

Some notes on the talking with media for DEFCON attendees and speakers by Dead Addict.

This is not my speech.

If you want my speech, you will have to go to it, or wait a few months for the video to come online.

Following my advice may make the media's job a bit harder. To the good journalists, I apologize, to the bad journalists, I hope you won't be able to get any stories out of Defcon (yes, I know mentioning the red hair, tattoo's and full leather jackets 'set the tone', uh huh).

For the mature intelligent people out there, please forgive me if my advice may seem obvious, but there are many people here who are younger and many with poor judgement (sometimes the same people, older folks don't have the excuse of youth, and the folks with youth and good judgement show others that youth isn't really an excuse either).

That being said, I'll approach the obvious before moving on to more subtle points.

Do not admit to crimes to a journalist. Law enforcement can and does get leads through reading the paper and watching television. In fact many crimes which would below their threshold to actively investigate may suddenly become a top priority. It's one thing to commit a crime they normally wouldn't investigate, it's another thing altogether to flaunt your derision for the laws by boasting on national television about your crimes. A sidenote: it's generally not a good idea to humiliate law enforcement.

Having said that DC might not be the best place to boast of your crimes (certainly not with detail) at all. Your newfound friend might be a fed. Awareness of law enforcement attending DC is one reason the 'spot-the-fed' contest was created.

You can talk about interesting things you've been doing, but always discuss such things in a legal context: "on my home network, i discovered I could do xyz with abc technologies...". Instead of "I hacked ABC bank the other day because they had this lame vulnerability"

As I said, all of this may seem obvious, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need to be stated.

Don't place your friends in danger. This is a good rule that can apply outside of hacking and journalism, but it's useful to state. I've seen friendships and groups broken up by one person talking to the press when the others weren't interested in publicity for their activities. If you are involved with a group of people in your activities, get their consent before going forward with any interviews.

Have a reason to talk to the press. A real reason, beyond ego and vanity (often times compelling motivations for people). Beyond seeing you face on TV, your name in print, is there a motivation that you have? While it may be possible that

being on TV at Defcon will help your career, its potentially equally likely that it will harm it. I've known people who were threatened with being fired if they showed up on camera at DC – at least that employer gave the person forewarning.

Research the journalist. If their past work was crap, there is a good chance that their future work will be as well. If you get 'bitten' by a journalist (ie: they assure you that you'll be treated kindly in their article/TV show, and instead you are crucified) but upon later research determine that they burn everyone, are they to blame or are you? Another way to put this is how much pity do you have for the person who shows up on the Jerry Springer show, or calls up Dr. Laura and then gets humiliated? That being said, if they are good responsible journalists, you might want to consider talking to them when you wouldn't normally talk to a journalist. Good journalism is only as good as its sources. Keep the above points in mind if you decide to engage them.

With all this said, there are good reasons for talking to the media.

When to talk to the media: When you have a product to pitch, when you have a book to pitch, when you have a specific political agenda to pitch. If you decide to engage the media, keep in my mind your own agenda, and attempt to not stray from it. Even if it means not answering their questions (remember journalists rarely pring their questions, only your answers).

If these matters interest you, come see my speech. I'll blather on for nearly an hour and give clever anecdotes, drop some names that you don't care about, and may even give you the illusion you can change the world – or at least stay out of jail.