

HOW TO GET AND DO TV INTERVIEWS

by Rich Strelak

R&J Productions

Las Vegas, NV



How many of you have that one attraction in your market that always seems to get all the TV interviews? Why?

Sometimes it is political, that haunt might be a big advertiser or they know someone at the station. Sometimes the station is just lazy, "... hey who was that guy we interviewed last year?" Having a TV interview can be not only one of the cheapest promotions (FREE!) but one of the most effective. So how do you do it?

Every market is different. There is no one right answer or one magic phrase that will guarantee you an interview. There are however a few steps you can take to hopefully give you a shot and things you can do to hopefully put you in the position of the "go-to" person for Halloween.

Preparation

It starts NOW. You need to have a contact list of every station in your market. You need to know the RIGHT person to contact. Knowing a reporter maybe helpful but will he or she even *be* at that station in October? Many reporters do not have the luxury of determining their assignments. Maybe you need to know the program director, station manager, news division chief or even the Vice President of the station. So how do you meet these people? You start by asking questions and meeting people.

My wife/partner never lets an opportunity go by. No matter where we are, she is always talking to people and asking them where they work, what they do and when they reciprocate and ask what she does she tells them we own a haunted attraction. That is a sure conversation starter! You would be surprised how many people know the people *you* need to know. The only way to get to those key individuals might just be through his neighbor that you just happen to meet at a friend's party! You will never find out until you ask. Remember the principal of "Six Degrees of Separation"? Psychologist Stanley Milgram in the 1960's theorized that any one person is connected to any other person on this planet by six acquaintances!! There is even a popular internet game called the Oracle of Kevin Bacon that links ANY actor to Kevin Bacon in less than six degrees.

<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/oracle/> (Try it! I can't get more than a Bacon Number of 3!) In a small community environment you will likely have 2 maybe 3 degrees of separation. So there is a likely chance you will run into someone who knows the person you need to get to...IF you ask questions!

When talking to people at any function ALWAYS hand out your business card and ask for theirs. Jot a few pertinent notes on the back to jog your memory. Then make sure to follow up! Call them in a few days, "Hi Bob, this is Rich with the haunted house, we

spoke at the mixer? Did you have a chance to talk to Fred at WXYZ? You wouldn't happen to have his number would you?" That business card has become invaluable!

How do you make sure that *you* are remembered and they keep *your* business card? You make it valuable. In conversation you will learn if they have either been to your attraction or not. Either way, I invite them to come out as my guest. I take my business card and write, "Good for 2 VIP tickets to the Asylum" and sign the back. That business card now has a value!! Not just two tickets but two VIP tickets!!! The added value will insure that he will not lose your card and number and maybe even feel a little obligated to set you up with his friend.

So between now and September you work on developing and continually updating this contact list. To assist you it is important to keep your web site, phone number, email, etc. all up to date and current. No telling when this person might need pertinent information to help sell the idea of an interview. If your web site has enough interesting pictures that portray the quality of your show, selling the idea of an interview could be quite simple.



How CLOSE can they get???

As September approaches you need to contact the people on your list and remind them of your existence. To help secure an interview you need what is known in the business as "a hook". What puts you apart from other attractions in your area? What is "news worthy" about your attraction? Is there a new addition to your show? A special guest? A new program? A new location? You make this information known to the stations well in advance of your season. You must make yourself "TV Friendly".

How do you make yourself "TV Friendly"? TV crews have special needs. The more of these needs that you can meet, the higher the likelihood is that they will interview you.

- Make sure that power is easily accessible for the camera. Many times you are squeezed in between several other assignments and the batteries are dead.
- Have photogenic areas of your attraction easily accessible. If you do not have a killer façade that can be used as a backdrop to do the interview, have a cool looking room right near an exit. You don't want to have the crew lug equipment halfway through your attraction.
- Easy location. If your attraction is located near major highways it is easier for a crew to stop off from another assignment. If they have to drive 10 or 15 minutes from a major arterial, they most likely will go somewhere else.
- Easy access. Make sure your attraction has arrangement so that the TV van can drive right up to the front of the attraction. If they have to park and carry equipment very far it infringes on their ability to cover other events so you lose.
- Be available to their schedule. You may have to bring in your crew early or keep people late to accommodate the interview. We got a morning interview where they cut back live every 15 minutes or so for the entire hour and a half of the

morning program. We were the only Haunt willing to have people ready at four in the morning!

- Offer an incentive. Make tickets to your attractions available to the station as a giveaway during the broadcast. The reporter mentions it during the interview, viewers call in to win tickets and your attraction gets mentioned again at the end of the broadcast.

You need to let the station know up front that all of these criteria have been addressed. Then when they need to cover a Halloween Event, yours will be the easiest to do.

The Interview

So you have done your homework. You have contacted the stations and informed them how “TV Friendly” your attraction is. You have a hook, a very good reason why they should interview you instead of XYZ Haunt. They show up for an interview. If it goes well you can establish yourself and make all future interviews easier. If there are too many difficulties, you can expect it to be your last interview! How can we keep them coming back?



Involve the reporter, it's fun and it increases air time

Try to remember that time is money. The longer the crew is there the more it is costing the station or the fewer reports they can cover. There are several different types of segments they can do. While the technical terms for each may differ from station to station or area to area the style and purpose of each remains universal. You need to be ready to service the needs of each type.

- One Spot- in this interview the camera is in one location with an interesting backdrop like your façade or a killer room. In this situation it is usually a reporter who is asking one person questions about the event.
- Morning Shows- in this scenario a series of One Spots are done during an hour and a half to a two hour Morning Program.
- Reporter Involvement- in this case the reporter is the focus of the piece. Maybe the weatherman reports the weather in front of your attraction or a reporter participates in your attraction and tapes his involvement.
- Voice Over Spots- In this situation a reporter may not have been available so they just send a cameraman. He films areas of your attraction, takes the footage back to the studio and they edit a piece with either music or a reporter voicing information over the footage.

First let's cover some things that are common to all types of reports. You must have all your information available and memorized. You do not want to be caught on camera not knowing what time you open! Have an information sheet available to give to the reporter. He can scan over it and use it to ask you the right questions, “ ...so Rich what charity

benefits from this year's show?" This could be a very embarrassing question if you are not working with a charity that year!

Try to use the name of the reporter. Everyone likes to hear their own name. It can put the reporter at ease and it looks more like you are old buddies than just a person being interviewed. Make sure the reporter knows YOUR name. It looks bad if he can't pronounce your name or forgets it.

Do not try and use the interview as an advertisement for your sponsors. If you are live and you step in with, "... and we'd like to thank Smith's, Coke, Saturn, McDonald's and radio station 97.1 for being this year's sponsors" chances are that will be your last interview. One or two major sponsors can conveniently be worked into the conversation without appearing to be a commercial.

Do not use "insider" terms or jargon unfamiliar to the audience. If you must use a term, use it with a very short explanation. "We try and utilize the Roller Coaster Effect. That's where we build up anticipation, scare them, then we let them relax as we build for the next scare." If it takes too much explanation, do not use it.

If it is a taped interview as opposed to a live interview, try and keep things generic so the station can air it at their convenience. If you claim that tonight you have a special event and your interview gets bumped because of a five car pileup on I-15 you may lose that interview. If it is generic enough they can air it tomorrow, or maybe even on the noon, 6 o'clock, AND evening broadcasts!

Make sure that you mention the location! It may sound like a odd point to make but I have seen other interviews where no one mentions the location and the anchor ends up asking the reporter "...so Bob where are they at?" then the reporter fumbles for the location.

Consider your apparel. Remember you are being filmed for a TV broadcast. Your haunt prides itself on the dark and scary look. Exactly the opposite of what the camera needs. If your background is dark, wear lighter clothing so you show up. If you are stuck in dark clothes, shoot against a lighter background. Avoid using stripes. They play havoc with the camera.

If you are interviewed in character, STAY in character. There is nothing worse than a Transylvanian Count that starts out like Bella Lugosi and ends up as Jeff Foxworthy! Be excited and interesting. If you do not have the personality to pull off a successful interview, find someone else who can. Instead of interviewing the owner maybe they interview the main character, an actor coordinator, or the owner's wife! If you are boring, you won't be back!

Now let us cover some of the situations inherent to the specific types of reports.



A One Spot Interview

The *One Spot*. By far this is the easiest and most frequent coverage. It is important to have a one sheet to give to the reporter so he can ask you the right questions. Remember to look at the reporter when he is asking questions, not the camera. An interview is a conversation between you and the reporter. Make sure you have an interesting enough background to show off your attraction. For instance you would not want to film in front of your queue lines on a slow night or before you are open when the report is to be broadcast later on the 11 o'clock news. People assume all interviews are live so it appears that you are dead at 11!

The *Morning Show*. First you have to have a crew available in the morning. This can be hard if you have a lot of high school actors on a school day. Remember you are shooting in the daylight. Certain areas of your attraction may look awesome at night but hokey in the daylight. Maybe shoot inside under a controlled environment. The Morning Show will have you doing a segment every 15 minutes or so. Arrange it that you can easily move the crew to a new spot for each segment. It can add variety to each segment and gives you a chance to talk about different aspects of your show. Be careful not to show off too many "secrets" or you might spoil your show for the people who see the interview.



Place the reporter in an interesting location

SO

The *Reporter Involvement*. This can be a very good angle. You invite the reporter to participate in your show. One station does a "Dare Dave" segment. We had our Actor Coordinator challenge Dave to work a night in our Haunted House. Another station used to do a "Nate, Do My Job". If your local stations do not do this type of segment on a regular basis, suggest it! Invite a popular reporter who is a little more "off the wall" to be a Guest Ghoul in your attraction. Have the weatherman do his forecast from your attraction...in make-up! Your one minute interview could end up a feature piece.



Reporter was "dared" to work the Haunt

The *Voice Over*. Reporters get tied up but maybe a cameraman is nearby. They send him over to get footage. You need to make sure you have a good one sheet with all the necessary information since you will not personally make those points. Suggest to the cameraman that he takes a lot of quick shots of various rooms, props and actors using different angles as opposed to just shooting and exposing a couple of your scares. This technique shows *more* of your attraction by showing *less* of it!

Always try and talk to the reporter and cameraman after the filming. Make sure to get a business card and invite them back. You can either tell them that you will have their



Provide them with your information

names at the Box Office or hand them VIP tickets so that they can return and enjoy the attraction with their friends or family. Always remember the cameraman. That reporter may move on to a different market next year but the chances are the cameraman will still be working here next year.

A minimum of 24 hours after the interview, mail a thank-you note to the reporter and the station contact. Mention that you are always willing to help out any way that you can. We had a station do an interview early in the season and then they used our attraction as a backdrop on Halloween night. The Halloween night broadcast didn't help us, but helped the station.

Nothing here can guarantee you additional television exposure. But by following these steps and ideas you can begin to develop a professional relationship with your location stations. You must earn a reputation as the "go-to" people at Halloween. Then eventually YOU will be that attraction that everyone asks "...how do THEY always get interviewed?"

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