

How to be a Terrific Radio Guest

Contributed by Shel Horowitz
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Wouldn't it be wonderful to find yourself on the radio? There you are, broadcast to thousands of people anxiously awaiting your every word, eager to run out and buy your book. Shel Horowitz shares his wisdom on how to make the most of your time on the radio.

Book Promtion on Radio

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Creating Good Sound Bites for Book Promotion

For TV and radio especially, but even in print, if you can create "sound bites"-brief quotes that sum up your point in a deeply memorable way-you're ahead of the game.

The best sound bites are memorable because they use familiar metaphors or analogies, draw on pop-culture references, start controversies, and/or incorporate poetic devices such as rhyme, alliteration, and rhythm.

A few examples:

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Spiro Agnew's "nattering nabobs of negativism"

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Where's the beef?

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Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s analogy of the check returned for insufficient funds in his "I Have a Dream" speech

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Go ahead. Make my day.

So...How do you translate this idea of sound bites into promoting something as abstract as a book? By asking the same kinds of "so what" and "what's in it for the listener/viewer" questions that we explored when discussing book titles and press releases-the more outrageous the better, as long as you can document and substantiate the claim. Some ideas:

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Don't be cloned by a criminal! (for a book on identity theft)

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Murderous burgers: you'd be better off starving than eating that fatty patty (for a book on healthy eating-uses rhyme and

an outrageous, controversial claim)

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Park your car safely and inexpensively in Manhattan, in any neighborhood, any time of day (something most people think is impossible; I actually know someone who's written a book on that)

Some I've used in promoting my own books:

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On the Internet, a stay-at-home mom can market more successfully than a Fortune 500 company (for Grassroots Marketing)

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Nice guys don't finish last-they finish first! (Principled Profit)

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How'd you like to plan a fun, memorable wedding-for \$300? (The Penny-Pinching Hedonist)

For novelists, sound bites can be tied to topical or geographic themes. Even poets can use sound bites-by reading poems that contain vivid images.

Expand beyond Sound Bites

But don't build the whole interview as a string of sound bites. You'll come across as really shallow and superficial unless you build some depth. For fiction and creative nonfiction (such as biography or memoir), listeners will want to get to know you, and your characters. And for instructive nonfiction, use sound bites as jumping-off points for more in-depth discussions. So for my frugal fun book, the sound bite might be, "Even a waitress can afford a great vacation!" And then the follow-up: "My wife and I took a really nice six-night vacation in Greece. Including everything-airfare, food, lodging, admissions, even souvenirs-what do you think we spent?" I pause while the host guesses several thousand dollars and then I give the answer: \$400. Then I spend a minute explaining how, and of course mention that there's much more information in the travel chapter of The Penny-Pinching Hedonist-and I mention the title by name; I don't just say "in my book."

Be Prepared

Nothing makes a worse interview than a flustered source. The more prepared you are, the better your chances of doing well. Some tips, noting the appropriate media where it makes a difference:

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Offer the interviewer a list of questions but if s/he declines, don't worry about it (radio, TV)

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Provide whatever materials the producer requests: a bio, book cover, author photo, copy of your book, etc.; a lot of this stuff can be up on your pressroom page so journalists can instantly download it

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Get a friend to practice with you, asking the questions on your list and other questions you might not have thought of; tape this and play it back-and if you ramble, or mumble, or speak in a monotone, or talk over the audience's head, use it as a tool to improve: Practice again, listen to the tape, and see where you improved and where you still need work (all media, and especially radio and TV)

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Write your three to five most important points in big letters and put this sheet where you can comfortably see it while talking on the phone with the reporter (print, radio)

- Have a sheet at your fingertips with a pithy quote or two from your book, that you can read if it's appropriate (print, radio)

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Research the reporter: Visit the show's or station's website, read other articles the journalist has written, listen to/watch a few segments

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Know your best sound bites inside and out

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Think on your feet-or retreat to some safe verbiage such as "I don't have those numbers in front of me, but I can get back to you with them"-and then follow up as promised!

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Never say anything that you wouldn't want splashed across page one in your exact words, or the lead story on a newscast-stay away from irony, sarcasm, and negative examples; they'll be thrown back in your face out of context as if you meant them just the way they sound

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Always remember that journalists and media folk are people too, and for the most part, are trying to do a very difficult job under extreme pressure-very few will be deliberately out to make you look bad, other than the occasional "shock jock"

The award-winning author of five marketing books, Shel Horowitz specializes in helping authors and small publishers succeed in a crowded marketplace-as a marketing copywriter, strategist, and book coach. Visit him on the Web at <http://www.frugalmarketing.com> or call him at 800-683-WORD (800-683-9673) or 413-586-2388. This article is taken from his latest book, Grassroots Marketing for Authors and Publishers; his two other current books are Principled Profit: Marketing That Puts People First and Grassroots Marketing: Getting Noticed in a Noisy World.