

# **No One Interviews a Book ...**

## **10 Surefire Radio Interview Tips for Authors**

### **by Dan Smith**

All talk radio listeners have heard them: An interview in which the guest/author utters “as I say in my book” every 10 seconds. I’ve even heard authors recite chapter titles ... every one of them! Similarly, some guests mention their website in every sentence.

There’s an adage in book publicity: No one interviews a book. Books are not good guests. People, on the other hand, can be engaging, informative and interesting interviews. A good guest can hold the attention of a host and listeners, and sell a lot of books in the process.

Becoming a great radio guest isn’t hard, literally anyone can do it. Here are 10 tips that can make the difference between listeners changing stations during an interview and immediately ordering a book.

#### **1. Practice the art of the “soft sell”**

The “soft sell” is basically letting opportunities to plug your book come to you, naturally, within the flow and context of an interview. There’s nothing wrong with saying “as I say in my book” occasionally, or directing listeners to your website ... just don’t go overboard. Remember, the vast majority of talk show hosts will gladly and freely plug your book, both during and at the conclusion of an interview. If you run into a host who doesn’t do this, then do it yourself.

#### **2. Personalize your interview**

It is amazing how much simply addressing a caller by their first name during an interview means. It shows you care, and it makes your answer personal to callers, i.e. you’re addressing their question, needs, or offering tailored feedback. The same applies with the host of the show. With a “hostile” host, calling him or her by their first name makes it just a bit harder for them to be aggressive with you!

#### **3. Be prepared, for anything**

I’ve had clients call me after interviews, literally in tears. They went on the air expecting a walk in the park and instead entered a full-fire combat zone. The fact is, as sure as you may be about a show or a host’s disposition, you never, ever know how an interview will proceed. To be sure, the vast majority of interviews go exactly as hoped, with a friendly and engaging host; but trust me, this isn’t always the case. You have to be prepared for anything. Moreover, even with a “friendly” host, you might easily get into a duel with a caller who takes issue with you. If you are prepared, you can easily handle such instances.

#### **4. Listen to what your mom said ... sit up straight**

Posture counts, even in radio phone interviews. The way your voice projects directly correlates to how and where you are sitting. Sitting up straight helps create a “confident” voice and minimizes mumbling. Also, be aware of where you are sitting (or standing). Lying on your bed or your couch is not a good idea; it will create too much of a relaxed demeanor. If you have a home office, sit at your desk. This way, you’ll feel and sound more professional because of the setting. You may also try doing interviews standing. Figure out what works best for you.

#### **5. Consider the phone you are using**

This is a simple tip: Avoid using cordless phones, try to never use a cell phone, and if at all possible, use an old fashioned landline. Cordless phones can create static, cell phones create a host of potential problems, but landlines rarely fail you.

#### **6. Short answers often say more than long ones**

Most of us have a natural tendency to be a little longwinded when discussing a topic near and dear to our hearts. The problem is, time is a valuable commodity on radio, and going too long with answers often makes it difficult for multi-tasking listeners to follow along. Keep your answers short, yet complete. Practice answering common or likely questions succinctly.

#### **7. Mumbling, the interview killer**

I don’t think I’m alone with a bad habit I have: When speaking to a group of people, I have to consciously avoid having my sentences trail off at the end into mumbling. Likewise, I have to consciously try and keep the volume of my voice consistent. Practice speaking, record yourself, and you might see what I mean. Simple answer: Know your speaking tendencies, and address the ones which don’t work to your benefit.

#### **8. Know the show**

If at all possible, listen to the show you are going to be on to learn the personality of the host and theme of the show. Usually, you can go online and listen live in advance of your interview, or go to a station or host’s website and find archives of old shows. Knowing what to expect can make all the difference.

#### **9. Listen to veteran talk show guests**

First, if you’re doing radio interviews, you should listen to talk radio, period. Even more importantly, listen to interviews with some very well known authors or guest. Listen to how they let the interview come to them, how they get promotion for their book or themselves without being overbearing. Then, copy their style, while still maintaining your unique personality.

## 10. Practice

One of my favorite things, as a publicist, is to conduct mock interviews with my clients. I enjoy throwing “curveball” ball questions because I can see how helpful it is for them; they almost instantly learn how to handle themselves. Likewise, I offer plenty of “softball” questions to help them learn how to hit the ball out of the park with great answers! Have a friend or family do a mock interview with you. Because 99% of the interviews you do will likely be “phoners,” make sure the mock interview is done over the phone. You’ll find it incredibly helpful, and fun!

Radio interviews should be a staple of most publicity campaigns. They are remarkably convenient because no travel is involved, and even a busy author can easily do five or more a week. As in any facet of promotion via the media, remember the process is absolutely a “you scratch their back, they’ll scratch yours” deal. Every talk show has air time to fill.

As always, enjoy yourself, and relish every minute of the wonderful experience of entertaining or educating thousands and thousands of people!

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### About Dan Smith

**Dan Smith is the president of TCI-Smith publicity, a full service book promotion and public relations agency with offices in New Jersey, New York, and London. He has personally conducted more than 250 promotional campaigns. Clients of TCI-Smith Publicity have appeared on virtually every major radio and television show, and been featured in top publications across the country.**