

Handling TV appearances

By Amy Battell Crane



context, I turned to media training expert [Sandra Beckwith](#). Her comments alternate with mine.

The Prep

In the 26 hours between the e-mail from my editor and my actual appearance via a remote feed from a public television studio in Erie, Pa., I fielded a number of phone calls from the Bankrate.com PR folks and a producer at MSNBC.

While I had done a couple of live radio interviews and a number of print interviews, I'd never been on TV, local or national. I did discuss the main talking points with the producer on Friday morning, but I didn't have much time to actually go over my stories or my notes on bankruptcy reform or really have much time to think about what points I wanted to make.

When you are dealing with complex topics, as many financial topics are, the key thing to remember is that you won't have a lot of time and so you have to clearly define what are the most important one or two points that you want to make. Write them down and bring them to the studio with you. Even better, do some role-playing and practice in advance. And many times with national media, they need you now, so there isn't a lot of time to prepare, so it's good to role play just to get used to it even if you don't have an interview scheduled.

— [Sandra Beckwith](#)

Although I did get some rudimentary guidance on the focus of the interview, I had no idea what to wear. I realize

The chance to appear on national television doesn't come around every day, especially when you're a fairly obscure writer who lives pretty far from New York City. But it did happen, and I'm here to share what I learned through my 15—well, it was more like three—minutes of fame.

Let's start at the beginning. I'm a freelance writer who covers investing and personal finance as well as practice management issues for the financial planning profession. In the past six years, I've developed a fair amount of self-taught expertise on these topics.

I cover a wide variety of topics, and

it was actually a couple of assignments on a new-to-me topic that netted me an appearance as an expert on MSNBC-TV. My editor at the consumer finance Web site Bankrate.com assigned me a story about the new bankruptcy law in late summer. By the end of September, I'd written three stories on the subject and felt fairly conversant with the ins and outs of this complex topic.

So when my editor e-mailed me in October to see if I'd be interested in being on TV, I thought "why not?" I didn't realize that I'd actually be doing the interview itself a little more than 24 hours later. To put my experience in

this is more of a problem for women than men, but still, it's an issue. I wanted to look professional but not stuffy and didn't have time to research appropriate wear for TV. So I ended up wearing a melon-colored sleeveless turtleneck with a patterned jacket and small earrings with no other jewelry.

With clothes, you want to focus on simple and appropriate. For guys, that usually means a suit jacket and a tie, so if you are wearing a polo shirt to work you need time to run home and get changed. For women, keep it simple especially when it comes to accessories like jewelry and scarves. You want people looking at your face, not your big earrings or the scarf wrapped dramatically around your throat. Avoid white, since the camera light bounces off it and makes you look pale. Solid dark colors are usually a good bet; cream or ivory is a good alternative to white. Don't wear busy patterns or plaids.—SB

As if clothes weren't enough to worry about, I fretted about makeup or the lack thereof. I hate makeup, but even I've heard that makeup is necessary on TV. I had no idea if there was any

make up at the studio or anyone to help me there with makeup, so I ended up making up myself before I went to the studio, just to be on the safe side. This turned out to be a good decision since their "green room" was about the size of a closet with a mirror and a few make-up supplies on a small counter.

It's difficult to persuade men to wear make-up on TV, but it really makes a difference for both men and women. You need heavy makeup for TV, makeup that would make you look like a clown off camera. You need foundation, blush, eyebrow pencils, lipstick and more so you don't look like a ghost.—SB

On Camera

When I entered the studio, I was placed in a chair on a platform in front of a camera. I was given an earpiece and had a microphone pinned to my lapel. The cameraman asked me whether I wanted the monitor turned on during the interview or not. At first, I said yes, but right before we went on the air I told him to turn it off, because I thought it would be too

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Books

Streetwise Complete Publicity Plans: How to Create Publicity That Will Spark Media Exposure and Excitement, by Sandra Beckwith (Adams Media Corporation, 2003). Available via www.sandrabeckwith.com

Building Buzz, by Marisa D'Vari (Career Press, 2005)

Web sites, Articles and Reports

Media Training Tips: Maximizing Your Media Moment
ezinearticles.com/?Media-Training-Tips:-Maximising-Your-Media-Moment&id=29421

How to Establish Yourself as the Expert of Choice with Free Media Placement
Available with subscription to free newsletter
www.deg.com

Television Media Tips

www.mediatrainingworldwide.com/media-tips.htm

FPA CAN HELP WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

When you receive that urgent call from an editor or reporter, don't hesitate to turn to FPA's media relations team for assistance. They can help you prepare for an interview in a number of ways, including:

- Helping you identify three key messages
- Conducting mock interviews
- Offering tips on what to wear and how to conduct a successful live or taped television or radio interview
- Providing insight on the topic, including Journal of Financial Planning articles, consumer resources or general information

Additionally, FPA's media relations staff can review and provide feedback on draft press releases; identify local media who are interested in financial planning topics; and provide you with several customizable template press releases and letters. Members may also subscribe to FPA's *Financial Planning Perspectives* (FPP) article series. Addressing timely financial planning topics affecting consumers today, FPPs are a quick, easy and cost-effective way for members to promote the financial planning process to the local media. To learn more about FPPs, visit www.fpanet.org/products/fpp_intro.cfm.

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distracting. It was difficult to concentrate on looking attentively into the camera, smiling and cogently answering questions at the same time.

Doing a remote interview is probably the hardest kind—you have to maintain eye contact with the camera and answer questions from someone who isn't even in the room. If you are doing the interview in a studio with a host, always look at the host, not the camera. You will look much better and it's easier to relax when you are focusing on a person rather than a camera. —SB

Besides my eyes, I had to figure out what to do with my hands and posture. You wouldn't think sitting in a chair talking to someone about a topic you are well versed in would be so complicated, but trust me, it is.

When you are in front of a camera you need to look overly animated because it tends to drain your energy. Talk with your hands, the way you normally do in conversations. Sit straight up on the edge of your chair, don't lean back—if you don't, you will look droopy and tired. And even if the topic

is a serious one, as many financial subjects are, remember to smile. Consumers don't want to look at someone who looks like they are lecturing; they are attracted to a friendly face even when the topic is serious. And you want to be appealing, because you want to be asked back as a return guest. —SB

In the end, I'd have to say the 26-hour scramble was worth it. I sent an e-mail out to my distribution list of friends, clients and potential clients and got a lot of positive feedback, even from people who weren't able to watch. I updated my Web site with the information about the TV appearance right away and believe the experience of appearing on national TV enhances my credibility as a writer, expert and speaker. I would do it again in a heartbeat and know it will be easier next time because I have a much better idea of what to expect.

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Who says video killed the radio star?

By Beau Ballinger

Financial planning has long been a profession of service, and for some advisers that service extends beyond their client base. Today more and more financial planners are hosting radio shows in their communities. But it's not as easy as it looks—or sounds.

You may be exceptional at consulting your clients in the privacy of your office, but that doesn't mean you're cut out for show business. However, starting your

own radio show might just be the next logical step in your career. Before you make a decision here are some issues to consider:

Make the commitment

Don't get involved if you're not planning for the long-term. Most radio shows take at least a year to get on their feet, so if you don't commit, you won't see the payback. You must be willing to give time and money to help your show succeed. If you are already struggling with the demands of your work life, launching a radio show is the last thing you'll want to consider.

"I look forward to each week," said Aubrey Morrow, CFP®, of Financial Designs in San Diego, who started hosting in 1985. "The shows are 99 percent ad lib. Either you know the business or you don't. Topics come easy—we simply emphasize the need for personal financial planning and rotate the six steps of the process."