

For Students: Please listen to the teacher read the dialogues and question before answering each question. Please answer the questions with the full answer rather than only the number. The dialogues are contained in this pack after the question for your review. Please do not read them until instructed to do so by the teacher or after the lesson.

Part 4 – Interview



LP1E 12-1

No. 26

- 1 The public was not persuaded by the advertising it used.
- 2 The public felt it should not have been paid for with tax dollars.
- 3 It attempted to inform the public about the county government's services.
- 4 It used President Reagan's words to appeal to the public.

No. 27

- 1 Getting the media interested in the county government's plans.
- 2 Having to choose her words carefully when talking to the media.
- 3 Being criticized for trying to make the county government more transparent.
- 4 Being accused of manipulating the opposition politicians' words.

Interviewer (I): Good evening. I'm Susan Ferris, and welcome to *Careers in Focus*. Thanks for coming to the studio with us today, Linda. Could we start off by your telling us a bit about what a public information officer does?

Linda Gould (LG): Sure. The public information officer is basically a liaison between the government and the public, and so what that means is they deal with media, they handle calls from constituents, and try to give out information.

I: I believe you helped to develop a marketing strategy. What did that involve?

LG: Well, marketing is usually considered something that companies do to get people to buy their products. In government, it's a little different. People pay taxes, so they don't really have to buy the products. But, government offers so many services that people are often unaware of. So, what we did was develop a marketing strategy, we used advertising, we used public events, we used market research to try to get the information that the county government provides to constituents.

I: OK. What was the public's image of the county government?

LG: That's a really interesting question. Ever since President Reagan said, "the nine most terrifying words in the English language are 'I'm from the government, and I'm here to help,'" Americans have been pretty distrustful of

their government, and that includes county government. So we were in part, you know, trying to counter that negative image.

I: What kind of challenges did you face in your role as a spokesperson?

LG: The biggest challenge had to be that the media always wants a short, easy explanation—something that we call “sound bites.”

I: Right.

LG: But no issue is ever really short and easy, and, and understandable without including all the nuance that we wanted to include. Anytime you work for government, you have to be careful what you say because there's the opposition out there who's just waiting to pounce on anything that they can take advantage of. But it isn't so much limitations or restrictions because you can never know, you know, what is going to be taken out of context. So, the really important thing is just being sensitive to how your words can be manipulated, and act accordingly.

I: What was the county government's approach to transparency?

LG: Well, transparency changes depending on the circumstances. You know, the whole marketing strategy that we were involved in was part of trying to make government transparent and accountable to the people. But as soon as politicians get in office, you know they're under constant attack from the opposition, from the media, and so they—it, it's almost like as soon as they get into office, there's this temptation to always shut down the information and to close that door to transparency. So, sometimes you get it, sometimes you don't.

I: Great. Thank you so much for talking with us today.

LG: Thank you so much for your interest.

No. 26 What does Linda say about the marketing strategy she worked on?

No. 27 What was one of the challenges Linda faced in her work?