

shows you don't know the answer but know how to get it, and that you're willing to give it to him/her in a more appropriate manner. It shows you care about being accurate, not glib.

Now let's turn to the bumpy part—when things aren't going well, when you hit snags and difficult people and tough questions, getting that ambushed or "I'm not in control" feeling.

## Handling Difficult Questions and Questioners

### *Taking Back the Power*

Because of our conditioned "I am powerless; ask away" mental set, we *allow* too much during question-and-answer sessions. Just keep reminding yourself that you have total power over your answers. Not over the questions, but over the answers.

- *The information is yours*

Before you speak, think: "The information is mine. Only I know it this way. No one can forcibly extract it from me. It's my gift to give, and I alone will decide what to give, how much of it to give, and also how to give it." This will make you know what a powerful position you're really in.

- *You don't have to tell all*

You may choose what you say and delete and edit as you go. Since no one can read your mind (not yet, anyway), you can *choose* what to tell.

- *Respond only to what's asked*

Stay on target. Make your answers short, succinct, and most of all, to the point! Don't tell them *all* you know, just tell them what they asked for. It's not only safer; it's less boring. If they want more, they'll ask a follow-up question, which is a good idea because it makes for a *dialogue*, not a monologue—the proper format for the question-and-answer period. It also gives you more time to think.

## Buying Time

Probably the most difficult aspect of answering questions is that at the end of the question everyone expects an instant answer. Some of us have great extemporizing abilities and the mind-to-mouth route works really well. Lots of people don't, and further, don't want to blurt out any