

Event-in-a-Box

Tips for Choosing a Spokesperson

Who should serve as a spokesperson?

A spokesperson is an individual who speaks on behalf of another person, group of people, business, or organization.

A spokesperson must be:

- Knowledgeable and well-prepared;
- Able to speak in clear, easy-to-understand language;
- Able to speak before a group that may have gathered in a crisis or may be assembled with the intention of expressing a concern or differing opinion;
- Able to remain calm and well-organized at all times, and
- Available.

To prepare, a spokesperson must:

- Know the subject matter and be able to speak on short notice;
- Be able to repeat, plus rephrase key points in several ways, emphasizing them.
- Be able to respond rather than react;
- Be able to identify key issues and/or concerns;
- Be willing *and* able to anticipate questions on *both* sides of the issue;
- Be able to think through answers to these and other questions that will allow the spokesperson to make key points;
- Be able to speak with or without notes or prepared materials, and
- Be willing to defer to another source who is more able to answer the question or address the issue.

Additional Do's and Don't's:

- Provide a fact sheet.
- Assume that everything you say will be on the record.
- Be truthful, but keep the information specific to the question; do not volunteer unnecessary information.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, defer to a source who can. Saying "I don't know" is preferable to saying "I don't want to answer that question" or "No comment," which may imply that you are concealing information.
- Consider your audience and choose words that they can understand. An inappropriate analogy can help you make a point, but an inappropriate reference may fuel anger or distrust. Avoid unnecessary comparisons. Use humor sparingly, if at all.
- Repeat a question before answering. Doing so gives the spokesperson an opportunity to clarify the question before answering and also a little time to think.
- Be kind, demonstrate empathy.
- Maintain poise and confidence without appearing arrogant or defensive. Do not allow anger or frustration to show.
- Dress appropriately. Use good posture and maintain positive body language.
- Don't use scientific, technical, or academic language that's difficult to understand.