

October/November/December 1991

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman

RE: The Three Questions Reporters Ask

There are only three kinds of questions reporters ask - three and only three:

- Questions you never ever want to respond to
- Questions you would love to respond to if only someone would ask
- There but for the grace of God go I questions

Here is a bit about each:

QUESTIONS YOU NEVER EVER WANT TO RESPOND TO:

Generally these are the kinds of questions that involve us in making comments which are either inappropriate because information is incomplete and unnecessary, or are prohibited because we are involved in legal actions of our own or lawsuits filed against us; or because the information is proprietary or classified, would simply hurt the person involved, would require us to disparage someone else, make forecasts which we are not qualified to do, or speculate.

QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LOVE TO RESPOND TO IF ONLY SOMEONE WOULD ASK YOU:

Because reporters don't really know your business or care about your business (because they can't know or care about your business), they can't ask the kind of questions you would really like to respond to. But, they can come close with help. If you can, in advance, think about the kinds of questions you would like to respond to and list them along with appropriate answers, you will be able to bridge to them when reporters use their customary questioning techniques. You need to do this preparation before you are interviewed. The last time you want to hear these questions or use your answers for the first time is when the interview itself occurs.

OFF-THE-WALL QUESTIONS:

In more than half of the news media interviews that go on each year, the interview subject is asked about topics and issues which relate to someone else in their industry, business, or circumstances. You simply must expect that these kinds of questions are going to be asked. Why? Because the reporters read the morning papers before they come and talk to you. So on the days you are going to be interviewed, be sure you too read the morning papers and watch television news programs. That's where many, in fact most, of these questions come from.

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