

GS Insight

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Say It With Eloquence

You Don't Need a Thousand Words to Paint a Great Picture

Regardless of the industry, how you speak to the media is every bit as important as what you say. Unless you are the president of the company with breaking news, your view is competing for coverage — and if you don't say it with panache, what you say may never get printed or broadcast.

Think about it: When a reporter must choose between similar remarks from two or more sources, the one who speaks with color and style, who makes the listener really feel and visualize a situation, will inevitably be the one quoted. Of course, if you have something really different to say, a unique point of view, *that* can certainly stand out. But even then, when you must speak for your business, your company or your industry, saying it with verve adds jet fuel to your idea.

Most of the following quotes employ similes or metaphors that breathe life into ideas, and often appeal to one or more of the senses. Great quotes usually convey feeling, and reporters love them because they can be highly memorable. The lively quote gets up off the page and grabs the reader. As the following examples show, you don't need a thousand words to paint a great picture.

"To grow, you have to push those technology buttons. We've become very aggressive about adopting new enabling technologies. In this business, you're either fast or you're forgotten."

Delores Marciel, corporate procurement VP at Adaptec, maker of input/output components for computer systems
Information Week, Aug. 23, 1999

"It was as if [EPA Administrator] Browner pulled a lever and opened a trap door, and no one knew how far they were going to fall."

Tom Graves, general counsel for the National Paint & Coatings Association, after filing a petition challenging EPA standards on soot and smog regulations
Modern Paint & Coatings, July 1999

"I was over at my brother-in-law's the other day and sat at his modem, and that's when I really realized how much better I have it than all those folks still on 28.8 ... It's like when you got automatic door locks on your car, and at first you thought, 'Do I really need this?' Once you have them you can never go back."

An executive at a health care information publishing company, commenting on high-speed digital access
New York Times, April 28, 1999

"He will become our Y2KKK problem."

Representative W.J. (Billy) Tauzin, Republican dean of Louisiana's Congressional delegation, commenting on the prospect of David Duke winning the congressional seat vacated by Robert L. Livingston
New York Times, April 28, 1999

"It's like handing out speeding tickets at the Indy 500. You can pull over whoever you want to."

Bill Burnham, electronic commerce analyst and trading guru at Credit Suisse First Boston, commenting on the the vast options available to on-line traders.
New York Times Feb. 7, 1999

**"What's my return on e-commerce?
Are you crazy?
This is Columbus in the New World.
What was his ROI?"**

Andy Grove, Intel Chairman, when asked to quantify his company's payoff from Internet e-commerce
Strategy & Business, 2Q 1999

"Holding DaimlerChrysler liable in this case is like holding the manufacturer of a bulletproof vest responsible because their product saved someone's life but resulted in a few bruised ribs."

Karl Lukens, an attorney for the automaker, following a \$58.8 million jury award in a class-action suit filed by a woman whose hand was burned when her car's airbag inflated in an accident
New York Times, Feb. 18, 1999

"It's like being on a hang glider, running off the side of a cliff, and hoping the winds aren't blowing against you."

Lawton Fitt, General Partner at Goldman Sachs & Co., on the risk and exhilaration of an initial public offering of an Internet stock
Business Week, Sept. 6, 1999

"If this is the constitutional convention for cyberspace, it's as if they started the talks in Philadelphia without half the colonies."

Andrew L. Shapiro, senior advisor to the Markle Foundation, commenting on the structure of a new committee to oversee Internet policy issues
New York Times, Aug. 30, 1999

"She just has to breathe in and out 17 times a minute for three years and [an estimated \$66 million in Hewlett-Packard restricted-share grants] are hers."

Graef Crystal, editor of an Internet compensation newsletter, pointing out that the bulk of CEO Carly Fiorina's compensation package at HP is not tied to performance (to be fair, the new CEO reportedly abandoned about \$70 million in stock options when she left Lucent Technologies.)
Wall Street Journal, Sept. 23, 1999

"Feet fall within a narrow range [of sizes]. They are not all snowflakes out there in the world. They are predictable."

Kirk Marshall, co-owner of KLM Laboratories, on the prospects of custom-molding orthotics to a mass market
Plastics News, Aug. 30, 1999

The following quote conveys the feeling and impact of current events on business:

"The Timor issue creates a lot of anxiety. It goes against a lot of the progress we thought we were seeing earlier ... It hurts overall confidence in the country. And that can spill down into the local economy."

John K. Johnson, Southeast Asian chief for H.J. Heinz, which purchased a large Indonesian sauce company in March
Wall St. Journal, Sept. 8, 1999

A word of caution: Even though attack dog tactics, like the following, do make memorable quotes, they are best reserved for political points.

"What you have here is an extremely greedy and profitable industry that is ripping off the American people big time and using its profits to put extraordinary pressure on Congress, through campaign contributions to both parties, not to move forward to protect American consumers."

Rep. Bernard Sanders (Ind.-Vermont), commenting on pharmaceutical industry opposition to a prescription drug benefit proposal for Medicare
Chemical Market Reporter, July 26, 1999

The right words do not fall easily from the lips of most business executives. Foresight and training can go a long way toward polishing one's poise and confidence and learning to give great "sound bites" when talking with the media. Experienced G&S media professionals can conduct on-site speaker training that can help executives quickly master the skills needed to speak more effectively, and memorably, to the trade or business press. (More on this in a future issue.) Should you need immediate assistance, please contact one of our offices.

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Know someone who might consider joining G&S? Our growing G&S family has immediate openings at all levels (entry level, AEs, acc't. mgrs, sr. mgm't., etc.) in High Technology, Consumer Marketing & Biz-to-Biz practices. Referrals should be directed to Cos Mallozzi, Pres. & CEO at 212/697-2600 or cmallozzi@gibbs-soell.com.

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