

How to Handle Q&A

- **Don't do it cold – preparation is the key to success**
 - Brainstorm potential topics and questions that may come up
 - Develop answers (or non-answers) in advance
- **Anticipate the types of questions you may be asked. Types include:**
 - Innocent/basic; seeking comment on rumors or speculation; hypothetical; long-winded or convoluted; open-ended; bringing up negative information about you or your competitors; multi-part; combative, judgmental or emotional
- **Listen for the “topic” of questions**
 - It often sounds like this: “BLAH-BLAH-BLAH-**TOPIC**-BLAH-BLAH”
 - Don't get trapped answering long-winded, poorly worded questions
 - Once you've heard the topic, think back to your prepared Q&A
 - Avoid reacting to the last five words of the question
- **“Bridge” away from questions you don't want to answer**
 - First, acknowledge the question and provide some sort of answer to the question asked – don't just ignore it
 - Then, “bridge” to what you do want to talk about: “I'm glad you asked that because it's something we're taking very seriously. I can't provide you with a lot of information on that right now, but what I can say is...”
 - Stand your ground: once you have answered, do not allow yourself to be drawn into answering it again
 - If it's something you can answer off-line, ask the questioner for a business card or contact info and offer to get back to them
- **How to say “No Comment” without using those loaded words**
 - “I'm sorry but I'm not able to speak to that subject”
 - “Thanks for asking but I'm not able to answer that question”
 - “I'm sorry but that information is proprietary”
- **How to handle emotional questions**
 - Acknowledge the emotional content (“I understand your concern...”)
 - Then bridge back to your messages (“... but what I'd like to talk about is...”)