



What Makes a Media Interview Truly Effective?

By Kevin Sullivan

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If you google the Daniels School of Business, one headline jumps out: *“Purdue's Mitch Daniels School of Business aims to redefine what it means to lead.”* That line didn’t come from a press release — it came from Mitch Daniels himself, in a standout interview with WTHR-TV on April 23, 2025.

Daniels didn't just talk about curriculum. He framed a vision. He spoke of Purdue's legacy of excellence and how "this new reimagined business school will set itself apart" as "uniquely positioned to teach young men and women how to lead businesses of highly technological character, which is increasingly the ones that create the most value in the country."

In essence, Daniels envisioned the headline he'd like to see and spoke to that.

And he didn't stop at theory — he told a story.

"I heard over and over," Daniels recalled, "businesses would tell me, 'We love your graduates. They know their stuff. They work hard. But we wish they could share what they know more effectively with a team — or maybe write a memo others can absorb.'"

That moment — clear, candid and human — is why the headline he generated sings. It's also a masterclass in media communication.

In today's fast-moving media landscape, a great interview isn't just about answering questions — it's about shaping perception, reinforcing values and advancing narrative. Whether you're an executive, an administrator or a civic leader, the most effective interviews are those that blend clarity, control and connection with the audience.

Here's a simple roadmap for preparing to deliver a winning interview that fulfills your business purpose:

- › Start with identifying and understanding your audience.
- › Decide what you want them to know or better understand.
- › Craft a "home base" message. Think of the "why" and "how." Daniels wanted his audience in Indianapolis (and beyond online) to know that Purdue had "reimagined" its business school in a way that uniquely prepares its graduates to contribute and lead in today's tech-driven economy.

- › Short cut: Envision the headline. If you could write it, what would it be? Speak to that, as Daniels did skillfully.
- › Anticipate the questions (even the easy ones) and prepare for them.
- › Identify a short story or anecdote to use that will reinforce your messages and make them memorable. Stories are not only the most persuasive form of communication, but you will also naturally be authentic and more dynamic when sharing one.

A truly effective interview delivers a message that resonates with its audience, sticks in memory and serves its strategic purpose. The prep roadmap — anchoring a message, anticipating questions and choosing a story that brings it all to life — is your guide. When you prepare with intention, you don't just answer. You connect. You shape perception. You drive the narrative.

[Kevin Sullivan](#), a 1980 Daniels School alum, served as White House communications director under President George W. Bush. He also was assistant secretary for outreach at the U.S. Department of Education. Prior to his time in Washington, he was senior vice president for corporate communications and media relations at NBC Universal. He is founder of Kevin Sullivan Communications and a senior advisor at the George W. Bush Presidential Center.