
MAKING TELEVISION WORK FOR YOU

TELEVISION REACH

The Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 1999 throws up some interesting insights in light of the belief that print medium far surpassed the reach of electronic medium. The survey conducted between January and December 1998 covered a sample size of 2,120,000 individuals across cross sections of income levels in 741 towns and 2,365 villages. On an overall urban plus rural basis, the print media reaches 32.9 per cent of all individuals while television reaches 46 per cent. A break up of urban and rural reach shows that the reach of radio is similar in both. But the difference is sharper when it comes to print media and television. In urban India, the print media has a reach of 57.8 per cent while television has 76.2 per cent. In rural India print has a much lower reach of 23.5 per cent and television has less than half its urban reach at 34.6 per cent. These figures clearly indicate that compared to 10-15 years ago, there is greater equalisation in the reach of the electronic media

Doordarshan (urban and rural) reaches every two out of five people in India and is much ahead of any other channel. Zee TV and Sony only become relevant in the urban context. DD1 reaches around 41.3 per cent of rural and urban populations combined. A look at urban viewership reveals 66.7 per cent watched DD1 while the figures for the rural areas are 31.6 per cent. In contrast, around 7.4 per cent overall watch Zee TV with 22.1 per cent in urban areas and 1.8 per cent in rural areas. Sony on the other hand accounts for 5.9 per cent, with 17.6 per cent in rural areas. STAR accounts for 3.6 per cent and Eenadu for 3.4 per cent. If rural India is examined exclusively, the regional channels rank high on the list.

A mapping of the state wise print versus television reach reveals that Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra are high print and television areas. On the other hand, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh are low print, high television areas. Gujarat is a high print, low television area, whereas Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa and Bihar are high television, low print areas.

WHY TELEVISION

Research has proven that individuals of average intelligence who read, let's say a thousand words of well-written, graphically illustrated printed matter on any subject, will be found when tested to have absorbed roughly 10 per cent of the content. If however, the same information is purveyed through the ear - perhaps on radio or on a sound tape recording, with music and sound effects to aid the commination technique the absorption rate will double. That's impressive but 20 per cent is still not very much.

Now take the information and communicate it through moving pictures plus sound and the rate jumps to 60 per cent, or six times the impact of the printed world. That is certainly not to deny the value of the printed or spoken word-but

it surely emphasises the need to learn how to optimise profits from all present media if you really want to get your message across.

MASTER THE TECHNIQUES OF TELEVISION PRESENTATION

To maximise on an opportunity presented by an interface on electronic media, it is important to understand how this medium functions and how stories get broadcast. An attempt has been made to provide insights into a journalists' views of what they need from an interviewee to aid their stories.

To quote Michael Barratt, one of UK's most celebrated and respected interviewers and presenters, who first made his mark on BBC Television in the sixties presenting 'Panorama' and '24 Hours' and thereafter launched 'Nationwide', BBC's most successful current affairs magazine programme:

"The aim of the interviewer is not to reduce a victim to a gibbering wreck, but to establish a rapport that will make for an articulate conversation which informs, education and entertains the audience. Indeed, I believe that most progressive media practitioners the broadcasters and journalists actually welcome the efforts business people (Yes, and even politicians!) make to improve their performances when being interviewed. In the studio or on location, I've always preferred the lucid, effective, quick-witted and persuasive interviewee to the hesitant, unconvincing, defensive one."

Learning to master the techniques demanded by media exposure is not just a vague matter of 'developing' company image or 'improving perceptions in the marketplace' or similar sounding jargon. It's real. It's measurable in hard cash-to the tune of many lacs of rupees.

The cosmetics of media presentation and interview techniques are simple enough. Appropriate dress, good posture, a steady eye, the warmth of a smile, but they will be of little avail if the basic attitude to this kind of exposure is wrong.

Once again to borrow from Michael Barratt if you were to think of the interview as a 'grilling' or the studio chair rather like the one in the dentist's you'll throw away a great opportunity.

"Regard your interviewer as the enemy and you'll be shot to pieces. On the other hand, if you approach an interview as a heaven sent chance to promote yourself and your cause, worth a fortune, as mentioned-your attitude will reflect on your performance. You'll look as through you're proud of what you practice or make or sell".

A BASIC CHECKLIST

While facing the camera, 'live' or recorded, the cosmetics of media presentation may not be enough for you to maximise the opportunity. A serious effort of preparation put into presentation will see you through anything that the 'clever' television presenter can throw at you. Do your homework taking the simple steps of listing the likely questions, your answers to them, and most importantly how to turn them into promotional tools. When the interviewee walks away from the television station he should be reassured that he in all actualities 'cashed the cheque' for his company.

Here are some basic questions you need to have answered before you face the camera

- ❑ Dress, this calls for especial care, because it provides the viewer with first and last impressions. Remember the basic ground rules of avoiding small checks and pin stripes as even with the most modern of cameras, as they have the effect of dancing or stroking on the screen it is.
- ❑ How does the presenter usually dress-casually or formally?
- ❑ It is advisable to check with the production assistant what colours one should avoid wearing owing to technical considerations and not some attempts at portraying political affiliations.
- ❑ At what time of day or night is the programme being transmitted?
- ❑ Who are the target audiences?

Arriving early, well before transmission time will provide valuable time to allow you to see the studio script and check that you're happy with the way you will be described when you are introduced. *(There's nothing more likely to get an interview off to a bad start than your having to begin with something like: Could I first ask you to correct what you've just said about me? I'm not the chairman, I'm the marketing director!')*

Also it may be worthwhile to check the '**Aston**' (the name and description the producer proposes to superimpose at the bottom of the screen when you first appear) the programme intends to carry for you. Your name could be spelt wrong or your company name not given. A typical example '*Pashupati Advani – Share Broker Analyst*' atleast you could attempt to persuade the producer to add value by inseting, say, your company name. You may not succeed, but' it's worth a try!

Whatever the interviewer's way of working, there's one rule to be observed: ask beforehand what the first question is going to be. Obviously, this is to give the interviewee time to think about his opening answer possibly the most vital factor in the whole performance. Remember in this day and age where a plethora of choices present themselves to the viewer he is unlikely to be persuaded to watch unless you can keep him interested from the very start.

TEMPTATIONS OF A LIFEBELT

Having already mentioned the importance of preparation, do not under any circumstances go into the studio with your notes. In all probability the temptation to keep glancing at them, rather like clinging to a lifebelt, will be strong and the rest of the interview may pass with your eye's cast down.

TRAVELS OF ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE AN INTERVIEW

In the first question lies the clue to influence an interview; in fact if cleverly handled the first question can often be the key to how an interview proceeds. If the interviewee answers the question straightforwardly and adds an extra piece of information, or injects a fresh relevant opinion, the interviewer is most likely to base his next question on what has been told to him. (Otherwise it may seem that he is not listening). Thereafter you are well on the way to influencing the course of the interview and communicating the message that needs to be promoted.

But that approach will only be effective if the question asked is truly answered! There is always the chance of irritating viewers and losing ground with the interviewer if attempts to indulge in any politician's like methods are made.

BODY LANGUAGE

What is often called body language can often say more than words. Posture, the way you sit or stand has the effect of helping both relaxation and concentration, with the added bonus, if practised properly, of improving the overall image.

One of the problems usually in facing the camera for the first time especially at a television studio is that the cameras act as a kind of magnet. While sitting across an interviewer, there will almost certainly be a camera pointing at the interviewee from over the interviewer's shoulder. Don't let the camera distract your honest steady gaze.

What are you to do with your hands? This is probably the most frequent question asked by beginners. Here there is no hard and fast rule-because we should be as natural as possible and we all have different ways with our hands in normal circumstances.

PERSUADE-PROJECT-PROMOTE

While the cosmetic manner of a worthwhile interview is of importance you would have simply lost the opportunity if you have not focussed on the three Ps- Persuade, Project and Promote.

The only thing which matters is to persuade the interviewer, and, through him, the audience about the strength of your point of view. Are you getting through to them? Moving them? Convincing them? If that's your only concern, the rest will follow. Stop worrying about the form of words you're using or the risk of fluffing your lines. Persuade! The right words will come naturally as will the right body language. You'll find yourself leaning forward in your chair, the excitement of communicating effectively reflected in your stance.

Persuading will lead you to project. If you are in a real situation of addressing a large audience assembled, say in the company canteen, nobody needs to tell you that you need to project your voice so that the person right at the back can hear you. On television, there's no point in raising your voice: the sound engineer will merely turn down the volume to maintain a technical balance. But think, nonetheless that you are trying to project what you say through the

camera and your message is reaching out to all those millions watching you in their homes. Reach out to them mentally and your performance will be wonderfully enhanced.

And when you succeed is both persuading your audience and projecting your personality, use these advantages to promote your company or your personal message. The opportunity of a blank cheque is there for you.

Cash it for your company!

PRACTICE SESSION...THE 'EASY' INTERVIEW THAT CAN BE DIFFICULT

Let us now attempt to delve into a practice session.

BACKGROUND

You're the chief executive of a computer services company called COMP. You have been asked to appear on a television programme called 'Careerline', to be interviewed on the subject of career opportunities for young people in the IT industry. You've been told that the programme is part of a series, which attempts to help young people choose and pursue careers. It is transmitted in the late evening. Its audience profile indicates viewers aged between 16 and 25, and their parents, Your interview will last approximately three minutes. Let's examine how it could go wrong.....

Interviewer: Mr Adige, what advice would you give a 16-year-old school leaver thinking of a career in the IT industry?

Chief executive: Well I'd tell him that information technology is a very exciting industry to be in. There are such a wide variety of jobs available. It's a modern industry, which is still growing so there are plenty of opportunities for a young man who's eager to work and is ambitious.

Interviewer: Yes, but what should our school leaver do? For instance, is it a good idea to leave at 16 or do most companies require higher qualification nowadays?

Chief executive: Oh, it's up to him, really. I mean, there are plenty of jobs for youngsters of his age if he's prepared to start at the bottom...

Interviewer: Like an unqualified office boy, you mean?

Chief executive: Well, yes. I mean, we've all got to start somewhere. I'm trying to explain that in these days of high unemployment, opportunities are difficult to come by...

Interviewer: But Mr Adige, we're talking of young people who want to carve a career in IT. Let me put my question another way: what sorts of qualifications are desirable to make a good start in the industry?

Chief executive: Well, the better your qualifications, the better your chances.

Interviewer: Specialised qualifications or simply a good degree, perhaps?

Chief executive: Ah, well, this young boy we were talking about...

Interviewer: Excuse me, Mr Adige, but I didn't have a 'young boy' as you call him in mind. A 16-years-old might be a girl. Are there equal opportunities for girls in the industry?

Chief executive: Oh, yes. Plenty.

Interviewer: How many women hold senior positions in your own company for instance?

Chief executive: Well, not senior positions exactly but there are several girls in the general office nowadays.

Interviewer: That rather sounds as though it is a male-dominated industry. What are the rewards?

Chief executive: Well, they're very good really. I mean, programmers and people like that can earn a good living better than working in the retail industry, let's say.

Interviewer: Can you put a figure on it – the kind of salary a 23-year-old might earn, for entering the industry with a good degree in computer technology?

Chief executive: That's difficult –I mean, it would depend on how much specialised training might be needed in-house. But I'm in the marketing department and I'm not sure what the exact rates are in the technical side.

Interviewer: Where can young people find out more about the industry and how to enter it?

Chief executive: Most companies have training or personnel officers who could give them more details.

Interviewer: Thank you, Mr. Adige, I'm afraid that's all we have time for. It does seem that the computer industry is no place for ambitious girls and there's no clear entry pattern but let's turn to our next career subject ...

The scenario as depicted here may be a wee bit exaggerated, devised to illustrate as many gaffes as possible for the purpose of illustration.

The last comment of the interviewer illustrated a common peril- that of a 'summing-up' critical comment right at the end of an interview, leaving a bad taste (and sometimes a false one) in the mind of the viewer.

For a start, you could watch that interview and at the end of it still be asking what company the chief executive represented! It would have been so easy to say at least once something like: 'I can't answer for every company in the industry, of course, but at COMP...' and go on to make a positive point that would have amounted to a priceless recruitment advertisement, seemingly within editorial parameters.

There were so many more mistakes. The assumption in the very first answer that a 16-year-old job seeker would be a boy for instance, the Chief Executive wasn't thinking fast enough – this is not about sexual biases but just plain common sense.

What kind of practical help is it for a young career-seeker to be told that there are 'exciting' opportunities without being given a single factual clue as to what they may be? There was the patronising bit: "...opportunities are difficult to come by". There was also the fundamental failure to listen to questions so that an exasperated interviewer had to resort to 'Let me put my question another way'. Then there was the classic example of thoughtless, empty boasting about 'plenty of equal opportunities', which led the chief executive's own firm to be exposed as a very bad example.

The question about rewards proved a disaster on more than one level. Surely the chief executive should have first made the point that rewards are not exclusively financial. There are more important ones that attract young people—a good working environment; the satisfaction of quality workmanship; fast track promotions; exciting developments on the technology front..... He could have warmed to the topic by culling out examples from his company's own operations.

As it was, the whole interview desperately lacked the kind of basic information that job seekers need – addresses and phone numbers of organizations able to help them, for instance. He didn't even have the wit to suggest viewers write to him at COMP for more guidance!

The difference between the one conducted and the one that might have been could be estimated in cash terms to the tune of hundreds of thousands of rupees. Just consider the might-have-been version (and note how the questions become different as the inevitable consequence of more skilful answers). A typical example of how an appropriately answered first question can lead the interview:

Interviewer: Mr Adige, what advice would you give a 16-year-old school leaver thinking of a career in the IT industry?

Chief executive: Probably not to leave school at 16! It is possible for a boy or girl to enter the industry at the bottom with few academic qualifications – but in these days of fierce competition with honors graduates flocking into the industry, a youngster would have self-imposed mountains to climb by starting as some kind of office junior.

Interviewer: So are you advising university and a specialised degree as the best way in?

Chief executive: Not necessarily specialised. There are many firms, which believe that the most important factor is evidence of a young person's 'brainpower'. In other words, they'll look for really good degrees in almost any subject on the basis that a good, well-disciplined mind can more easily be trained to absorb the company's own technical methods. My own company, COMP, for example, spends a million pounds a year training graduate recruits - even if they come to us with IT-related degrees! On the other hand, there are companies who insist on honors degrees in some aspect of computer technology.

Interviewer: You make it sound a tough career to break into.

Chief executive: For most young people who are ambitious to get to the very top in the industry it certainly is - but there are many attractions for young people at the same time. It's an astonishingly fast-growing industry so in the most progressive firms there are always vacancies. (We're looking for 80 people right now!) There are plenty of examples of enterprising, ambitious youngsters - some without university background - who have shown it to be an industry of opportunity by becoming millionaires in their thirties and forties!

Interviewer: So where should young people watching us now turn for more and information?

Chief executive: They should ask their careers counselors at school or college. I suggest they pick up some of the industry journals like *Dataquest* or *Computers Today* to get a feel for what's going on in the industry and to see the kind of jobs that are being advertised, with the qualifications being sought. Approach local companies for advice. I'll be happy to help, too. Would you like me to give my address?

Interviewer: That would be very helpful. We'll put it on screen at the end of this interview... the last question, though: you've mentioned the millionaires, but for most average achievers, what are the rewards?

Chief executive: First and foremost, I think, is job satisfaction. It's an enormously exciting industry, developing at a furious pace and opening up opportunities literally to change the ways everybody works and lives. As for money, salaries are a good deal higher than in most jobs at an early age. "Starters" straight from university for example could easily earn Rs 10-15,000 a month, with repaid increases.

Interviewer: I think I'll change jobs! Mr. Adige, thank you. Now your address for viewers who'd like more information....

So there you have an interview which began with exactly the same question as the previous disaster. Yet it will be worth a great deal of money to Mr. Adige's

company- not just as a free recruitment exercise, but by promoting the COMP image with long-lasting effect. And it didn't break the rules of 'puffery' (editorial promotion). Offering help was a perfectly acceptable ploy in the context of the programme.

Note how the interviewer's questions become much kinder simply because Mr Adige's answers are positive and informative with no dubious comments. There are also fewer questions, which is the way it should be.

The danger inherent is that performing well (and profitably) on television seems deceptively simple. The skills are basic, but they need to be learned nevertheless! They require not only professional training but also painstaking preparation to arrive at the ultimate goal of making it all look easy.

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