



## Winning the Tug-Of-Words

### Interviewer Technique

**The AK-47:** pursues rapid fire, progressively negative or accusatory questioning. For example, “How could this happen? Way anyone hurt? Shouldn’t you have prevented this? Who’s to blame here?”

**The Buttinski:** continually interrupts your answers – “Can’t you just admit...”, “Will you answer my question...”, “Sure, but what about...”

**The Grenade Tossers:** hurls inflammatory declarations at you, such as “You’ve flip-flopped on this issue” or “Your safety record is among the industry’s worst.”

**The Repeater:** a single-agenda interrogator who poses the same negative question over and over in the hope of pushing you into a misstatement.

**The Interpreter:** Listens patiently, and then adds, “So what you’re really saying is...” or “In other words, you mean...”

**The Framer:** attempts to box you into an either/or, lose/lose situation – “So either you lacked adequate training or you broke standard policy...”

**The Silencer:** displays dissatisfaction with your statement by simply staring at you, an attempt at pressuring you into expanding your remarks.

### Counter Strategy

Select the one question you are most comfortable with and respond using one of your central themes. The interviewer will likely follow-up on your answer, ceding to you control of the agenda. Should he return to his original line of inquiry, you will own the advantage of the earlier acquaintance with the combusive questions.

Remain focused and unfazed. This is merely an attempt to goad you into a snap, emotional response. Stick to your core messages. Don’t be afraid to drop in a “May I please complete my answer?”

Another technique designed to throw you off stride. Never repeat the contention, otherwise you will grant enormous credibility to the very notion you are contesting. Instead, respond with your most appropriate theme and remain in the positive.

This requires cool and patience. Work your way through your core themes, and if the questioning persists, simply recycle your answers. Don’t be worn down by his relentlessness.

This approach is often mistaken as a sign of agreement. What the interviewer is really trying to do is twist your comments to suit his own purpose. Politely, yet firmly, restate your position in your own words.

You define your universe, not the interviewer. Don’t debate within his limited options; point out other, more positive alternatives. But be cautious not to reveal more information than appropriate.

Pleasantly stare back. Don’t give into the temptation to expound. TV and radio air time is too valuable for your host to let too many seconds pass before resuming his questioning.