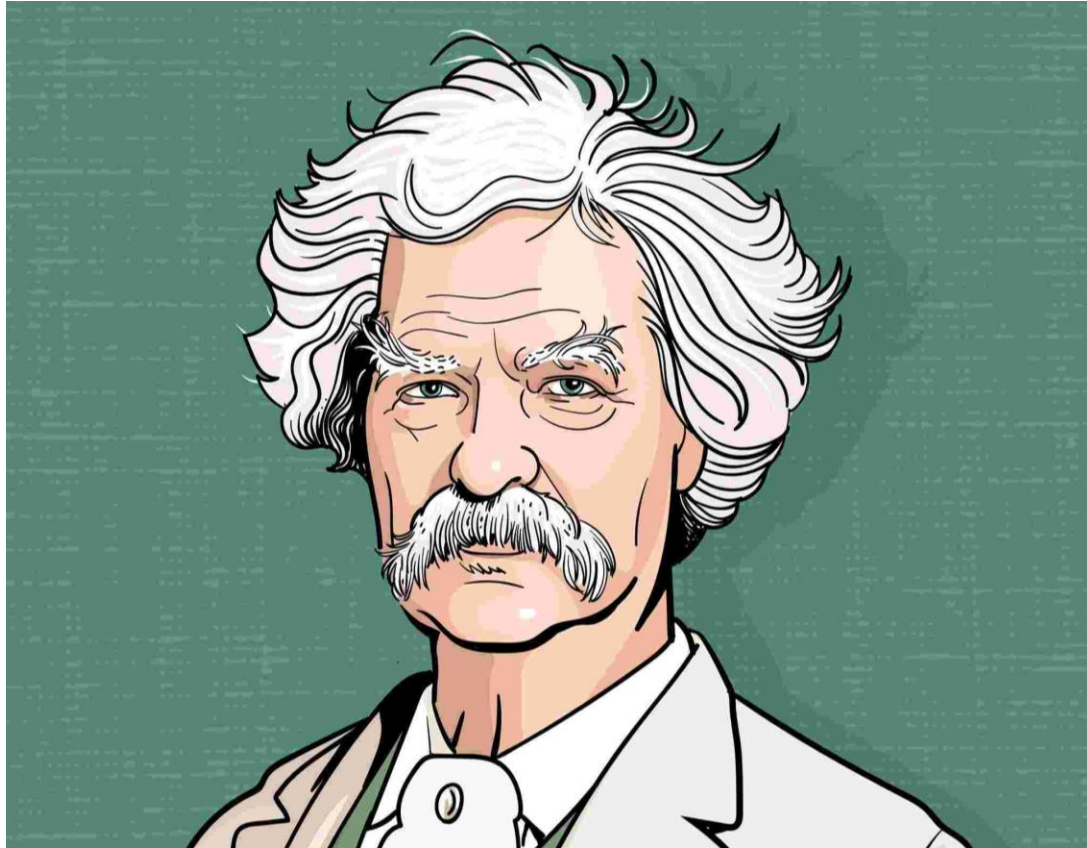
“The questions don’t do the damage. Only the answers do.” – Sam Donaldson, ABC News (Famous American Anchorman)

Rehearsing Is Important

- Having a colleague play the journalist play the reporter and ask you questions will help you
- Time your answers, even if just practicing yourself
 - ✓ It's a great reality check, especially for live TV or radio
- Rehearse until you feel at ease with the *particular* talking points for the particular interview
- Get comfortable with different forms of saying *"I don't know, but I can try to find out."*
- This kind of preparation pays rich dividends



Proven Advice



“It usually takes 3 weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech”

Mark Twain (famous American writer of Scottish origin)

If TV or video...

- Keep in mind the importance of eye contact with the reporter
- Try not to slouch; body language is important
- TV interviews may involve bright lights that generate a noticeable amount of heat. Don't dress too warmly.
 - ✓ Lots of sweat is just not a good look for anyone! (*click the image to see*)
- Do not wear clothing with patterns in different colors as these can generate Moiré patterns on screen. Solid colors are safest.
- If an interview not in a TV studio, try to remove distractions during the interview that can cause you to involuntarily look elsewhere



mark zuckerberg



Mark Zuckerberg Privacy Interview

AVOID TEMPTATION

Speaking “Off the Record” and while mics are still “On”

- Generally, it’s a **VERY** bad idea
 - ✓ Once you’ve said something, you are now 100% reliant on not only the ethics of the given journalist but also his editor
 - ✓ You basically have no recourse, if they quote (or misquote) you
- However, there are a few exceptions to this rule:
 - ✓ A journalist with a long reputation for not revealing sources or being accused of abusing “off the record” comments *may* be okay
 - ✓ If you already have a trusted relationship with the reporter
 - ✓ You feel a moral need to do so
 - ✓ In reality, if you are “outed” it will do you little harm
- Nonetheless, you should **NEVER** say sensitive something off the record unless you have identified a clear and compelling business motivation for doing so. *(click the image to see)*

YouTube PL

obama and medvedev



OBAMA-MEDVEDEV
EXCHANGE CAUGHT ON OPEN MIC



Less is Often More

- Don't be tempted to fill dead air
- Don't blurt out lots of information quickly (*click the image to see*)
 - ✓ Better to leave something for the next interview
 - ✓ It can make you appear nervous
 - ✓ Be especially careful about not speaking too quickly if not speaking in a language in which you are fluent, and/or if many in the audience are not fluent
- It's good to briefly pause after a key point to let it sink in



too fast



Strabane man

Err on the side of conservatism

- Don't lie
 - You have a higher chance of getting caught than you think
- Don't bluff
 - Ditto
- Don't grossly exaggerate or promote
 - Remember that everyone expects you to say how great your products are, so you aren't adding any value to the reporter or the audience by doing so
 - If you really can't resist the temptation, infuse the answer with some humor (e.g. "Of course I think my product is the best").

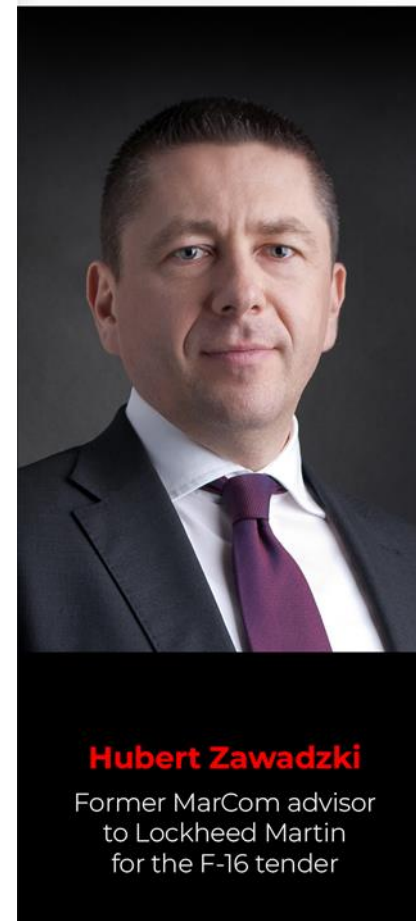
AFTER THE INTERVIEW

A good closing matters

- Thank the journalist for his time
- Offer your availability for any additional questions
- Email or text any action items you have undertaken, for example:
 - ✓ Getting the answer to a particular question
 - ✓ Providing a requested introduction or contact info
 - ✓ Actual follow through – or not – will be remembered
- Do not chase the reporter for another interview unless you have a really important, new message

About the Presenters

- **Elizabeth Charnock** has been profiled in publications including the New York Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Der Spiegel, The Economist, Fortune, Forbes, and many others.
- **Hubert Zawadzki** was responsible for Marketing & Communications for Lockheed Martin in Poland during the \$3.5 billion dollar tender won by the F-16.



About this Educational Series



- Chenope in collaboration with the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine is producing a series of training modules oriented towards technical CEO's of startups and other small to medium technology companies to help provide them the skills to expand and thrive beyond Ukraine.
- Updates and new modules may be found at:
www.miltechstartupservices.com