



Access Radio Taranaki 104.4FM
Shop 4, Top Town ARTcade
119 Devon St East, New Plymouth
Ph: 06 751 3720
Email: admin@accessradiotaranaki.com
www.accessradiotaranaki.com
Look for us on Facebook

Interview Skills

Kia ora, and welcome to Access Radio Taranaki.

We truly believe in the power of stories. As a broadcaster with us, sometimes you'll be sharing your own stories and sometimes you'll be holding space for others to share theirs. What follows are some words of wisdom (we hope), some pointers and guidelines to help you in your role as a host.

First, and most importantly, your guest needs to feel welcome and safe. Once they understand and believe that we're all about lifting people up and not putting them down, they will relax and bring their authentic selves to your show.

It all starts with the invitation. Explain why you'd like this person to be your guest and a little bit about the show. Make them aware of our Golden Rule about not speaking ill of others, and tell them that we try to keep the conversations focussed on solutions rather than problems.

Make sure you arrive at the station before your guest – around 10 minutes before a live show is due to start. Rushing does not help with nerves.

Before the mics go on, check for any potential 'ninja noises', like jangly bracelets, crinkling jackets, or clicky pens, rustling paper. The mics will pick these noises up and your listeners will notice, even if you don't.

You can prepare for each show by researching your subject, and jot down a few bullet points as prompts. If the conversation's really flowing, you may not even need these, but it's good to have them on hand, anyway, and they can help you keep the conversation on track.

Your introduction will set the tone. Uncover an interesting fact or anecdote about your guest and include this when you introduce them. No embarrassing stories here, please. Remember, we want them to feel safe. Here's an example of a simple guest introduction that works:

*Mōrena and welcome to **The Wheels on the Bus**. My name is Fred, and today my guest is someone who has 50 years' experience of driving buses, all over the world. Each day was an adventure, and his family have encouraged him to write a book about some of his more outrageous days behind the wheel. Welcome to the show, Buzz Driver.*

I think the host has given just enough information there to pique the listeners' interest, and hopefully that means they'll stay tuned in.

It may sound obvious, but it's important to be fully present with your guest throughout the whole show. We've probably all heard those awkward interviews where the host asks a question that the guest has already answered. Make sure that you're not so busy reading your notes that you forget to actively listen and engage.

Use simple, open-ended questions rather than those that can be answered in one word. For example:

- "How did you feel about that?"
- "Can you tell us more about that crash in Peru?"
- "What made you decide to drive across the Sahara?"

These types of questions invite a longer answer than something like, “Did you like driving buses?”, which could simply be answered with a “yes” or a “no”.

Another trap to watch out for is putting too much information into a question, such as in this example:

“Tell me, Buzz. Was it a tricky decision to turn your boss over to the police, or did you think it served him right for holding your pet llama to ransom, even though you hadn’t actually called him those names on social media because your account had been hacked and it was someone else posting.”

Can you ‘hear’ how confusing that is? You’ve just told the story, and was there even a question in there? Whereas, if you were to start with, “Could you tell us the story about your boss and the llama?”, it’s an invitation for Buzz to tell the story in his words. Once you’ve asked your question, sit back and listen to the story unfold.

Voice breaks – that’s the talking part – should be around seven minutes long, to keep the listeners attention. Be aware of the time and listen for a convenient break point to gently wrap up the segment. Then again, if the conversation is really flowing and you’re engrossed, then the listener probably is, too, and stopping for a song may feel like an intrusion. But you do need to have breaks. Knowing when to stop for a break will get easier with practice.

OK. So, after a song, welcome listeners back and remind them of what they’re listening to. For example: *“Welcome back to The Wheels on the Bus on Access Radio Taranaki. My name is Fred and today our guest is Buzz Driver.”*

In normal conversation, we often punctuate someone’s story with things like, “Right”, “Oh, wow!”, “Aha”, “Mmm hmm”, “Really?”. Things like that to show that we’re listening. But this does not work on radio. And you’ll need to show your interest in other ways. Nod your head encouragingly, maintain eye contact, and raise your eyebrows to show surprise or delight.

It’s pretty likely you’ll make mistakes. Do it cheerfully, try not to make a big deal out of any slip-ups, and just move on. Your guest will take their cue from you, so you need to stay calm and keep talking through it.

Before the end of the show, it’s always good to ask your guest if there is anything else they’d like to share that you may have missed and, if it’s appropriate, ask where people can go to find out more, or how people can get hold of them. At the end of the show, wrap it all up by thanking your guest by name and, also, thanking your listeners.

Encourage your guest to share the podcast after the show has aired. It will usually be up on all the platforms by the end of the next working day.

In the interests of continuous improvement, take time to occasionally listen back to your shows. Hearing yourself as your listeners do is a great way to iron out any wrinkles for next time, and to feel good about what you’re putting out there. Listen out for things like starting questions or sentences with “um” or “so”. Try to avoid that next time.

Finally, we really recommend having a listen to a great little Ted Talk by a lady called Celeste Hedley. It’s called ‘Ten Ways to Have a Better Conversation’. There are some real nuggets of wisdom in there that will be useful to you as a host, and, also in general conversation.

We really look forward to watching you grow and enjoy your role as a host on Access Radio Taranaki. Ka kite anō