

Website Feature Copy

Performing the perfect pivot

No, we're not talking about ballet or tap, and "jazz hands" are optional. If you represent your organization to the media, it's helpful to know how to gracefully "pivot" from a question you'd rather not deal with to the topic of your choice.

As a first step, make sure your PR representative confirms the purpose, scope, and conditions of the interview beforehand. Your team will let you know whether you're waltzing into a cordial conversation or an adversarial tango.

Set the tempo by planning your messaging goals and preparing your responses for obvious questions. Then think about the not-so-obvious questions, gather your facts and statistics, and plan your pivots.

The key to pivoting is doing it with style, smoothly and gradually. Give the question a nominal response, and then transition, or bridge, to a relevant messaging point you want to make.

Keep the fancy footwork to a minimum. Simple is better, and if you can pivot to a related subject or similar situation, that's best. Practice the technique and then practice some more until you're comfortable freestyling your transitions.

Of course, reporters always want to lead, but you don't have to accept negative language or framing. Whether you deftly restate a question using your own terms or openly reject the interviewer's premise, don't let anyone put you in the corner.

Remember, you're "on stage" from the moment you enter the venue or virtual meeting space. Be friendly and kind to everyone you encounter, not just the reporter. The person behind the camera, microphone, or front desk is just as important, and may influence what ends up in the final piece.

Finally, keep it real and be your authentic self. Let your passion for your subject show, never stretch the truth, and always wear comfortable shoes!