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I'm getting ready to conduct media training with folks in my organization. Anyone have lessons learned one working with media that they would like to share?

3 months ago

Follow Holly

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Brennan Sarich, Jill Elswick and 44 others like this

356 comments



Follow Pete

**Pete Burdon** • Never talk to the media before organising the key messages you want to get through in the interview. Then answer the questions asked briefly, but then bridge back to these messages consistently. Never use exactly the same wording when repeating a message. Also sometimes dress them up as sound bites so the media cant resist but use these in their stories.

3 months ago • Like

7



Follow Cayci

**Cayci Banks** • Practice on camera interviews with your staff. Play them back and let the group critique. One of the primary concerns of my staff is always being on camera, so let them practice and hopefully feel more comfortable about it.

3 months ago • Like

4



Follow Wendy

**Wendy O'Neill** • It's obvious but often forgotten -- Answer in complete sentences, pulling in some key components of the question into your answer, to avoid being taken out of context.

3 months ago • Like

5



Follow Gregg

**Gregg Feistman, M.A.** • Also - never be afraid to say "I don't know." Don't speculate! If you don't know the answer, say so and promise to get back to the reporter in a timely manner.

3 months ago • Like

8



Follow Pete

**Pete Burdon** • Totally agree with Cayci. It's also important to do lots of on camera interviews because during the first few they will probably be nervous and more worried about what they look and sound like than actually learning anything. So for the first few interviews, go easy on them to build their confidence.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jan

**Jan Angilella** • Absolutely practice. Tell your folks to have three points ready. Normal practice, too, is the TV producer will put your person through a pre-interview. Very important! This is a chance for your client to get the message in the segment. I've had producers ask "What is the most important thing about X, Y, Z.. And when you still get asked something out of the blue on live TV, then you bring it back to what you know. "That's a good question Larry. It's difficult to say. But..." Then you say what you know. In bucco a lupu! (That's Italian for 'good luck!')

3 months ago • Like

1

**Bob Ibach** • Holly, I have done this for many years beginning with my 10 years as PR director of the Chicago Cubs where I had to counsel the ballplayers in their approach to

#### Latest Updates



**Pete Burdon** started a discussion: During media training, do you advise clients to buy some time and come up with three key messages even if the reporter only wants a quick sound bite? Also, what if he is on deadline?

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**Brad Maione** commented in the group on I have to write a number of articles at a 6th grade reading level and wondered if anyone can tell me how I check the level. Is there a public site I can go to for this or do I need special software: Check this out:...

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**Marmie Edwards** and 1 more commented on: How much would you pay for a video?

48 comments 3 hours ago

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handling media questions. During the past 15 years of owning my own PR firm, I have worked with many clients such as Bayer, Topps, Nikco Sports, Make-A-Wish, etc and helped shape their campaigns and also worked with spokespersons for these campaigns so that message points delivered to the media are on target, etc. Would love to be able to assist your company on these matters. Call me to discuss sometime. Regards, Bob Ibach: 847-922-6686

3 months ago • Like

2



Follow Neil

**Neil Kuvin** • As a former TV exec. I managed in major markets including NY, Detroit, Pittsburg, Boston & Atlanta. In crisis situations our experienced reporters chewed up & spit out hesitant, unprepared & otherwise ill-equipped spokespersons. For the last 20 years my PR/Media Relations company has been training CEOs & other "spokespeople" to 1. plan for crisis, 2. be prepared for the "oh hell, I didn't expect that question," 3. short, crisp answers (let the reporter ask follow-ups) 4. Stay focused & alert. 5. Tell the truth. 6. Ask your own questions if you need clarification. 7. Tell the truth. 8. What you say "off the record" can be used, and did I say, Tell the truth?

3 months ago • Like

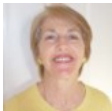
2



Follow Helen

**Helen Slater** • Looking at Holly's question, I translate it as wanting 'lessons learned' or war stories, rather than media training tips. I stand to be corrected? Anyway, here's one: The CEO of the New Zealand Employers and Manufacturers Association has just lost his job for commenting on what he alleged is the reason why women in NZ are paid 12% less than men (productivity). It's a bit involved, but this is a prime example for media training - here's the link. <http://bit.ly/H2Fvz>. Do check out the full interviews. they're real eye-openers on what not to do when dealing with the media.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • Lots of good advice here, and I agree with Wendy completely. Best way to manage questions. As a professional, media trainer, I would also strongly add caution against jumping straight to message development. Many interviews fail because people forget the strategic reasons for doing the interview/s in the first place. Ask first, what is the overall impression we want to create? WHY? Who are we really targetting our message at - pick TWO key audiences - not all customers will be appropriate - pick the most affected. WHY are they important? And then finally you can start to think about and plan your messages. What does that key audience WANT and NEED to hear from us? WHY?

Jan & Gregg also offer good advice.

BTW, I have a simple planning sheet which I'm happy to share Holly. Let me know if you would like one.

And finally, I would also counsel about having a trained trainer working with your team. You will get better results and longer lasting results.

Good luck and have fun.

3 months ago • Like

1



Follow Neil

**Neil Kuvin** • I would be happy to share some of my prepared materials with you via email. Let me know if you're interested and we can figure what might be useful.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • I agree with all the previous comments, but there is one supreme rule, never lie or try to hide the facts not matter how tempted the spokesperson may be. If you don't have an answer to a question say so and promise to come back with the appropriate information.

3 months ago • Like

1



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Thanks again to all who have commented. This is a great discussion with lots of good advice. You guys are awesome!

3 months ago • Like

1

**Mike Collins** • We also specialize in media and crisis preparation and there's a lot of good advice here about audience targeting, message development and discipline. Recommend



Follow Mike

two other tactics. First, to teach a too-talkative subject how to speak in short soundbites, we've sometimes taken them into the editing room and challenged them to pretend they're editing a story and asked them to find a 5-second bite (amazing how it works!). To impress the subject on the importance of clarity of communication and of avoiding jargon, we have a retired national journalist who interviews the subjects by phone, then writes a short news story based on the call.

3 months ago • Like

2



Follow Jessica

**Jessica Coscia** • Speaking to reporters requires getting down to the bottom line as quickly, and as quotably, as you can. It's important to have key talking points in the can and a unified message that everyone (yes, everyone) in your organization is on the same page with. Any organization that is going to work with the media, has to recognize that reporters LIVE by the deadline, so you shouldn't commit to an interview or to providing content that you are not going to come through with by deadline. That is the best way to tarnish a relationship with a reporter. Having a media kit, talking points, backgrounders, images on-hand helps an organization with being more responsive when a reporter comes a calling. Looks like you have some awesome tips above as well. If I think of anything else I will let you know! Good luck!

3 months ago • Like

3



Follow Monica

**Monica Carazo** • Reporters have a long memory. When you said, you will get back to them, do it as soon as you can. I still have reporters ask me about details, "Off the record." We all know that doesn't exist. This is one of my fav that I offer to my clients, NEVER EVER answer a hypothetical question. That is how you get misquoted.

3 months ago • Like

3



Follow Harry

**Harry Hollingsworth** • Have those you're training ask themselves what are the five questions that they don't want to be asked of them during a media interview. Then work on an answer to each of those five and how they're going to "bridge" to the point(s) they want to make.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Harry - thanks for the tip. I really like the idea of asking the five questions and practicing the answers. Monica - I absolutely agree, never answer a hypothetical question. Will make sure I hit that point during the training. And Jessica - great to hear from you, hope you are well! I know that you've previously worked in the news media, so your feedback is very helpful to me.

3 months ago • Like • Reply privately • Flag as inappropriate



Follow Helen

**Helen Slater** • Great advice from everyone. These interviews epitomise all that is said above. <http://bit.ly/1H2Fvz>.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Paul

**Paul McCafferey** • It may have already been said, but...never let your staff say anything off the record that you wouldn't let them say on the record.

Oh and the one thing that really helps me as an editor is for them to incorporate the question into their answer. Very often, people will begin to answer the question with a "Yes" or a "No" and then go on to answer more fully.

Having them rephrase the question as part of their answer helps me because I don't have to include the reporter's initial question and it also gives me a good soundbite to use in later bulletins or in the news headlines...for example:

Interviewer "So this is just a cost cutting exercise?"

Interviewee "No it isn't, this is about getting every last bit of value for money out of a reducing budget..."

Far better to get them to say:

Interviewee "This isn't about cost cutting, this is about getting every last bit of value for money out of a reducing budget..."

3 months ago • Like

5



Follow  
Tabassum

**Tabassum Farooq** • Hi Holly ..i just finished a blog talking about television interviews and examples you can share with the participants ...see if there is anything you like and can use from there

<http://cbpr.ae/blog/2011/07/television-revolution-2/#more-629>

There are other blogs too posted that you can go through that might be helpful...

best of luck

3 months ago • Like



Follow Elizabeth

**Elizabeth Flaherty** • I never train my own people. I always get a trusted third party to do it, they can be a little more forthright and it is good to hear what you tell them everyday, coming from another professional. Also, I prefer the doorstep approach straight off the bat in training, it throws even the most seasoned and puts them in the frame of mind to learn quickly once it is over. You can then spend the rest of the session building confidence and it is great to show them the before and after at the end of the training.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Todd

**Todd Forte** • All of the above is great advice. I also teach my clients what I call, "media math," whereas  $3 \times 3 = 0$  and  $1 \times 3 = 1$ . What does that mean? Well, if you deliver three key messages three times during the interview, there's a good chance the reporter will remember none of them - too much information for the short attention spans typical of the profession. However, if you deliver one key message three times during the interview, there's a decent chance the message will be retained and reflected in the coverage. Somewhat sad, but true.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Timothy

**Timothy Watkins** • There is so much good stuff here. My first step is typically to try and anticipate what organizational events are media worthy and begin preparation beforehand. Nonetheless, there are those events that find me. I determine what the goal of our exchange is going to be and then develop messaging based on anticipated questions. I like the example of determining the 5 questions you don't want to be asked. If you can manage those and infuse your messaging during response, then you'll be in decent shape. In the world of soundbites and webbits (tweets), on point messaging is critical.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Tina

**Tina Luster** • One thing I learned in a media training, is NEVER say something untoward as you are leaving the interview. Just because the interview is over, doesn't mean the reporter is off duty. Sometimes the "best" (best for journalists and not your spokesperson) quotes come as the interviewee is taking off the mic. With You Tube and other interactive outlets, this becomes the lede of the story. This is applies to broadcast and print journalists.

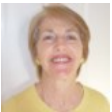
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Follow Monica

**Monica Carazo** • I agree Tina. Recently, didn't we have some presidents who were in this predicament, too? Unaware their mics were still on, they made some colorful remarks that circled the globe?

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • I totally agree wiht Elizabeth - independence is important. So too, is your trainer 's background and qualifications - they, not only need the prerequisite media background but are a trained trainer - they know how to get lasting results.

3 months ago • Like



Follow John

**John Elolf** • Expose your interview subjects to the hard questions. We've had many interview subjects come back to us and say thank you and that the interview was not as hard as the training

3 months ago • Like

1



Follow Monica

**Monica Carazo** • I agree John. I always pose tough questions during the mock interview for my clients. Afterwards, they were very grateful because it was much easier.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Mary Ann

**Mary Ann McCauley, ABC** • Go to [www.ateasewiththemediamedia.com](http://www.ateasewiththemediamedia.com). It is an online, self-guided tutorial that precedes live role playing. It DOES NOT advocate "stay on message" scenarios. Much more productive methodology that ultimately conveys your message.

3 months ago • Like

1



Follow Andy

**Andy Cole** • I used the word "extensive" once with a newspaper reporter, and the article said "expensive." Big difference, especially in the context it was used. Make sure your words use are heard properly.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Timothy

**Timothy Watkins** • Depending on the 'risk' assessment of the exchange, I advocate the 'stay on message' philosophy.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jason W.

**Jason W. Anderson** • A good friend of mine runs a website called Mr. Media Training. He has a lot of good tips on his site and his daily blog. You can google him.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • This is one of the best debates I have seen in LinkedIn, but as usual when there are so many participants, ideas and proposals are scattered around without any subject segregation and departmentalization. So as a way of saying thanks to all the participants for their effort and most valuable information I decided to structure it into what it could be an informal manual about conducting Media Training. Since LinkedIn doesn't allow long texts I posted it as one entry in my personal Blog (<http://masalladegutemberg.blogspot.com/2011/07/pr-experts-share-their-tips-on.html>) Feel free to copy, edit and post it where you consider appropriate or provide any other suggestion.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Mark

**Mark Haviland** • Holly: All the advice is exceptional, and Paul's advice above (rephrasing the question in the answer) is essential. I clicked on your profile and see you work in a healthcare setting. Are there privacy (HIPPA?) concerns? Also, after all the cost-cutting in media outlets, the expertise of reporters may range from the near-expert to the "winging it" level. Your clients or you may want to search for other stories by specific reporters and editors, and ask diplomatic questions of them that assess their knowledge. This is an opportunity to build relationships and clarify their understanding during interviews.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Hi Mark, We do operate under HIPPA guidelines, so talking points are always important. You are right about subject expertise, it's important to understand what the reporter knows about the topic. Great advice, I'll make sure I add that to the training.

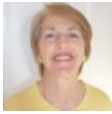
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Follow Laurie

**Laurie Jakobsen** • Remind the executive that an interview is not a normal conversation and it does not follow the rules of normal conversation. Repeating key messages, making it through the dreaded "dead air" pause of a reporter waiting to ask another question in the hopes you'll spill the beans. . . this is more like a negotiation. I like to stress that media training does not just make you better at interviews, it makes an exec better at pitching clients, sealing deals, and those other types of "transactional" conversations that require you to stay on message, listen closely, and accomplish a specific goal.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • Laurie is so very right. Media interviews are far from a normal conversation. They are in fact a "performance," where the stakes are very high. I always say to my clients, you are the paid actor on the stage for your company, so that means you need to learn and internalize your lines, rehearse and stick to your script! I also agree with Laurie - media training, if done well, prepares you for all types of communication. As a client said to me recently, "nothing like looking down the barrel of the media gun to sharpen one's communication."

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Laurie and Jane, thanks for the feedback. Absolutely agree with you, an interview is not a normal conversation. It is an opportunity to make your pitch and sell your points. And I like the analogy of being a paid actor on stage for your company. So true, I think that during an interview, you are not an individual per se. You become the face of the company or organization. Great stuff! Thanks again.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Scott

**Scott Giacoppo** • Never use industry jargon or acronyms. I was surprised to see so many of my staff using them freely when we did our recent media training. Bringing in a reporter and camera really made a big impact. We had our CEO get drilled with some unexpected questions to see how she would handle it and it turned out to be one of the best trainings we put together. The camera man and reporter really appreciated being able to add their input too.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Hey Scott. I agree, it's very easy to use acronyms. I get caught up in that myself and have to really watch that if I am talking with the media. Sounds like your training went well. I'll be bringing in a reporter and camera for "phase 2" of the media training. Thanks for the feedback!

3 months ago • Like



Follow John

**John Livingston** • Understand that everything you say will be on the record and may be published.

Do not offer to go "off the record."

Anticipate questions that will go beyond what is obvious on the surface, and be prepared to answer them -- if asked.

If you are dealing with competing news media outlets, avoid favoring one over the other. Reporters who are made to look foolish have a way of getting even the next time around. (John was a newspaper editor for seven years, and also has years of experience as a newspaper and radio news reporter -- before moving into technical communications and publications design)

3 months ago • Like



Follow Timothy

**Timothy Watkins** • One training I enjoyed follows suit with some of the discussion. We simulated a one-on-one on camera interview and then a press conference. The other participants in the class acted as the media during the press conference, firing questions at the lectern. All activity was video taped and critiqued. Copies of the individual's 'opportunities' were provided for continued review following the training.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Lena

**Lena Davie** • STAY ON MESSAGE. STAY ON MESSAGE.

Make sure everyone knows and understands the messages. Have a goal for the interview and do not let the reporter own/control the discussion. A good interview should be a two-way street. Both parties should gain from the experience, Do not stonewall but do stick to message and do assert your agenda and try your best to get your points across quickly and early.

PRACTICE. PRACTICE.

We always stage mock interviews, both taped and un-taped and allow trainees to watch themselves and others. Then we do it again. We also play print reporter and write an article as it would appear based on their responses they can see how good or bad the story would be. We do this early in the training so they can apply what they learn and try again.

IT IS OK TO SAY YOU DO NOT KNOW.

Stress to trainees that they should not answer questions to which they do not know the answer. It is always better to say "I do not have that information but will get back to you" then to try to guess and give an answer that will ultimately come back to haunt you.

3 months ago • Like



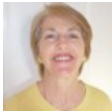
Follow Kevin

**Kevin Davitt** • One of the most helpful pieces of advice I got in over 20 years of my career was that, if you are being filmed/videotaped and you do not sense that you are saying what you need to say, STOP!

Then simply tell the reporter/producer you need a "Take 2."

I've never had anyone refuse that simple request. Reporters, as we all know, do it all the time. You or your client/staff are entitled to the same courtesy.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • Kevin - completely agree, if being taped. Another good rule is to take at least two seconds to respond - listen carefully to the question and respond using a word or phrase from the journalist's question - in complete whole sentences.

Lena - also agree with the mock interview approach. We always have our reporters feedback the stories that they would have written based on the interview. As we say - you need to get the participant "to jump through the hoop at least 3 times" for them to feel confident and competent.

This is a great discussion. I see a white paper coming on best practice. I'll take up that role, if it's of interest?

Thanks Holly for getting us started on this!

3 months ago • Like



Follow Melody

**Melody Kimmel** • As a full-time media trainer for 20 years, I always counsel people never to repeat the negative question. In one of the examples cited earlier, don't reply "This isn't about cost cutting" because that may turn out to be the entire sound bite. Think of Richard Nixon's famous "I am not a crook." Instead, answer the question briefly -- "No" before bridging to what you do want to say and would be happy to be quoted saying -- "this is about getting every last bit of value for money out of a shrinking budget." Visit my site for more tips: <http://mediatraining.fleishmanhillard.com/>

3 months ago • Like

1



Follow Joe

**Joe Troxler** • First-off, I hope that you've actually asked them what they want or need to learn!

Tell them that THEY (as subject matter experts) have the lead in the interview process, not the other way around. Respect your position and reflect that confidently, never arrogantly.

Don't be engaged in subject areas outside your own expertise. If it is within your purview, tell the reporter you'll promptly get back to them and actually DO THAT.

Suggest to your clients that they must ALWAYS do their homework on the reporter, his line of questioning, his background, his show or column, the slant of the prevailing media outlet. The more prep you do, the better in control you will be.

Joe Troxler, free-lance Communications, Writing, Media Relations in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada .

3 months ago • Like



Follow Anna

**Anna Averkiou** • Preparation, preparation, preparation! As per many of the comments above, this is the key. The journalists will have done their research - your staff need to do the same and be prepared and practice answers for any question - no matter how left-field. And always tell the truth - it's impossible to keep things under wraps these days. Whenever I use scenario-based exercises for crisis media management training, the need to be prepared really hits home as participants see how differently they behave and sound when unsure of what to say. ... and of course the other thing is to always sound confident and in control of the situation....

3 months ago • Like

**Joe Troxler** • I love this site!

Always a myriad of good, practical opinions that we can use every day in our jobs and our personal life too.



Follow Joe

3 months ago • Like



Follow Joan

**Joan Gladstone, APR, Fellow PRSA** • Great advice! I also do media training and want to offer an additional suggestion. Since most execs have not been confronted by TV cameras, don't throw them into a videotape session without some orientation. Help them know where to look, why they should adopt a pleasant expression, how to stand, when to use gestures and other body language insights. They will be grateful to you for helping them look - and sound - more confident early in the role-play.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • Who remembers this phrase: "I Want My Life Back."?

Of all the magnificent and brilliant advises posted in this discussion I came to notice the absence of very important word: Empathy.

I can assure you, that BP's CEO Tony Hayward's remarks during the huge oil spill in the gulf of Mexico weren't due to lack of media training. Out of my own experience of 25 years as PR consultant for the international oil industry, I can tell you that media training sessions in the energy sector are more common than going every six months to your dentist for a general oral check up.

So my assessment is that Hayward lacked a good sense of empathy and didn't understand the public concerns. And most of all, how this spill affected, not only those that lived along the gulf's shores, but the whole international environmental community. Many of his remarks during the crisis were perceived as self serving and placing BP's interest and him self's above everyone else: "What the hell did we do to deserve this?" [New York Times, 4/30/10]. "The Gulf of Mexico is a very big ocean. The amount of volume of oil and dispersant we are putting into it is TINY in relation to the total water volume." [Guardian, 5/14/10]. "I think the environmental impact of this disaster is likely to be very, very modest." [Sky News, 5/18/10]

Empathy means the ability to understand another viewpoint so well, you could just about walk in their shoes, regardless of whether you agree with them or not.

This is where you suspend judgment and your ego needs in order to pay full attention to the other person.

But in order to achieve this you and your media trainees, must have a deep understanding of how your business impacts other people's life. If it is a health oriented organization, remember that you are dealing with sick people. If you are in the aviation industry, be aware that many people are shocked by the huge numbers of casualties every time a plane crashes onto the ground. Remember the old Hindu proverb: "for every action there is a chain reaction".

So as a PR professional you have to guide your executive in order they understand another intangible bottom line that goes beyond figures and profits.

Is advisable you start by communicating your intention to understand your publics' concerns. "I can see you are upset. Help me understand why you are upset." And then let them tell their story without interrupting or being defensive. As they talk, you need to communicate your understanding. "That must be so frustrating for you" or "I can see now why that would annoy you." These responses must be genuine, of course.

Although empathy is intangible, its effects can be surprisingly real. I have seen an upset person do a 180 degree turn and become accommodating and co-operative once they realize I understood their position and did not judge them for their feelings.

My advice is to write a "worst case scenarios" list of how your business may impact other people's lives and having well articulated responses that shows a real empathy toward those concerns to be integrated to your media training sessions.

That's why I always insist to conduct a Cultural Sensitivity Training alongside your Media Training if you are conducting operations in another country with different language and perceptions. In the Dominique Strauss-Kahn's case perceptions were quite different in France compared to the U.S.

3 months ago • Like

2



Follow Lorraine

**Lorraine Edwards** • Agree with all of the above. Good advice. I never let "no comment" ever, ever, ever be an answer. Only go off the record on what you want to be quoted on. Never lie. Silence can be golden if you need the time to get your thoughts together. Better that the interviewer fill the silence than an interviewee.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • I agree with all of the above as well. And Hector, it's funny that you mention the BP/Tony Hayward story. I've got that in my training of what NOT to do.

Thanks everyone for the comments and keeping this discussion going!

3 months ago • Like





Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • Holly, when you're dealing with ideas and concepts you must be very flexible in what kind of strategy you will implement, something very different when you are dealing with numbers such as Marketing and Advertising. Conceptions may change in less than 24 hours and make a 180 degrees turn around in either direction: positive or negative. So that's why I insist of creating empathy, or a bridge, with your publics. That's a strategy that a 2000 year old organization has applied very effectively (without any intention by me to turn this discussion into a religious debate): the Catholic church. No wonder its CEO is also called Pontific e (Pont: from Latin meaning bridge, and "artifice" the one that builds). I can bet that Tony Hayward attended several media training, but he lacked something very essential: empathy. So instead of insisting on the "not to do", I'll suggest you to encourage them to develop this characteristic inside of them. I just like turning on the radio, if you don't have the correct dial you won't be able to listen your favorite station; all what you'll hear is noise.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Helen

**Helen Slater** • Again, Hector, we're thinking alike. Building bridges, having empathy, is what it's all about. It is what you do that forms public opinion. when you don't have empathy and don't understand what others think or feel, you end up at odds with your target audiences. One of my clients many years ago didn't take comms advice around an extremely important (for them) business decision. As a result they got bad publicity and it took them many months to understand it was because of their actions and lack of empathy with their community and workforce that caused the situation. Had they had empathy, and understanding with their key stakeholders, they would have taken a different business decision, or at least carried it out differently. They didn't because they believed their shareholders were all that mattered. The Murdoch empire is finding the same thing now. SO - in media training a key message is - you'd better demonstrate understanding of and empathy for your target audiences.

As as aside, it's also interesting that organisations (and many communicators) don't understand that communications specialists are also, when they're doing their job well, business strategists. Leave them out of business decisions at your peril.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Tarunjeet

**Tarunjeet Rattan** • Hi Holly,

One practical tip while giving a media briefing...esp to the top guys in your organisation...I have often seen that seniors after a certain level pride themselves on knowing the media themselves first hand through various sources / parties / marketing etc. Which is good but they often don't realize that once they are on the 'spokesperson' seat the media / friend relationship changes. When you tend to take them through a presentation / talk first on the do's and don'ts and get them to evaluate what it is they want from communication... it is usually met with a snide remark, smirk or complete disinterest ...worse snores from the back of the room! Your points on communication ( however valid) do not sink in.

Through experience, I have always seen that if you start the briefing session with an interview on the worst possible case scenario and put them in a spot, it shakes them real good and makes them sit up and notice and absorb each and every word that you are saying post that.

If the interview goes well for the spokesperson and s/he is able to handle it then you can always recount it as an example of a successful interview. If the person fumbles and lets himself get caught in a journo trap then pick points to discuss from it and then ask the group to comment on what could / should have been done. Then move on to your standard presentation. You will have the room's full attention !

Let us know how it went...

Warm Regards,  
Tarunjeet  
Nucleus  
Public Relations Division

3 months ago • Like



Follow Francesca

**Francesca Balestrazzi** • If you don't know the answer that the reporter that you don't know but add something that you do know and is linked to your key messages. If the reporter is trying to speculate on your answer tell him/her that you are not prepared to answer this question and to move on to the next question.

3 months ago • Like



**Brad Phillips** • Holly - I write a blog called "Mr. Media Training," which features a combination of media training tips and media interview horror stories.

To get you started, you might want to check this link, the 21 Most Essential Media Training

Follow Brad

Links: <http://www.mrmediatraining.com/index.php/2011/02/17/the-21-most-essential-media-training-links/>.

Please let me know if I can answer any additional questions once you've had a chance to click around a bit.

Best wishes,  
Brad Phillips

3 months ago • Like



Follow Eric

**Eric Bergman** • Do not teach your spokespeople to constantly bridge to messages or stay on message. These are outdated tactics in an information-driven world.

Always look for resources (<http://iabcstore.com/prmediarelations/mediatraining.htm>) or media trainers who can take your spokespeople beyond simplistic tactics.

Ensure that each participant is interviewed at least four times during your training, twice for print and twice for broadcast.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Thanks Eric for the feedback. I'll take a look at the web site you've suggested. Take care!

3 months ago • Like



Follow Paul

**Paul Del Colle** • Teach your subjects to actually answer the question, not dodge the question and then repeat the same talking point as before. The audience will just think that the subject is trying to hide something, and not trust that subject going forward. This point is lost on too many spokespeople and politicians.

3 months ago • Like

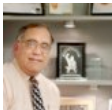
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Follow Timothy

**Timothy Watkins** • The reality is that there are many layers to this topic...and I doubt any one comment is going to address Holly's question comprehensively. There are varying levels of risk associated with media interaction. Some of it depends on the subject, some of it depends on the relationship with the reporter, some of it depends on the organization's standing with the ultimate audience, etc. In some cases, you can speak directly to the questions, but in other circumstances you have to be sensitive to where those questions are taking you and be prepared to get back on point (or message if you will). Nonetheless, I think the thread that weaves through all of the comments is preparation. Good luck Holly.

3 months ago • Like



Follow David

**David Shank** • Can't repeat it enough...be truthful. AND...NEVER say "no comment." There are a 1,000 ways to reply to a question without using the red flag words.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Joe

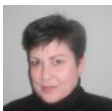
**Joe Troxler** • David:

Excellent point!

Everytime you think that you no longer have to reign in this horse and buggy phrase with clients, someone screws up. And it's surprisingly often that it's somebody who should know better.

There are many people who are already familiar with the theory and practice who aren't even communications or PR experts too.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Andrea

**Andrea Butler** • On a lighter note . . . I advise clients to wrap up interviews -- especially broadcast -- with "my pleasure." It's a clean, economical and graceful exit.

3 months ago • Like

1



Follow Lorraine

**Lorraine Edwards** • Andrea, what a class act!!

3 months ago • Like



Follow Claudia

**Claudia Ferris** • My observation is that it annoys reporters to hear the same couple of messages repeated over and over. Most reporters aren't stupid enough to be fooled by the same answers worded slightly differently. As Monica points out, reporters have long memories and if they are annoyed, they won't keep you as a source - which is fine if you are trying to avoid building relationships with media. I like Jane's suggestion that you don't go directly to key messages as you will likely prepare robot-like answering that works for no-one - Neil's suggestion of working on answers to the questions you really don't want them to ask can work well. I like to tell people to be prepared to give a short, somewhat sensational answer in the first 10 - 15 seconds, followed by the facts and details. TV news will use the short clip and will often crib your facts for their own narration. This way, you give the media what they need - some emotion/urgency/punch, without giving them total control on how this is done. No-one wants boring. Personal stories are good too, but many avoid it as they want to appear "professional" and won't let anyone but key spokespeople talk. I encourage companies to let their affected people speak, after training and practice of course.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Kimberly

**Kimberly Deppe** • Reporters hate it, but remember that you are in control of the interview. If there is a question you don't want to answer, then either say so or brush it aside and move on. Never say "no comment" but there are tons of ways to do that without using those words - I don't have the answer to that now, or that's not something we are prepared to discuss - those are respectable and truthful responses. I totally agree with Paul about rephrasing the question to hit the message in a positive yet truthful way to avoid being misquoted or taken out of context. Be brief, be honest, be approachable, but be in control of the interview and the message. The reporter's job is to ask, but you are not required to answer every question thrown at you.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Suzi

**Suzi Neft** • All the above information is excellent. No one thinks of coffee. Try not to drink it before an interview. It dries out the mouth and throat and makes the interviewee uncomfortable. It's something that runs through your mind at the same time as the interview, especially if your nervous. It's a completely unnecessary worry. Drink water instead.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Anthony

**Anthony Jones** • I had an opportunity to conduct media training for over 200 census bureau managers and field partnership specialists. Some had prior experience dealing with the media while most others didn't. The lesson learned in my case was the importance of formulating a consistent message. We had a number of different situations pop up and having everyone on the same page was extremely important. This allowed us as an agency to look as though we are one team instead of many different teams. And reporters in other regions and markets would use the same messaging and ask other field staff members the same questions which would be worded differently (to try and trick them into saying something they shouldn't).

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • All good information! Thanks everyone for the comments. And I like the tip on ending the interview with "my pleasure". I've done that from time to time during interviews and it is a great way to close out. Thanks everyone!

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jeff

**Jeff Domansky, APR** • Hi Holly, I've gathered 400+ media training resources in the PR Coach library. Hopefully find plenty of resources to help. <http://bit.ly/qePqMr>

3 months ago • Like

**Michael Caldwell** • Responses are dictated by the circumstances. It's always preferable to have media requests filtered through a single channel and then assigned to the proper individual/department. That helps all parties - the reporter gets essential, factual information and the company's directives are promoted. On the other hand, crisis



Follow Michael

management is best handled by an initial "no comment." While the time window for responding may be short, this provides the company the best opportunity for damage control. Having spent over 40 years in print and broadcast media, I can assure you most reporters have already written/formulated their story prior to requesting quotes. My standing rule for clients is to honestly and accurately review the facts; then respond. Too often, a hasty, well intended response can exacerbate an incendiary situation.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Joe

**Joe Troxler** • Brilliant point, Michael and I wholly agree. A single channel, vs. various scattered experts throughout the company or government department/agency is a recipe for an unmitigated disaster.

And there is no 'cookie cutter' approach to each different scenario. You examine everything on a case by case basis. And not alone either, but in a collegial team setting.

So 'no comment' for every occasion is foolhardy, although in many cases it tends to be true. But, yes, in an emergency situation, it certainly can be most appropriate.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Michael

**Michael Caldwell** • Thanks, Joe. The media is ALWAYS searching for a reliable and truthful source. Properly managed, that can be you - even if you are the subject of the story! "No comment" should NOT be used as an official response. In instances where you are not briefed or prepared for specific questions, it provides a time bridge. Any other comment is "spin," and oftentimes can unknowingly create a tangential issue. Get the true facts; then make your comment. Never be afraid of the truth. Regardless the problem, it's much easier to manage. Trust me, the media will eventually discover the facts.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Brad

**Brad Phillips** • Joe and Michael - I agree with you both that "no comment" is a toxic phrase that only inspires more skeptical media coverage. Still, as you suggested, there are times when a spokesperson truly cannot respond directly to a question. In those cases, I advise my clients to "comment without commenting" -- in other words, that they share with the journalist the specific reason they can't respond more fully. I've written an article about commenting without commenting here, which also enumerates a few of the times refusing a question is appropriate: <http://www.mrmediatraining.com/index.php/2011/02/11/advanced-skill-comment-without-commenting/>.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • Relating on my previous experience as a journalist, every time I heard "No comment" it was like an alerting button telling me there was a lot more than we knew about any case or situation, and something very sinister was kept under the rug. So not conforming with a simple "No comment" I was more than motivated to dig deeper and go to any source available that could give an insight of what was going on. So in the process I contacted friends and foes alike of that who said "No comment". Then you can imagine that at the end more damaging information was emerging around the case.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jon

**Jon Lederman, CBC** • It's ok to admit that you don't have the information required to answer a specific question and that you'll have to get back the reporter. Just be sure to do so before deadline! Also, refrain from answering questions related to customers or partners that they should be answering for themselves. In other words, it's ok to say, "You really should speak to X about that."

3 months ago • Like



Follow Claudia

**Claudia Ferris** • I seem to have replied to the wrong thread earlier - sorry about any confusion that generated. It should not be difficult for people within a company to speak to the vision or mission of that company if they believe it and live it. That means that executives need to work with their staff to ensure they all know where they fit in with the vision. I would agree that one or two key people should be coordinating media, but they don't have to be the only spokesperson. It can be very effective to refer questions to the appropriate department, (with a previously media-trained rep) to get a deeper story. I'm a big fan of having some emotion and passion allowed as it makes a story more interesting. Certainly more interesting than key messages - which are fine as long as they are delivered with some personal examples that can be worked into a story. The facts are for background, media still needs some kind of emotional punch. If you don't help them with it, they can easily manufacture it by finding and even helping to create conflict. Environmentalists can often be encouraged to light themselves on fire or create a visual rally against your client if the facts and representatives are too boring.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great discussion points - especially on "no comment". I appreciate all of it! I'm very fortunate in my current role as we have a Public Affairs department which acts as the "gatekeeper". They take the initial call from a reporter, get the necessary information and then find the appropriate spokesperson. So I usually have ample time to prepare for an interview. Thanks everyone!

3 months ago • Like



Follow Gary

**Gary Catt** • A. Determine the format.  
B. Identify the reporter and look at their past work  
C. Schedule the interview to allow sufficient time to prepare  
D. Develop most likely questions and your key messages around them  
E. Anticipate follow ups.  
F. Practice. Practice. Practice.  
G. Critique, but don't browbeat.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Mona

**Mona Terrell** • A key learning for you is that even with media training, everyone is not cut out to talk to the media, even if its a senior leader. At the minimum, your colleagues will understand the media, the animal it is and why having the right person, at the right time, for the right reason, with the right comments are critical to expressing the message. Who are you training and why? What's your goal going in?

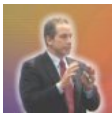
3 months ago • Like



Follow Mac

**Mac Harris** • When the interview is over, it should be over. Change the subject to something neutral like the weather or sports scores--anything but the topic of the interview. When the camera turns off, it can be tempting to engage further about the topic--and say something that opens a new line of inquiry that gets the camera rolling again. And, as many have already said, tell the truth. You don't have to tell the reporter everything you know, but everything you tell him or her should be the truth.

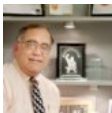
3 months ago • Like



Follow Mark

**Mark Grimm** • - Have a clear idea in your own mind what you want the headline to be, then draft a disciplined message geared to produce it.  
- Explain to them, the media, what's in it for them. Why it will attract readers and viewers?  
- Integrate the message across all media platforms  
- Be visual with emotional soundbites

3 months ago • Like

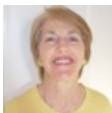


Follow David

**David Shank** • Holly, Mac raises a great, and sometimes missed point --from the time the reporter and his/her crew, if it's broadcast, enters the room -- EVERYTHING is on the record. Casual comments before the camera runs, or said to the videographer while the reporter might be on the other side room could be used. The same applies when a print reporter comes in. The note pad or audio recorder may not be out the pocket, but the reporter is listening and remembering everything. The typical response after the 'official' interview is over is to drop your guard and get casual. That's when you have to be even more stringent. Often you may have to walk the reporter and crew back to the front door, and as Mac suggests, keep the conversation to the weather, sports or kids.

And since I used the term "on the record," don't even begin to or let your staff people think they can play on or off the record games. The only time OTR, "background" or "deep background" might be used is in Washington and then it's a questionable tactic.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • I totally agree Mona. Even all the training in the world, some people are just not oging to make it as spokespeople. It is useful to remember that people default to type under pressure (as we saw so painfully demonstrated by Tony Hayward). I recall at one media training session I ran for a client, our chosen spokesperson took umbrage at a question (in the role-play) and swung a punch at the reporter. If that reporter (a guest of the client) hadn't moved fast he would have been knocked out. Needless to say he was quickly removed of this spokesperson role, and we changed tack immediately.

David's comments about "off the record" are spot-on, as we Aussies say. I always advise my clients that you are never off the record and behave as if everything can and will be used.

I have found that the savvy, veteran reporters are very good at final last question when the interview looks done, with their "anything else I need to know ..." Can throw an interviewee off guard.

Such a great discussion.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Helen

**Helen Slater** • There's no such thing as an off the record comment. I used to get some very good stories by picking up a comment from one source and going with it to another source, building the story from there. Even if your exec is not quoted, the information can be used. Why say things off the record? The information will be used somehow, on or off the record.

Remember, straightening the tie, fluffing the hair and generally 'preparing to look good' - asking "do I look OK?" and making silly self-deprecating comments in front of a rolling camera can be used against your exec (usually if they've fallen from grace as one CE here in New Zealand has found). Get your exec looking camera-ready before fronting the journalist, in another room.

When it comes to key messages - find a whole lot of different ways to express the same things and don't repeat the exact same phrase. Other wise, it's like having a parrot in the room - not a good look.

Above all, anticipate every possible angle and if there's time, think about who else the reporter might have talked to (ask the reporter but don't expect the answer) and what other information the reporter might have in hand. Are there possible bombshells? If so, think about how you're fronting those - proactivity is good.

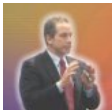
3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great comments - I agree that not everyone can be a spokesperson. An advantage to conducting a media training is you can set up mock situations and determine who is most comfortable in the role of spokesperson. Some key leaders are spokespeople whether they like it or not. I'm very fortunate in that my organization's leaders are pros and work very well during interviews on and off camera. I like the tip about being "on" as soon as the reporter walks in or you walk into the studio. Very true. I've seen TV interviews when the spokesperson was making disparaging comments and didn't realize that the microphone and camera were on. Mac, great point on changing the subject when the interview is over. It's too easy for interviewees to keep talking "off the cuff" and get into trouble. Thanks everyone!

3 months ago • Like



Follow Mark

**Mark Grimm** • I spent 12 years as a news reporter/producer. Rule one --- remember to ask, "What's in it for them? Be able to explain concisely why they will benefit from covering you, i.e. how will it attract listeners, viewers, or readers.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Ken

**Ken Hitchner, MBA** • Preparing for a media interview is like making lasagna. Don't feed them everything at once. Give them the information in layers, which are much easier to digest. Remember, most media types are not authorities on your company or industry. Package the information into three layers, beginning with the key messages first. Then, expand on it with more detail in each subsequent layer. That will allow them to ask softball questions off the top of their heads, which your employee is ready to answer. As a fall-back option, make sure the employee knows the company's mission statement and how it directly relates to today's topic. When the employee is stumped by a question, he/she should bring in the connection with the mission statement to fill the gap.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Scott

**Scott Frangos** • Hello Colleagues -

Tell the Truth... and tell it promptly. Historical lessons about about companies that failed to do so.

Great question and comments.

Cheers -  
Scott

Scott Frangos, CMS Developer & Optimizer  
WebFadds.com - Optimize • Connect • Convert

3 months ago • Like

1



Follow Dave

**Dave Carstens** • Thought I'd throw in an idea or two... (from the point of view of a former TV news videographer - who has supported literally hundreds of media training sessions for trainers I'm sure many of you know)... I just did one where three execs were trained: a bold CEO, an obtuse senior exec, and a younger, rising female exec... the first mock interview and playback revealed the younger exec to be defensive and unsure, and the CEO's condescension didn't help the situation...but the second time around she hit it out of the park... So, wisely, our client (in-house PR) convinced the higher ups that she was to be the spokesperson, even though she is the more junior exec of the three.

Lesson: hold your ground, rather a CEO with a bruised ego than a PR disaster.

Simple visual tip: remember, for the 'real' media interview, pay attention to what the camera sees behind your spokesperson... every picture tells a story.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Joe

**Joe Allegritti** • A few additional thoughts I don't think I saw elsewhere:

- Manage expectations. Reporters often misquote their sources. Your folks need to be ready for that possibility.
- Avoid "no comment." Come up with an alternative that fits the bill without sounding so evasive and suspicious.
- Body language:
  - Look the reporter (not the camera) in the eye.
  - Good posture makes a difference. If sitting, lean forward slightly.
  - Match facial expressions to the context of the interview. You don't want to be looking all jazzed and happy when the news topic is sad.
- Be positive & don't repeat the negative.
- Avoid acronyms.
- Clarify vague questions before responding.
- Check appearance: no 5 O'clock shadow, no sunglasses, check teeth, keep a handkerchief handy to avoid the Nixon moment if sweating.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • Excellent advice from Dave Carstens, every bit of information, even the background images, become part of the message.

3 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • I like the comments - all excellent advice. The lasagna analogy is one that I had not heard before and is a great way to get your messages/call to action to the public.

Thanks Dave for your insights as well. It's good to hear from a videographer. Thanks everyone for the comments!

3 months ago • Like



Follow Melody

**Melody Kimmel** • Dave Carstens has supported many dozens of my media training and is a FABULOUS videographer. Also is a keen observer...

Melody Kimmel

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3 months ago • Like



Follow Sunetra

**Sunetra Ghosh** • Hello Holly,

all the above discussion is so very interesting and could not help jump in and comment:)

anyways while all the above steps are so very relevant...one activity which I found very useful for communications persons like us specializing in media relations is that while we talk to the media and want to pitch stories it becomes helpful to provide them with ready to use sound and visual bytes...given their deadlines and also in some cases lack of time to research the news...it becomes helpful.

i have had many media friends write back saying that they could file their reports and/or have programmes go on air with the help of the ready information which can be given to them in CDs.

hope this contributes to the training.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Jesper

**Jesper Andersen** • You should check out this 2-minute interview with Labour leader Ed Miliband for a demonstration of how training the message can ruin the interview. Ed is completely unable to "let go" and answers every question with the same sentence. Hillarious!! :-D

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=PZtVm8wtYFI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=PZtVm8wtYFI)

2 months ago • Like

1



Follow Paula

**Paula Gunness** • All great comments from everyone. And don't forget training on body language---they must appear confident, but that does not mean crossing arms and appearing defensive. And NEVER let them sit in a chair that spins! When someone is being interviewed, they can get nervous and start spinning or moving too much, which is distracting.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Kayla

**Kayla Schwartz** • I'm reading great comments on content and messaging. In my work as a Presentation, Writing and Communications Coach and Media Trainer I also place a strong focus on connecting with your audience, and in this case it's the viewers through the eyes of the interviewer. So once you've gotten the content down, practice with the idea of making a personal connection with the interviewer, and then the audience. That also implies knowing who your audience is.

Remind your speaker that it is a conversation and to be conversational. Think if the tone you'd take sitting next to and conversing with a new acquaintance at a dinner party. There must be a warmth and authenticity in your speaker for him or her to be believable and trustworthy.

In addition to practicing with you or staff with this in mind, see if your speaker can have even a little time with the interviewer before the interview. And see if they can try to take a second to really connect with them on a personal level. That will add a level of comfort and personal connection that can't help but seep out to the viewer.



Kayla@kaylaschwartz.com

2 months ago • Like



Follow David

**David Gibson** • Some training techniques I use in addition to the ones mentioned above - particularly when I'm training large groups - are:

1. get the training participants to undertake the task of writing a news release, then discuss and edit it on flipchart
2. get the training participants to undertake the task of writing a news story, from the publication's point of view, then discuss and edit it on flipchart
3. get the training participants to interview each other then write up the interview (as well as showing them sample interviews and having the trainer conduct interviews)

Of course you need to present and discuss the elements of news and PR writing as well as the rules of being an interviewee/interviewer etc. Involving participants in both 'jobs' begets clearer understanding.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Laura

**Laura K. Kinoshita** • Here's how to include Twitter in your PR plan (working with reporters on Twitter)

<http://info.laura-kinoshita.com/blog/bid/32830/How-to-Include-Twitter-in-Your-PR-Plan>

2 months ago • Like



Follow Ann

**Ann Wright** • Lots of good advice.

One point to add ... in most interviews, the first question is generally fairly open: 'what's going on ...' 'what do you think about this ...'. Use this opportunity to set out your stall and give your key messages.

Good luck.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Glenn

**Glenn Zimmerman** • This is an excellent list of tips, however, one thing is missing: thinking about what the reporter may want.

If you help create a compelling interview then that reporter will call you again and again. My simple advice is practice and prep but do not allow the talking points to speak too loudly (i.e. don't allow an interviewee to sound scripted). This is a huge turnoff for a reporter.

In general, reporters are looking for something real, insightful, concise and ideally memorable. You marry that with the list of tips from everyone and it is a winning combination!

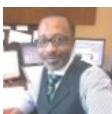
2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Wow! I was "unplugged" while on vacation, but it's great to see this conversation still going. Thanks to everyone for the comments and links to additional information! Still working on content for the training so this is all very helpful!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Greg

**Greg Hudgison** • 1. You are in control of your interview and your message.

2. There is no such thing as "off the record " If you don't want to see it on air, or in print, don't say it.

3 Never answer questions that start with "What if..."

4. Know your 3 message points and repeat them often.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Ron

**Ron Dennis** • First lesson: Hire an expert media training firm which will keep you at arm's length from your people and the process they'll undergo. The beauty of using a media training firm is they can get as tough as the media during session. All you do is to provide them with the ticklish issues...

2 months ago • Like



Follow Mary Jane

**Mary Jane Reiter** • Many great responses here. As a former reporter, I always appreciated a straight answer not one filled with jargon. Assuming this is not an ambush interview, its best to know your subject and provide succinct answers. If the interviewer wants more, he/she will ask a follow-up question.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Tony

**Tony Geishauser** • Every once in a while you get a call from 60 MINUTES when the producer of a piece will tell you that they are going to do a piece on your company because of something that may have just happened. It's important to get as much information from the caller as possible and not to argue the "facts" in the case at hand with the producer working for the on-air types.

No matter how 60 MINUTES or other shows like this threaten you, they need you to get what they want or they wouldn't be calling. Be nice, get as much info as you can to include contact information on the caller and tell him or her you will be back with them at a very specific time - no more than 24 hours - often less depending on what's going on.

You have more power than you think when these magazine shows want to do a hammer job on you. Getting your execs on the air to explain things isn't always a good idea, especially when they only want to use them and the company as props to a hatchet job.

The last time I worked with 60 minutes, my boss - a great guy, but a non-PR type person, said this was pretty serious business. If things went wrong with this story, I could get fired. I told him I agreed, but if I handled it like many pros really know how to do, I should get a raise. He raised his eyebrow like that wasn't likely.

After the story aired, because of the way I handled mostly the producer, and who from our company did or did not appear on the program - they did us no harm. And, yes, I did get a raise. - Tony Geishauser

2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Thanks Tony, Mary Jane, Ron and Greg for your comments!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Aric

**Aric Caplan** • One of the best in the business is Brad Phillips. If you are not familiar with his actionable advice, have a look at his "Mr. Media Training" blog: <http://www.mrmediatraining.com/>.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Jendi

**Jendi Coursey** • When print media journalists call, remember that the deadline is theirs. If you (spokesperson) are not ready to answer their questions, tell them you'll call them back in five minutes. That gives you time to breathe, organize your talking points, and get mentally prepared.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Lettie

**Lettie Herbosa** • Here are some you might find useful:

1. Prepare a set of canned Q&A-- (expected and non-expected; straightforward and sensitive issues)
2. If you don't know the answer, say you will be get back to them right away (24 hrs. max or whatever deadline they have). And make sure you do, otherwise they will research for an answer on their own and you might not like it.
3. Be nice and courteous to media, even if they are pushy; they are just doing their job. They may even have you preview the interview before actual airing and be willing to edit out some unpleasant stuff to your liking.
4. Last, but not the least, remember that there is no such thing as "off the record," even if the media person is a very nice person. That "off the record" statement may not appear in what is to be aired now, but soon you will find it injected in another related story the media will do. So, don't even think about it.... unless your goal is to really start a fire somehow.

2 months ago • Like

**David Waller** • Honesty and sincerity have a greater impact on reputation than spin,



Follow David

soundbites and rehearsed answers.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Deon

**Deon Binneman** • To work with the Media, you need to understand the rules of the game.

Fits and foremost, all dealings with the Media must be with strategic intent. I fully agree with Jane Jordan-Meier's statements.

In my Media Survival Skills I teach the importance of win-win agreements. Some executives find it hard to make that shift. They say the media is out to get them, to misquote and misreport.

I tell them:

- The reason the media seems hostile is because they see themselves as devil's advocates. Therefore you need to think of them as Hard-to-convince customers

- Every journalist has an agenda, so should you! Your agenda is to use the media with strategic intent. They are nothing other than conduits to reach your audience - your readers, your viewers or listeners.

Therefore by following the tips and guidelines that I give them they can minimise bias and misreporting.

- They find it difficult when I tell them that a successful media interview is not measured by whether you were misquoted or not, but by the fact that you managed to get your three key messages across. "Did your audience - the viewers, listeners and readers get your message" - that's paramount.

My thinking win - win means that in order to get your message across you need to play the game. You can only play in a game if you understand the rules and conditions.

For instance - Why make yourself accessible 24/7? Because they work different deadlines, and if you are not available they will go to secondary sources.

Thus, do your homework. Do research and find out what reporters want from companies. Then see if you can fulfill those needs and expectations WHILST prearing and protecting your organization's reputation.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Grace

**Grace Drury** • Resist the temptation to 'shock' the delegate with a really nasty question right at the start in your first mock interview. This will only undermine their confidence and make it much more difficult to build them into a compelling and interesting interviewee....

2 months ago • Like



Follow Letebele

**Letebele Masemola-Jones** • Deliver your message simply and clearly - never speculate. Always be available to answer questions, but do not be afraid to say "I don't know" and make it clear when you can get a response and stick to that time frame. Good luck.

2 months ago • Like



Follow David

**David Robertson** • There are 3 quotes which tell you everything you need to know about handling media interviews:

"It takes me two weeks to prepare an off-the-cuff speech."  
Richard Nixon

"Who's got the questions to my answers?"  
Henry Kissinger

"There is no such thing as a wrong question, only a wrong answer."  
US Broadcaster, Ed Morrow

Answers can be turned into punchy sound bites by adding memorable facts, figures, analogies and illustrations. These can be introduced in a natural way with the PEP Technique:

P = Make your point briefly first

E = Add your evidence

P = Briefly summarise your point

Point:  
We are confident our product/service will be a fantastic success...

Evidence  
That is because the customers who're already using it are telling us (anecdote about how much it is benefiting their lives etc.)

Point:  
So that's why we are so confident in our product/service.

Interview Control:  
Only once you know exactly what you want to say to an audience can you use control techniques to move from the interviewer's question to your answer, in a concise but natural way.  
Bridging (also known as the ABC technique) is the key. It gives you the ability to answer or respond to a difficult question, make a verbal Bridging (also known as the ABC technique) is the key. It gives you the ability to answer or respond to a difficult question, make a verbal bridge then deliver your message. Don't just ignore the question as this annoys the journalist (and the audience in a broadcast interview).

Example: Reports suggest you are planning xyz. What are your plans?

Answer:  
I can't comment on speculation/give away business secrets...

Bridge:  
But what I can say is...

Communicate message:  
We will continue working to ensure....

Other bridging phrases or flagging key messages:

- DO say:
- The most important point is...
  - The big picture here is...
  - One thing to remember is...
  - Let's put things into perspective...
  - One thing that hasn't been mentioned is...

- Do NOT say:
- No comment...
  - What a stupid question!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Marie

**Marie Gentile** • Practice doing interviews via Skype. We are using this medium more and more now for presentations and the networks often use Skype to interview people. Think of it as a satellite interview without all the equipment.

If you agree to a Skype interview, determine your location and do a trial run ahead of time.

Just as in a satellite TV interview think about what your background will look like (company signage!), lighting, a quiet environment, and what to wear - the basic rules apply.

Also because bandwidth can vary and sometimes create odd pacing - i.e. a delay between the visual and audio, you'll need to watch your body language and practice looking into the camera, etc.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Kayla

**Kayla Schwartz** • Great Skype advice. There are obviously increasing areas to master in the world of Media Training.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Valeriu

**Valeriu Tones** • Great ideas, thoughts and useful shared experience, so far.  
Make sure that you have some basic rules settled in you organization:  
1. Who, When, What is talking to the press. Don't let them assume that living within the company means that they can talk about everything. Tell them to avoid exceeding the area of competence, and responsibility they have within the organization.  
2. The day by day contact for the press - the PR Dept.  
3. Q&A, interviews, talkshows - received, answers, planned by PR. Better preparation and unique possibility to have your own copy registered for good.  
4. CEO& directors agenda is not a open book to be set by journalists. The best "secretary" in the relation with media is the PR! But CEO should also be trained for impromptu speech in a public space: business meetings, conferences...after these happened, he/she should "report" to the PR. Usually, after an instant interview, another journalist/agency is following the subject and is a good idea to let the PR know the CEO point of view.  
5. Have your folks scarred, but not to much. A journalist is not the Devil nor your brother to share your sensitive life story. He is a professional looking for a source of info and, at the same time, he is one of the best channels to send your information to the public. Be sure that your folks understand the differencies among various media, and the trend of this

market.

6. Exercise the best answers for "uncomfortable" questions, like:

- Your CEO said that because of the crisis it will be a 10% layoff within your organization. Is that correct? Do you agree with?
- Your management has been changed. Do you really like your new boss?
- What is the climate in your organization after the take over?
- The sales decreased. How do you feel about that? What do you think that the CEO should do?

2 months ago • Like



Follow Shaun

**Shaun Markey** • When being interviewed, many people have a tendency to simply keep talking and overextend the response. In doing so they keep the pressure of the moment on themselves. Shorter, concise answers effectively transfer the interview back to the reporter and with it the responsibility to ask the next question. That in turn also gives the guest a chance to breathe and mentally ready themselves for the follow on question.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Aric

**Aric Caplan** • The following tips provide for a larger discussion of the mechanics for delivering impactful messages during media interviews.

- Know the ground rules for your interview. Who will conduct it? What length of time will be necessary? Will this forum be live or recorded? If it's broadcast, when will it air? Will it be a one-on-one interview? Will there be other guests? If so, who are the other experts?
- Always conduct yourself as if the microphone, phone line, etc. is "on" and that the interview has begun. Bear in mind, reporters will routinely think what you have to say is "on the record."
- Never conduct interviews using a cell phone or a headset. A landline telephone offers the most reliable sound quality.
- Ahead of time, prepare yourself with the answers to three questions you want most to be asked during an interview. Btw, supply those three questions ahead of time.
- Be advised that most interviewers may be conversant on the subject roughly 20% of the time. Prepare for the 80% of folks who may not be as knowledgeable on the material. Frequently, interviewers rely on suggested interview questions provided to them in advance as well as the press release.
- Know when you have answered the question and stop talking. Often that silence gives the interviewer the opportunity to follow up on the subject or switch gears to another direction. If you don't understand a question, feel free to ask for clarification. Don't assume you know where they are headed.
- Regardless of the anticipated length of an interview, prepare three key talking points. Know what the news (or overriding subject) is on which you have been asked to comment. What delineates your voice on the matter from others? Consider why you were asked to comment. What makes your quote newsworthy and timely?
- Prepare to deliver urgency to the precise subject. Share answers that relate specifically to local audiences. Make all examples for local readers and audiences where you are speaking.
- Express a "clear call to action." Where can local stakeholders go to learn more and get involved? What web site should be mentioned? Don't wait for an interviewer to ask. They won't.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Kimberly

**Kimberly Deppe** • That's a good point, Shaun. As a former reporter myself, I know that one of the best tools is to just sit and be quiet because most people will keep talking to fill up the silence.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Patti

**Patti Dobranski** • As a former reporter for 24 years, I believe the most important theme here is TRUTH. Speak it... always... the media never forgets. And, "no comment" means "I have something to hide." Always be prepared and always respond to a question as TRUTHFULLY as possible.

2 months ago • Like

**Terri D. Ledsinger, MBA** • Preparation, preparation, preparation is critical! Your audience



Follow Terri D.

can sense when the interviewee has not prepped and one's credibility (or lack thereof) is remembered. Also, don't fudge an answer. If someone asks a question and you simply don't know the answer, "I don't have an answer at this time for you" is a sufficient response. Offer to contact the interviewer on the spot. Then after getting your answer from your identified credible source(s), return that call to the interviewer ASAP! Showing that accuracy prevails over swiftness can go a long way.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Dain

**Dain Weister** • Always, 3 main talking points, use bridging statements to bridge back to your key message. "What's important for people to know is...." . Prepare for any and all tough questions they may ask. If you think they won't ask it, they will, so think of all angles... especially negative spins. We also practice on-cam, play back and give feedback. Blessings!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Benjamin

**Benjamin Singer** • Draft your key messages and make sure they resonate internally as well as externally. Prepare answers for the most difficult questions you'd be asked -- better to get it right with practice than wait for the real thing -- and rehearse. Also, nothing wrong with setting a time-limit for the interview. That will keep both you as spokesperson and the reporter on agenda and honor the media's deadlines. Good luck. And if you need a media trainer, can provide references for one as well.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Arun

**Arun Sareen** • Media is always looking for some spicy news to make the headlines. Media has the habit of digging up and asking unpleasant questions as well. Be prepared , do your homework, be aware of the historical facts and the best attribute is - Be calm & never lose your composure..

2 months ago • Like



Follow Frank

**Frank Hobson** • Excellent comments here. I would say practicing is most important. Everything else will follow. Being comfortable in an interview means you are not nervous and you can take time to think about what you are going to say.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Charlotte

**Charlotte Tomic, MBA** • For women, don't wear distracting jewelry like dangling earrings, tons of bracelets or necklaces that detract from your face and what you have to say. Dress professionally, but simply, with minimal jewelry. Earrings and a simple necklace are best. Also, in terms of body language, when on television, cross your legs at the ankles when sitting - don't show too much leg!!!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Excellent comments - and I like the idea about practicing an interview using Skype. I see that being used more and more for interviews. I appreciate everyone continuing to weigh in on this question - it's been a very rich and fruitful discussion! And it's been very helpful in preparing my training. Enjoy the weekend everyone!

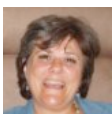
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Follow Anne

**Anne Bell** • As PR Manager for a national television news program, I have the good fortune of seeing both sides of the equation. I can tell you one thing a media interviewer appreciates, is an interviewee who doesn't feel they have to make their entire case in their answer to the first question. I would advise interviewees (especially for television or radio appearances) to be aware of how much time has been allotted for the interview and pace themselves accordingly - leave some room for some back and forth.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Janet

**Janet Cohen** • As a BBC current affairs reporter of thirty years, and now a media trainer I second most of this good advice.

There's one thing nobody seems to have mentioned. A good media performance isn't just about what you say - it's also about the way that you say it. Aim to be credible, likeable and trustworthy. That's why practice in preparation and in front of camera is so important in assessing how you come across.

You can follow all the best advice about answering questions, bridging to your key messages etc, but if you sound like a bad-tempered spiv, no audience will believe you.

AND sometimes the simplest questions are hardest to answer. Remember how Tony Blair floundered when he was asked "What exactly do you stand for Mr Blair?" Good luck with the training.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Melody

**Melody Kimmel** • Good adds, Janet. The US version of your story is Roger Mudd asking Ted Kennedy, "Tell me why you want to president." He had prepared for weeks for the many hard questions about the various skeletons in his closet -- but that simple question hadn't landed on his radar. His stammering reply, many believe, derailed his presidential bid.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Suzanne

**Suzanne Hall** • Practicing in front of a camera is key, as is having key points mapped out. I find that media do not always conduct a "pre-interview," especially if they are planning to spring particularly difficult questions on the subject while the camera is rolling. I also counsel my group to engage but maintain a neutral facial expression. Some people tend to smile and that is sometimes not appropriate for the message.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Valerie

**Valerie Ramsay** • let's not forget to work on the body language and eye contact, how you come across and present is just as important as what you are saying

2 months ago • Like



Follow Timothy

**Timothy Watkins** • 158 comments and counting...obviously and important area for many of us...thanks for starting the thread Holly.

2 months ago • Like



Follow John

**John Elmore** • I concur with the warning -- nothing is ever "off the record," so if you don't want it used or publicized, don't say it, don't reveal it. And answer in short quotable, useable sentences 15-30 sec. max. Long run on sentences might be used, but only with a fade in, fade out by the editor back at the station. Even then you run the risk of not having your say on camera and having only other footage shown while the anchor talks over it. And that means a shorter news story. If you get 45-60 seconds, you're doing well. If you have 90 seconds or more, you have triumphed, providing the story is a positive one as reported.

Oh -- and as others have said in their comments, answer as if the question will NOT be heard. It won't -- just your answer (or a piece of it) will. So always rephrase the question in your full sentence answer.

Q: When did you begin this project?

A: We began the planning for this project about a year ago, and all our hard work has been worth it, just to see the smiles on these faces here today.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • I agree with the comments above - facial expression and body language is important, nothing is off the record and John raises an important point about editing for a story. It's easy to give a long response, but important to remember that the story will be edited. You won't get 5 minutes of a newscast - you get 60 seconds if you are really lucky. So short, talking point responses are key. I've seen interviews with a key member of an organization where the responses used were too fluffy - nothing important was really said.

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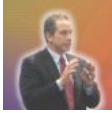


Follow John

**John Matsui** • Something I previously forgot to mention . . . I'm a former print journalist so my partner who came from TV news used to keep reminding me that when you do a TV interview, the reporter is irrelevant in terms of the message. This is your chance to speak directly to viewers so look straight at the camera and address the audience as if the reporter wasn't there. Capture the question briefly in your answer and then deliver the answer you want. This is good TV and addressing the camera/audience directly will add

credibility to what you say. Don't get caught jerking your head back and forth from the reporter to the camera. Listen to the question while looking at the camera and not the reporter. If you are looking at the reporter, turn to the camera and pause three seconds and then answer the question. Your head movement will then be edited out. If you do all of this, you are now in control of the interview, not the reporter.

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Follow Mark

**Mark Grimm** • Don't stare into the camera during the interview. That looks canned. Face the interviewer and be natural.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Timothy

**Timothy Watkins** • John's comment and the plethora of other comments only reminds me that there are so many 'takes' on this subject. I've been to trainings that say never look into the camera, some that say it's optional and now John saying always...

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2 months ago • Like



Follow Marie

**Marie Gentile** • OK to settle the discussion about whether to look into the camera or not -- ALWAYS look in the direction of the person asking the questions. So, if it is an interview via satellite or Skype, then look directly at the camera because that's where your interviewer is -- on the other end.

If it is an in-studio interview, or you are being videotaped for an interview that will be aired as part of a newscast, then look in the direction of the person asking the questions, which is usually off camera.

Hope this helps!

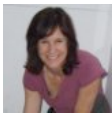
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Follow Leslie A.M.

**Leslie A.M. Smith** • I was a reporter for two years and I was always amazed at what people would tell me "off the record." They'd offer it freely. They wanted to give me the back story to explain the environment where their answers were coming from. As a PR person I was empathetic to them and never threw anyone under the bus. It was a community newspaper and I never felt my job was to ruin their projects on some technicality before they got off the ground. However, most reporters will not infuse kindness in their "pursuit to get to the truth." There's a middle ground to develop your interviewees to be more than automatons giving pre-approved answers and less than a reporter's BFF dishing the office gossip.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Claudia

**Claudia Ferris** • John I think you would be correct in the situation where you have a live remote broadcast with only one camera and you are standing next to the reporter. But you would still be way safer looking at the reporter because you really need to know what you are doing before this doesn't look weird. Leave the camera turns to the professional anchors - or ask, where should I look? You could ask beforehand if its okay to look at the camera when answering if it looks like the camera would be shooting your profile otherwise. Giving these kind of technical directions to a subject that needs to focus on what they are saying could just end up a recipe for disaster, unless they are very media savvy and experienced. If you paused for 3 seconds before answering during a live interview you might stress out the director back in the studio and they may likely dump out of that interview up quickly - do you have any idea how long 3 seconds of dead air feels to the crew back in the studio? A long time....

2 months ago • Like



Follow John

**John Matsui** • You're right. I forgot about live interviews and scrums.

From: Public Relations and Communications Professionals



2 months ago • Like



Follow Aileen

**Aileen Katcher** • And, make sure they understand that nothing is truly off the record. My mantra: If you don't want to see it or hear it, don't say it or write it. Period.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Regarding off the record - I like to tell folks to imagine the headline in the paper - "Employee gives exclusive comments on...." or "Employee confirms disparaging comments made by..."

2 months ago • Like



Follow Ed

**Ed Shiller** • You'll find useful information about media training and related topics on my website ([www.edshiller.com](http://www.edshiller.com)). Click on Ed's Blog and check out the page on In-House Media Training.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Steve

**Steve Kee** • Media Training is an ongoing process and not a one-off, 1/2 day conference or seminar. I compare it to golf. Most golfers are serious and go to the range and practice putting. Why would you expect to be good at the media if you learn the techniques once and expect to be great all the time.

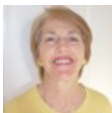
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Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Agree Steve, media training is not a one shot deal. It is a process with multiple trainings and "check ups".

2 months ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • I 1000% agree with Steve. Refreshers, follow-up coaching, "tests", annual review, at least. Often a series of short burst training (e.g.2-3 sessions of 2hrs) are more effective to build on learning. Indeed, research shows us that there needs to be at least one follow-up/expreince wihtin six weeks of the first training, and the participant needs to practice his/her skills at least 3 times a day for 21 days or one a week for seven weeks for the learning to sink in. Professional trainers are the way to go!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Steve

**Steve Kee** • To take that one step further...I find that no matter how much I did for training inside an organization...having a fresh or objective outside face was critical and a wake up call for some execs.

Now I work on the agency side....so I'm outside all my clients. It's a different, and somewhat better, situation when it comes to getting the training buy-in.

Wondering what the breakdown of inside and outside trainers are here...

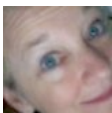
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Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • Good point Steve that "Media Training is an ongoing process and not a one-off, 1/2 day conference or seminar". I'm a communications professional with 30 years in the field and still in learning process, mostly with the new technology that is changing the whole communications landscape.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Suzanne

**Suzanne Hall** • Practicing in front of a camera is key, as is having key points mapped out. I find that media do not always conduct a "pre-interview," especially if they are planning to spring particularly difficult questions on the subject while the camera is rolling. I also counsel my group to engage but maintain a neutral facial expression. Some people tend to smile and that is sometimes not appropriate for the message.

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Follow Valerie

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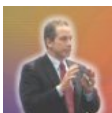
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2 months ago • Like



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2 months ago • Like



Follow Leslie A.M.

**Leslie A.M. Smith** • I was a reporter for two years and I was always amazed at what people would tell me "off the record." They'd offer it freely. They wanted to give me the back story to explain the environment where their answers were coming from. As a PR person I was empathetic to them and never threw anyone under the bus. It was a community newspaper and I never felt my job was to ruin their projects on some technicality before they got off the ground. However, most reporters will not infuse kindness in their "pursuit to get to the truth." There's a middle ground to develop your interviewees to be more than automatons giving pre-approved answers and less than a reporter's BFF dishing the office gossip.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Claudia

**Claudia Ferris** • John I think you would be correct in the situation where you have a live remote broadcast with only one camera and you are standing next to the reporter. But you would still be way safer looking at the reporter because you really need to know what you are doing before this doesn't look weird. Leave the camera turns to the professional anchors - or ask, where should I look? You could ask beforehand if its okay to look at the camera when answering if it looks like the camera would be shooting your profile otherwise. Giving these kind of technical directions to a subject that needs to focus on what they are saying could just end up a recipe for disaster, unless they are very media savvy and experienced. If you paused for 3 seconds before answering during a live interview you might stress out the director back in the studio and they may likely dump out of that interview up quickly - do you have any idea how long 3 seconds of dead air feels to the crew back in the studio? A long time....

2 months ago • Like

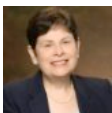


Follow John

**John Matsui** • You're right. I forgot about live interviews and scrums.

From: Public Relations and Communications Professionals

2 months ago • Like



Follow Aileen

**Aileen Katcher** • And, make sure they understand that nothing is truly off the record. My mantra: If you don't want to see it or hear it, don't say it or write it. Period.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Regarding off the record - I like to tell folks to imagine the headline in the paper - "Employee gives exclusive comments on...." or "Employee confirms disparaging comments made by..."

2 months ago • Like



Follow Ed

**Ed Shiller** • You'll find useful information about media training and related topics on my website ([www.edshiller.com](http://www.edshiller.com)). Click on Ed's Blog and check out the page on In-House Media Training.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Steve

**Steve Kee** • Media Training is an ongoing process and not a one-off, 1/2 day conference or seminar. I compare it to golf. Most golfers are serious and go to the range and practice putting. Why would you expect to be good at the media if you learn the techniques once and expect to be great all the time.

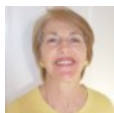
2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Agree Steve, media training is not a one shot deal. It is a process with multiple trainings and "check ups".

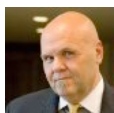
2 months ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • I 1000% agree with Steve. Refreshers, follow-up coaching, "tests", annual review, at least. Often a series of short burst training (e.g. 2-3 sessions of 2hrs) are more effective to build on learning. Indeed, research shows us that there needs to be at least one follow-up/expreince wihtin six weeks of the first training, and the participant needs to practice his/her skills at least 3 times a day for 21 days or one a week for seven weeks for the learning to sink in. Professional trainers are the way to go!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Steve

**Steve Kee** • To take that one step further...I find that no matter how much I did for training inside an organization...having a fresh or objective outside face was critical and a wake up call for some execs.

Now I work on the agency side....so I'm outside all my clients. It's a different, and somewhat better, situation when it comes to getting the training buy-in.

Wondering what the breakdown of inside and outside trainers are here...

2 months ago • Like



Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • Good point Steve that "Media Training is an ongoing process and not a one-off, 1/2 day conference or seminar". I'm a communications professional with 30 years in the field and still in learning process, mostly with the new technology that is changing the whole communications landscape.

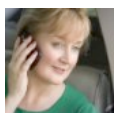
2 months ago • Like



Follow Sophie

**Sophie McCann** • Never, ever start an answer by yes or no. They'll cut the rest of your answer.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Diane

**Diane Mulligan** • Great answers...As a former TV exec for 15 years and national spokesperson for 8 years, always think of what you hope they won't ask or fear they might ask and know exactly how you will handle those answers.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great advice - Sophie, I saw a recent interview with a colleague where the reporter cut and edited the story as soon as she said "no". A shame because it made her look bad.

And Diane, I agree with you as well. I think you can feel much more in control of the interview if you know the answers to the "feared" questions.

Thanks Ladies!

2 months ago • Like



Follow Héctor

**Héctor Héreter** • And the oldest advise of all: never, never, never repeat the same negative phrase said a second before by the interviewer. I'd seem a lot of time intelligent top executives fall into this trap.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Ed

**Ed Shiller** • The following is an extensively abbreviated section from my media training manual. I think you will find it useful:

How to answer challenging questions

1. Keep cool and remain respectful and polite, even in the face of extreme provocation by the interviewer.
2. Don't run on - when you've given the answer you want, stop talking.
3. Never say "no comment" - it will make you look arrogant and untrustworthy.
4. Don't tell the interviewer anything you wouldn't tell the whole world - nothing is "off the record."
5. Don't disclose confidential information - but explain the reason why the information is confidential, and if appropriate, bring in other relevant information that will shed light on what the reporter is asking.
6. Only answer the question that's been asked - don't answer an anticipated question.
7. Don't guess at an answer - if you don't know, say so.
8. Don't get unnerved if the reporter repeatedly asks the same question - if the question is the same, so is the answer.
9. Don't get penned in by "either/or" questions - answer by giving what you regard as the relevant facts.
10. Don't speculate - just give the facts and any appropriate explanation.
11. Don't respond judgmentally to third-party quotes - the reporter may want you to say something derogatory about the third-party, and thereby generate controversy. Instead, set the record straight by giving the relevant information.
12. Don't repeat negative questions or derogatory comments - Use a word or phrase (such as "well, actually" or "on the contrary") to show that you do not accept the negative statement, and then give an accurate description of the situation.
13. Don't ask the reporter to clarify a question - if the question is ambiguous, choose the most obvious interpretation and answer that. Asking for clarification makes you look evasive.

2 months ago • Like



Follow David

**David Gray** • Stay on point... I find that most of the time people have a reason why they want to be interviewed. However, the interviewer isn't always interested in the same issues. If you have a point to make, keep on target, and always try to come back to your point. Don't let the interviewer lead you down a road you do not wish to go. Anticipate questions, but you can say, "That's a great question; now as I was saying previously..." I suppose some would say that is evading a question, and your right, but in a short interview if you're selling a book, an event, a new product, your political viewpoint, you have to make sure you as the interviewee stay on point.

2 months ago • Like



Follow Ed

**Ed Shiller** • It is unfortunate that "staying on message" or as David Gray calls it "staying on point" - that is, answering media questions by bridging to a key message, regardless of its relevance to those questions - is the standard approach to giving media interviews. At best staying on message is ineffectual; at worst it can make the spokesperson appear devious, manipulative, insensitive and untrustworthy.

Here's why:

Staying on message is based upon the premise that the words you speak are taken at face value; that is, if you say that your organization is a good corporate citizen, that its products are top-notch or that its operations are environmentally friendly, people will believe you.

Science, however, particularly the emerging study of psycholinguistics, does not support this presumption. According to psycholinguistics, when we speak, we emit a vast array of cues that reveal the inner workings of our psyches. These cues are both verbal and

nonverbal; they are behavioural manifestations of just about everything that is occupying our psyches at that given moment.

Voice tonality, pace, syntax, grammar, hand gestures, head and eye movements, facial expressions, posture and a myriad of other subtle and often unconscious behaviours betray the inner workings of our minds. And those with whom we communicate receive and analyze these behavioural cues instinctively, frequently without realizing what they are doing. What they are left with, however, are strong impressions, judgments and biases that determine whether they like and believe the spokesperson.

On its face, bridging (also called zooming, steering or segueing) is a transparently manipulative ploy that is obvious not only to the reporter asking the questions but to anyone else listening to or reading the answers. This alone serves to undermine credibility.

In addition, staying on message inherently forces the spokesperson to act deviously, non-responsively and calculatingly. This produces undesirable behaviours that will inevitably be picked up consciously or unconsciously by the reporter, newspaper readers, radio or TV audiences or any other observers, and thereby further erode the credibility of the spokesperson and the organization that he or she represents.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to staying on message: It is to answer each question in a straightforward manner, and when necessary, to interject the most relevant of numerous speaking points, which were developed prior to the interview, as a means of putting the information the reporter wants into a meaningful context. By using this approach, the spokesperson genuinely expresses through both verbal and nonverbal behaviours appropriate thoughts, images and feelings that stem from, and relate to, the circumstances conjured up by the reporter's question.

In effect, the spokesperson answers each question without guile. And it matters little whether the actual words that are spoken convey information or viewpoints that the spokesperson may regard as unimportant or irrelevant.

Why? Because the spokesperson is perceived as being open, forthright, confident, knowledgeable, caring, sympathetic, likeable, well-intentioned and credible. And these are the true messages that ought to be conveyed in media interviews, because these are the messages that will most likely safeguard an organization's reputation and secure the public support it needs to attain vital goals and objectives.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Frances

**Frances Brace** • Make sure key messages are consistent not only over time, but also across groups of stakeholders: it's amazing how often key people in organisations think it appropriate to share company positioning on issues with the wider world without bothering to share it with internal audiences.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Kayla

**Kayla Schwartz** • Very interesting, Ed. I agree that the non-verbal is equally important. And successful bridging must include a response to the original question.

<<...answer each question in a straightforward manner, and when necessary, to interject the most relevant of numerous speaking points, which were developed prior to the interview, as a means of putting the information the reporter wants into a meaningful context.>> as you put it so well...would be the ideal bridging in my book! Thanks!

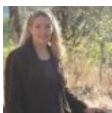
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Follow Jane

**Jane Barnett** • Prepare them for a crisis. Face the issue head on - acknowledge the issues/problems, take responsibility and if possible state a plan for resolving the issue. Or, state that a plan is in the works to fix the issue and deal with it. Then, you can move on!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Rachel

**Rachel Tyree** • Bridge back to your message - always get back to what you want to communicate no matter the question. This visual has always worked well for me. That, and having bullet points of my main message points that I can refer to, especially if is an interview over the phone. When the reporter asks, "is there anything else you would like to say?" I refer to my notes before hanging up.

1 month ago • Like

**Richard Meier** • Be aware of the 24/7 news cycle of Web sites and blogs. I'd set parameters of when a spokesperson will be available to take media calls. Regular business hours? Or 24/7. If you don't limit it, expect to get calls at 2:30 a.m. Obviously,



Follow Richard

emergency situations dedicate modifications.

1 month ago • Like



**Patchen Barss** • Hmm. A caveat to Paul's advice above - Incorporating the interviewer's question into your answer works in collegial situations but journalists can also use this to get you to accept a premise that you might not want to accept. The classic example is the question, "When did you stop beating your wife?" If you start your response by saying "I never beat my wife," you will come off sounding defensive and guilty. Sometimes, it's important not to accept the premise of the question, and not to lend it credibility by repeating part of it in your response.

(As an aside, I'm giving a talk tomorrow to a group of public health researchers on how to interact with the media. This thread has been very helpful in focusing my talk. Thanks, everyone!)

1 month ago



Follow Christine

**Christine Pietryla** • Doing a good interview comes down to preparation. They say that smiling communicates a positive attitude, even through the phone. Well, similarly, preparation communicates intelligence and confidence. All of the previous tools are great! I like to tailor each training program to the executive because everyone is different. Pick and choose which ones will best prepare the person you are training. Keep the overall goal of any training on what will keep each person looking and sounding prepared.

Personally, I need a list of bullet-pointed messages in front of me (or memorized) or I babble. So, the best way to approach my training would be to drill messaging and bridging. For someone else, it might be eliminating their fear of a camera...in which case their training would be very camera-focused.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Yassir

**Yassir Islam** • This crowd-sourcing has resulted in some really good advice, so thanks Holly, for starting this thread. I agree with much of what has been said so will add only one additional point. If you are communicating scientific research its really important to simplify your findings and avoid jargon. Know that any nuances or details are likely to be lost unless this is a for a science or trade publication/outlet. Yes, science is complex and deserves more airtime or space to explain, but in the end you'll get you 20-30 seconds like everyone else. Keep it simple--and safe, so there is less chance for your message to be misused or misconstrued.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Wow, this discussion has been so great and helpful. I enjoy reading all of the feedback and real world examples that people have shared. Thanks so much to everyone for keep ing this going. And Yassir - I agree with avoiding jargon or terms that are specific to your organization. I know in my work with HIV and other communicable diseases, it's very easy to get lost in the acronyms and medical language. So it can be challenging to write materials and press releases.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Eric

**Eric Bergman** • Q: When did you stop beating your spouse?

A: I never started.

:-)

1 month ago • Like



Follow Timothy

**Timothy Watkins** • ...but the question was about Tennis...

the risk of things being taken out of context...

1 month ago • Like



Follow Eric

**Eric Bergman** • I must be having a grandparent moment. Are we talking about tennis players who beat their spouses?

:-)

1 month ago • Like



Follow Dave

**Dave Turner** • Three types of interviews: 1: Ambush. Take control, be in charge. If not prepared, make sure they understand a statement will be made soon, until then, you have no comment.  
 2. The Statement: Give your statement, and open it up for questions. Make sure you, or someone on your staff selects whose question you will answer next. Do not allow interruptions. Cut off the questions when you decide. ONLY answer questions pertaining to the subject.  
 3. The pre-taped interview: Again, stick to the subject unless a question is raised about a subject you are well versed on. Remember, if you sound stupid on an answer, tell the interviewer to stop. Let's redo this question. It is in his/her best interest as well as yours. All the best.

1 month ago • Like



Follow John

**John Comey** • Lots of useful information here Holly. FYI...There is a great course that you might want to consider. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers the Advanced Public Information Officers course designed to prepare health care professionals to deal with the media in routine as well as emergency situations. Prepping spokespersons and conducting news conferences is one of the many areas addressed in the course.

The course is offered several times a year at FEMA's Noble Training Center located in Anniston Alabama. This course a week long and free. The feds even pay for transportation. A companion course for first responders is offered at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg Maryland.

The Noble Training site is: <https://cdp.dhs.gov/schedules/index.html>

1 month ago • Like



Follow Justyna

**Justyna McCaig** • What a great discussion. Some very useful tips.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Awesome tip John! Thanks, I will check it out!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Carla

**Carla Leininger** • You may reach out to small media organizations or university radio stations to get some practice without the pressure of reaching a huge audience. For example, local community newspapers or magazines are always looking for content and expert advice from trusted sources. These can give your folks or executives the practice they need in the beginning without a lot of impact.  
 I host a radio show on an university radio station which has given me tremendous experience in the art of interviewing. I have developed skills to present in public and moderate events. It's a great way to get comfortable with a microphone or camera. I highly recommend it!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Carla

**Carla Leininger** • If you have a thought for how an interviewer can spin your story, let them know. At times you will be the most expert on the topic and you may be able to provide a key element of interest that the reporter didn't see before. Do it nicely so that the reporter does not feel that you are doing his/her job.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Carla

**Carla Leininger** • Don't be afraid to sum-up the answer at the end, repeating your key words. The reporter is hearing a lot of information, so it will help for him/her to hear your most powerful key points twice.

1 month ago • Like



**Timothy Watkins** • Holly - You can probably just have the trainees follow this thread and your training issues are resolved...

1 month ago • Like

1



[Follow Timothy](#)[Follow Melody](#)**Melody Kimmel** • Quite a treasure trove here, for sure!

One more tip: before the interview, develop a "quote bank" of various ways to express your key messages. Many a great way of expressing a thought was hatched ahead. Listeners/readers will be dazzled by your clever comments without noticing the redundancy of the ideas they express. Just don't stress if you forget any of your snappy phrases. You're the only one who will know.

1 month ago • [Like](#)

1

[Follow Joe](#)**Joe Troxler** • You have a lot of excellent information to decipher regarding conducting good media interviews and how you can generate a buzz for your company, good, service in your industry. One basic tip, you must address the categories of information below before you proceed. And remember, your pitch, your style, your content and your approach will be determined in part by whether your company or organization is:

- 1) a private company;
- 2) a public company;
- 3) a government department or organization;
- 4) an industry association;
- 5) a not-for-profit agency;
- 6) large, small, medium-sized organization;
- 7) locally, regionally, nationally or internationally-based;
- 8) the corporate culture of your company or organization;
- 9) the corporate culture within your industry;
- 9) your mandate in the communications process, are you hired as a change advocate or to maintain the current status quo;
- 10) a common approach (passive, reactive or situational).

You can't fail with all the expertise and wisdom you have received!

1 month ago • [Like](#)[Follow Val](#)**Val Dooley** • Remember diction! You wouldn't believe how many people mumble or speak voce basso (too quietly). Pronounce the words clearly, keep a moderate tone but use as many inflections as possible to add flavour and always keep your eye focused on the camera. I agree with some of the other responses but often one forgets these important nuances.1 month ago • [Like](#)

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[Follow Susan](#)**Susan Pepperdine** • When doing TV interviews for humane organizations and other charities I've volunteered for, I've always made sure to answer questions with "(Name of group) recommends..." rather than "We recommend..." It's an easy way to get another mention of your organization's name. This idea has worked for my clients too.1 month ago • [Like](#)

1

[Follow Allison](#)**Allison Sandve** • Lots of good tips here. You're on your way to a good training!

I've done a lot of media training and I always tell people this: "Reporters are not your friends; reporters are not your foes." Too often, interviewees either operate under the assumption that a reporter is there as a de facto paid advertisement -- or that a Mike Wallace "gotcha" moment is inevitable. Not true. Good reporters are there because they need more information for a story that they, along with their editors/news directors, believe would serve the readers/viewers/listers well. A good reporter is a professional doing his/her job, just like the colleague doing the interview.

You'd be surprised how surprised some of your colleagues look when you tell them this!

Then: prepare, prepare, prepare. Bad coverage often stems from the fact that an organizational leader didn't think he/she needed to prepare.

1 month ago • [Like](#)[Follow Ulrich](#)**Ulrich Gartner** • With journalists in sight, you're "always on", so never say anything you wouldn't want to see published. It's so easy to let your hair down after an intense interview and get into chatting mode where you reveal some of the "inofficial" facts that you - of course - did not mention during the official interview. Similarly, it's an old trick by TV reporters to tell you they're "now turning off the camera, so let's talk real for a while".1 month ago • [Like](#)



Follow Alexandra

**Alexandra Costa** • One important thing. Know what NOT to say. Sometimes the problem is that the executive say to much.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Eric M.

**Eric M. Miller** • Always remember, it's an interview, not an interrogation. Just because a question is asked, does not mean you must answer. Control the message.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Chris

**Chris Myers, MCIPR** • This is so true. Journalists can use pauses to encourage interviewees to blunder in. As an interviewee, it is NEVER your responsibility to fill gaps and pauses!

From:

1 month ago • Like



Follow Deon

**Deon Binneman** • Just a little bit of humor:

The Daily News published a story saying that one-half of the MP (Members of Parliament) were crooks.

The Government took great exception to that and demanded a retraction and an apology.

The newspaper responded the next day with an apology and reported that one-half of the MPs were not crooks.

1 month ago • Like

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Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Good info, especially regarding diction. Interviewees need to remember to speak up and enunciate. And when the interview is over - it's over. I agree that it's way too easy to start talking and have your "off the record" remarks end up as front page news. And thanks for the humor Deon, I like it!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Danielle

**Danielle Krufft Maggio** • Make sure you are well-trained yourself and could easily be in front of a camera in a minute's time!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Agree Danielle, I've been working with the media for several years and I still get a little nervous when I've got to do an interview on short notice. But if you are prepared and know your talking points, you should be OK.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Richard

**Richard Snare** • I would like to add to the myriad of very valuable hints and directions given above a technique in media training that I have found very useful over the past 20 years.

First, I try to insist of doing the training in groups of 3. It might be 6 or 9 but after that it gets too hard to handle.

The groups of three are then interviewed on various scenarios either they or the comms

dept have developed with me. But for each interview I nominate an interviewee, an "advisor" to the interviewee and a "researcher" for the interviewer. In this way the interviewee and "advisor" discuss the interview in advance (usually no more than 5 minutes) trying to establish together the 3 points they wish to make and try to establish which questions they think will be asked so they can then develop answers relevant to the three points.

The "researcher" then advises the interviewer on any "background" that might be "useful in adding pressure" to their colleague. A company deep throat if you like.

I have found that this all adds a sense of friendly competition to the day as well as establishing in the executive's mind that discussing things in a friendly forum before doing the interview (even only a few minutes) can be the best preparation that can do.

1 month ago • Like



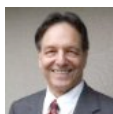
Follow Gemma

**Gemma Riordan** • Some great advice here.

Advising staff to know their message ( including some lines rehearsed) and to stay on message ( yes a cliché but very important) is critical. They need to be clear on what they want to get across and not be distracted by questions they may put them off their guard. Having said that, it is common sense that if there is an issue in the media that affects your company you need to be aware of this, and possibly be prepared to have a statement ready on that topic.

Often people think they can control an interview and the story that is eventually reported on. Although you can do your best to prep an interviewee and the interviewee can do a great job at staying on message - the final result is ultimately up to the journalist and their editor. Doing interviews always carries some risk but this is a risk often worth taking.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Ed

**Ed Shiller** • For a different perspective on Staying on Message, take a look at my video on [www.edshiller.com](http://www.edshiller.com).

1 month ago • Like



Follow Eric

**Eric Bergman** • I've watched this thread with interest, but I have some concerns about our industry still believing that "stay on message" or "stay on topic" is even remotely relevant.

I believe staying on message is a fallacy, an outdated paradigm in an information-driven world:

[www.presentwithease.com/message\\_fallacy.pdf](http://www.presentwithease.com/message_fallacy.pdf)

1 month ago • Like

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Follow Sheila

**Sheila Carmody** • Don't be surprised or offended when a reporter asks a question a second or third time or fourth time. They are not being nosy or pushy as most people think. People rarely answer the question asked the first time. Usually a reporter is putting together three answers to get a response readers and listeners will comprehend.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Thanks all to the links for additional information. And Sheila, I agree - I don't get offended, I just answer the questions asked. Thanks!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Peter

**Peter Dobens** • Holly, I've followed this for a while and finally decided to chime in.

If you had a former reporter on staff, that would be your best resource. Use that former reporter's skills as an interviewer and rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. Reporters, good reporters, will ask the most off-beat questions to try and get quotable responses. The best way to answer is through preparation. If you stray from the question, you will regret it. As a former reporter, with print and electronic media experience, I speak from experience. Answers need to be brief and to the point. If my interview strayed, adlibbed, I seized the opportunity and lead them into areas they were not prepared to discuss. Usually, I ended up with a better story, well off center the point of the news conference.

Another tip is to have a backup plan. If you don't know the answer, say so, but assure them you will get the answer. Have a staff member at the presentation mark down the

question, and the name of person seeking the information. When the presentation is completed, get the answer and provide it. You will gain immense respect from the reporter, and build a relationship that will ensure future coverage.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Gary

**Gary Wells** • Holly, we here conduct rather a lot of media and crisis training sessions. There are a lot of tactical suggestions I could make, but a number of such suggestions already have been made. The best strategy I can suggest is, as Steven Covey would say, to begin with the end in mind. That is, to ask people who go through a training session, what story they would most like to see. That question focuses their attention on what is most important to convey about their companies, organizations, themselves, in the course of an interview. It is not so much about staying on message. It is more about conveying an idea of interest to the reporter. Everything else really is tactical. But there is one other point that we add in every training session. This is not really about the media nor is it about their questions. This is not really about you nor the messages you want to convey. This is in the end, about a story of use both to the media and to you. I hope this is of help. Best Regards, Gary Wells

1 month ago • Like

2



Follow Michael

**Michael Grimaldi** • Hi, Holly:

Media Training 101, Section 1, Lesson 1: Tell the truth.

More precisely, start with the truth, then learn how to tell the true story and deliver true key messages to the media honestly, based on what the truth is.

That sometimes is a scary media training lesson, especially if something bad has happened or if the story that the media seeks is negative.

Presuming that people have been motivated by good intentions, have made the best decisions possible with the information available to them and have acted honestly and with integrity, then telling the truth to the media should be nothing to fear.

Indeed, the truth is liberating, assuring and sustaining.

1 month ago • Like

1



Follow Carl  
"Bear"

**Carl "Bear" Kay** • If you take what everyone has sent to you, you already have your lesson plan. Neil Kuvin summed it up very well. Congratulations to all of you that assisted Holly. Great advice.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Elizabeth

**Elizabeth Kelley** • All excellent comments and pointers. Develop the message and stay on it, prepare for ambushes and tough questions-for a really unexpected one, stay cool and say you'll get back to the reporter. NEVER put your guard down-before or after the interview....in the men's room, the hallway walking to the elevator, etc.

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Follow Gary

**Gary James** • Never say "no comment." It's a comment. If you don't want to answer, come up with an answer that is a no comment without saying it. Reiterate the question or rephrase what is being done. No comment opens the door to speculation and reinterpretation based on how the piece is edited.

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Follow Eithne

**Eithne Treanor** • One extremely important item to mention .. please make sure your people have some facts & figures and some real and decent substance in the interview. It's not all about the soundbite...

Also ... I would add: Don't ever say ... "That's a good question" Larry or whoever !!! We're journalists.. we only ask good questions and that's about 5 years out of date in terms of the worst bridging line that can be delivered..

Some great tips above.. combine them all with many more. Be in touch if I can help .. etreanor.com

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**Sheila M. McKean, MBA, APR** • Eithne, as a former spokesperson, I think that folks use "that's a good question" to stall to think quickly of how they're going to respond. If a



Follow Sheila M.

surprising question is asked, or one that the interviewee doesn't want to answer, can you or someone on this thread provide some concrete examples of how to give someone a chance to think during a fast-paced interview? If I've ever used this phrase, it may have meant that it was something very insightful or clearly showing that the reporter did a lot of homework to come up with the question. In a way, it's a complement. So, I'm looking for more bridging lines.

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Follow Ed

**Ed Shiller** • Just take whatever time you need to think. No need to say anything. The only pace that matters is the pace that you're comfortable with. Also, what may seem like an endless silence while you ponder your answer is usually no longer than a few seconds.

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Follow Ed

**Ed Shiller** • As for bridging lines - you don't need them. Instead, give the reporter the information requested, and if the situation warrants, use one of the many speaking points you developed (these, by the way, are not "key messages" that you are hoping to steer to) to put the requested information into a meaningful context.

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Follow Cheryl

**Cheryl Rios** • Great information is being said Holly, but a quote I use every time I do a training is from Mark Twain "If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything"

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • I continue to be amazed by this discussion - it has been a wonderful learning experience. All of these responses have been so helpful and I really like that people from all over the world are responding to add their advice and experience. I really appreciate it and thanks to everyone that has taken the time to comment! Have a great weekend!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Darby

**Darby Duffin** • John's recommendation on the FEMA PIO courses at the Emergency Management Institute is good advice. Media relations during disasters are the very definition of crisis communications. I've taken them and have served as an agency spokesperson for FEMA in many disasters (including Katrina). Having experience dealing with aggressive, cynical, even hostile media, much of the advice offered here is sound and I would agree with. In short, transparency builds public trust [i.e., Cheryl's comment of Twain's quote to tell the truth]. Granted, however, there is often a limit to the information you are at liberty to share. Reporters will attempt to prod you into speculating - a common pitfall. That's where key messages do work. A good spokesperson knows where the reporter is going BEFORE they ask the question and is prepared to provide that information in a timely manner. Clear, consistent and succinct messages. Remember: KISS [ Keep it Simple Stupid] :-)

1 month ago • Like



Follow Aymee V.

**Aymee V. Zubizarreta, MBA** • For the past two years, I have represented Fortune 500's as their PR and Media Specialist as well as served as their spokesperson. Here are some tips that I have learned along the way.

Make sure you have a knowledgeable subject matter expert that is not only camera ready, polished, good communication skills, able to think fast on their feet, and capable of articulate confidently.

When working with the Spanish language media, it is extremely essential that you also ensure the individual has a strong command of the language AND speaks Spanish neutral.

Before you put anyone on camera to represent your brand, role play with them. Test them on camera. When you feel they are ready, start the novice spokesperson of with local print or radio before TV. As those can be more forgiving. Gradually develop this individual to do larger audience media opp. Let only the most seasoned individuals handle Live TV and Crisis PR.

Hope this helps!

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Follow Gilliane

**Gilliane Lataillade** • I am thoroughly enjoying this discussion board - lots of amazing real life advice.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Alan

**Alan Hilburg** • 600+ training sessions later for attorneys, CEOs, plant managers, etc....a couple of lessons learned.

1. Three 'must airs' (learned that 20+ years ago from Virgil Scudder the dean of media training). Three themes that answer any possible question. Three proof points under each theme.

2. Interviews are like two opposite pages of a book. Left page is where the media wants you...the right page is where you want to be. Left page format is media question, your answer. Right page. Their question, your answer. And then the 'art' is staying on the right page.

3. Learn your 'bridges.' The 'bridge' gets you from the question to your 'must air' answer.

4. Media hasn't asked an important question...one that you absolutely want to answer. You say, "You know (name of interviewer), one of the questions that I'm asked most frequently is..."(ask and then answer your own question).

There are many more, but these are good starting points. Have fun.

1 month ago • Like

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Follow Jon

**Jon Cole** • I work in sports media relations and I have several tips that a colleague has given me to assist with being polished in front of the media. I have utilized these with my eight freshmen that are defining my team this year. I can email them to you if you like.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Melissa

**Melissa Davis** • Hi there - I made a short video for my website. It gives some tips. Hope it helps. Best wishes Melissa <http://www.mdcomms.co.uk/services/media-training/>

1 month ago • Like



Follow Craig

**Craig Butterworth** • I would create some worst-case scenarios and see how they respond without any coaching. Then, evaluate their responses and show them how to improve. Developing critical thinking skills under pressure is enormously beneficial. Of course, staying on message is essential but learning how and when to weave that message into a "make or break" interview is no less important!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Perry

**Perry Bishop** • Jon: If you don't mind, I'd like a copy as well to share with my graduate students -- with appropriate credit given. I can be reached at: p.bishop@faculty.umuc.edu.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Thanks again all for posting, Melissa - I will take a look at your video. Great advice, please keep posting!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Anne

**Anne Chaurand** • Hi everyone,

I'd say:

1/ Know your AUDIENCE and what they are looking for; take into account who your final audience is, (customers, partners, market?) Who are they and what do they need to know?

2/ Once you know who you want to address, organize and write your KEY MESSAGES, your spokesperson will also need to know what competition is doing, what the market is saying, what your stakeholders are thinking...

3/ Make sure you have a STORY to tell, make it NEWSWORTHY and interesting!

4/ Then have your spokesperson LEARN and KNOWS those messages from A to Z and from Z to A. They need to have a full understanding of your company and their place in the company. Make sure they DO NOT GO OUT OF THEIR ROLE. If he/she is a product

specialist, that person should NOT analyze the company's results - quite obvious but not always done!  
5/ PRACTICE, video is helpful, the story has to come out naturally.  
6/ be PREPARED be PREPARED and be PREPARED!

My 2 Euros :-)

Anne Chaurand  
Multicultural Communication Consultant - HOWCOM

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Follow Jon

**Jon Stephens** • Be a person when in front of the camera. Personality does sell. Play to the communication strengths of the person going on-air and build on that versus trying to "train them up" to be someone they are not. Being a robot does not win an audience over.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Nisah

**Nisah Tahara** • Be direct, don't play favorites and anticipate the questions.

1 month ago • Like

1



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great advice Anne, Jon and Nisah! Thanks for posting! Have a great day....

1 month ago • Like



Follow Tami

**Tami Cummings** • Great suggestions! I would recommend one more detail. Often media will ask you if you have anything to add at the end of an interview. This is often a gift. A great deal of the best sound bites come from that last comment if you have a seasoned response. I would recommend that your staff be prepared to reiterate the key message you want to get out or if that has been addressed several times, then at the very least offer them messaging about your organization.

1 month ago • Like



Follow John

**John Kageorge, APR** • Begin by creating a solid understanding of why they are participating in the interview: to deliver a message to stakeholders. Ask them to identify their audiences and what they need to communicate to them. The reason this foundation is so important is so they can overcome the mistaken idea that they are talking with a reporter from XYZ media outlet. After all, the reason for the interview has nothing to do with the face in front of them.

Thank you, Helen Slater, Paul McCaffery and Neil Kuvin for your tips and tales.

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Follow Isabel

**Isabel Walker** • I think it is absolutely key to build people's confidence through media training. There is no point training them for a day and then sending them away feeling despondent about their skills. Best way I know to do this is to conduct two sets of practice interviews: the first near the beginning before you have taught them the rules of the media game and how to play it; the second near the end after you have been through a specific exercise that prepares them to give effective interviews, whereby you first of all prepare your key messages and proof points, then anticipate all possible questions and then practise bridging from questions to messages. The second interview should represent a huge improvement on the first and you will send your participants away feeling confident, excited - and very grateful to you. Isabel Walker, Communication skills trainer

1 month ago • Like



Follow Eric

**Eric Bergman** • I couldn't agree more. Enhancing confidence is important, which is why I do not advocate ambush interviews.

And more interviews are always better.

Using our unique blend of online and in-person training, our standard is a minimum of four interviews per participant, two for print and two for broadcast. We can accomplish this with up to eight participants in a single day.

I have a one-on-one session with a client next week, in which we will go through at least

10 practice interviews in a half-day.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Gary

**Gary Wells** • This is one of the best discussions to which I have had the opportunity to watch or contribute. The latest discussions about confidence are perhaps the most important, because in the end that is what we as trainers are working to imbue in people. We recently conducted a hybrid training session - how to give a presentation, how to read a speech, and how to conduct an interview - for a CFO whose stumbling in earnings conference calls was beginning to alarm the investment community. Analysts were wondering about the disparity in what the CFO said about strong growth, and in how nervous he was in discussing those numbers. Why would he be nervous if all was well? It was presented to him as "media training" by the VP/IR so that the CFO would agree - he did not believe he needed presentation skills training. But once into the training session, the ruse became apparent. The CFO embraced the opportunity - and then "aced" the next conference call with analysts and investors. Because he now had confidence. As an aside, if you have not had opportunity, you want to read "When the Headline Is You" by Jeff Anson. It is a superb book about interview preparations.

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Follow Mark

**Mark Knight** • I have just written a blog on this topic which highlights some of the main attributes required to be a successful media spokesperson. I hope it's useful to everyone <http://bit.ly/qwZC5V>

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Follow Dennis

**Dennis McGrath** • Two additional points. One, don't say to the interviewer, "That was a very good question" For one thing, it sounds like you are trying to curry favor with the reporter. For another, it's condescending. Second, don't work so hard preparing for the hard questions that you forget the "fat pitch over the plate" questions. Have your subject listen hard and be ready to take maximum opportunity for that "fat pitch." Too many media interviews turn out to be missed opportunities for an interviewee to either make news or make a very positive, quotable point about his/her organization and its relevance.

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Follow Janna

**Janna McManus** • Remember that you CAN CONTROL : The Time, The Place, The Length, The Pacing and What is Said and How during the interview  
Remember that Questions Don't count. Answers Do!  
To sum it up: Identify your audiences, Know your objectives, Communicate your messages

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great advice everyone! And I like the topic of confidence. I agree that being confident with a reporter is key to the success of an interview. Lots of good tips to add to my training. Thank you!

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Follow Françoise

**Françoise Barlet, PhD** • Never lie to a reporter, they will rumble you in a nano second and you will burn your bridges!

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Follow Debbie

**Debbie Mitchell** • If your client is associated or plugging a product (book, website etc) please advise them not to constantly refer to it in the interview. The interview sounds like a commercial and it takes value time.

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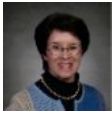


Follow Niamh

**Niamh Milne** • Never say 'No comment' - always qualify if you are unable to provide an answer... plus all of the wise advice already given...

1 month ago • Like





Follow Mary

**Mary Doyle** • This is a first-hand account of media training in the trenches. This article describes my personal encounter with Michael Moore: <http://aboutpublicrelations.net/ucdoyle1.htm>.

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Follow Romy

**Romy Ranalli** • Yikes. I strongly disagree with "Questions don't count. Answers do," as a media relations tactic. An experienced reporter will crucify anyone trying to avoid their questions. You will come off looking like you either have something to hide or you don't know enough about your job. Bad, bad, bad advice. It is even worse than the old-fashioned, "no comment." We need to train our people how to become confident in telling the truth, without fear or favor, so that they come across sincere and believable. For example: "That is not my portfolio, you will need to speak to department XYZ," is a fair response if it is true. "There has been some discussion on that but nothing has been confirmed," is also an incredibly fair, and true, response. "I've seen the report but I am not at liberty to discuss the details until it is released," can also be a true response. But there are so many dangers in approaching an interview as a marketing opportunity. Of course we have a message, a point of view, a story to tell; and some reporters are looking for controversy more than the fairness and accuracy that they promise they are. Navigating this wobbly ground takes skill, practice, planning, long-term relationship building and research.

1 month ago • Like

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Follow Vicki

**Vicki Ringer** • A technique that reminds training class participants that you're ALWAYS on camera: while conducting on-camera interviews, have the interviewer put the participant at ease by making small talk while holding the microphone down. Ask the camera operator to delay, pretending to adjust the equipment. Then the interviewer can casually ask a question about the topic assigned to the class participant, such as, "Tell me, did the CEO really abscond with \$50 million in employee pension funds?" or "Is it true what everyone is saying about the governor - that he really is an alcoholic? I bet you've had some fun times with him!"

Participants think they're just shooting the breeze with the interviewer while waiting for the "real interview" to start and frequently say really regrettable things that air back later for critiques from the class. It is a lesson no one ever forgets!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Isabel

**Isabel Walker** • LinkedIn Groups

\* Group: Public Relations and Communications Professionals

\* Discussion: I'm getting ready to conduct media training with folks in my organization. Anyone have lessons learned one working with media that they would like to share? <[http://www.linkedin.com/e/gctaqh-gsw5xeuz-s/vaq/61024658/82242/52670286/view\\_disc/?hs=false&tok=0NwdGM5WUcT4U1](http://www.linkedin.com/e/gctaqh-gsw5xeuz-s/vaq/61024658/82242/52670286/view_disc/?hs=false&tok=0NwdGM5WUcT4U1)>

Yikes. I strongly disagree with "Questions don't count. Answers do," as a media relations tactic. An experienced reporter will crucify anyone trying to avoid their questions. You will come off looking like you either have something to hide or you don't know enough about your job. Bad, bad, bad advice. It is even worse than the old-fashioned, "no comment." We need to train our people how to become confident in telling the truth, without fear or favor, so that they come across sincere and believable. For example: "That is not my portfolio, you will need to speak to department XYZ," is a fair response if it is true. "There has been some discussion on that but nothing has been confirmed," is also an incredibly fair, and true, response. "I've seen the report but I am

not at liberty to discuss the details until it is released," can also be a true response. But there are so many dangers in approaching an interview as a marketing opportunity. Of course we have a message, a point of view, a story to tell; and some reporters are looking for controversy more than the fairness and accuracy that they promise they are. Navigating this wobbly ground takes skill, practice, planning, long-term relationship building and research.  
Posted  
by Romy Ranalli

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Follow Keith

**Keith Bernhardt** • Learn TO interview. Also, learn to speak and with good grammar. Not : "I don't know where that's at." Always spell a person's name for the reporters. There may be a common name with an unusual spelling.

I agree don't be afraid to say "I Don't Know." If it is a situation where you need to 'check and get back.' Do it.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Marisa

**Marisa Jacobs, Esq.** • Be sure to obtain as much information in advance about the specific direction the interviewer will be taking and what other sources will be included in the interview or referenced. That will help you understand the tone and slant you can expect to be placed on your remarks.

Another important practice is to use the minute or two before the interview begins to ask the interviewer how he/she intends to open the interview. This will key you in to the first area of focus and give you a minute to get your thoughts together before going live. It also permits you to think about how you want to use that first question to bridge to your key messages.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • I appreciate all of the posts about this topic - I had no idea it would generate so much conversation! Great feedback and resources posted by all. Thanks and have a great weekend everyone!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Deborah

**Deborah Bass** • I agree with Paul. Reporters often thank me for putting the question in the answer. Not only does it make their job easier, but it ensures your quote - YOUR message will be used. I received media training several years ago and have used the following strategies extensively:

- \* Always answer honestly.
- \* Create and use themes. Themes are what's good or fundamental about your organization (or a specific point you need to express). Examples: We are a public health agency (crucial for a mosquito control district); All of our technicians are trained and certified; All of the products we use are approved by the EPA. Themes allow you to control the message and use the interview to your advantage. It's not about just answering the question.
- \* Now put the two together in a soundbite - 12-20 seconds long. In this, your quote won't be cut and reassembled which runs the risk of being taken out of context or changing your meaning. Do the reporter a favor and just give her the 12-20 second sound bite she needs- she'll thank you. (including the question in the answer is the best)
- \* So it looks like this:  
Q: XXXXXX? A. (honest answer), bridge to (theme 1) + (theme 2) = 12-20 seconds
- \* It's okay to repeat your themes, especially on TV as they will only air once.
- \* Always talk in the positive. Don't talk about what you don't do, talk about what you do, in fact, do.
- \* Never repeat the ridiculous or offensive behavior. ("I'm not a crook. I didn't steal the money" only leads to people thinking you might have. People don't here "not" and "didn't", they associate 'crook' with you. Say instead "I have always managed the accounts at XXX with the utmost.... I care about...."
- \* Be confident - they are talking to you because you're the expert.
- \* Relate to the viewer, not the interviewer.
- \* Practice out loud until it flows naturally.
- \* Tone (26%) and body language (67%) make up most of your communication (words 7%); don't disregard them.

Following these basic principles has worked very well for me.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Jinida L.

**Jinida L. Doba** • Write down and answer all KILLER QUESTIONS you can think of: the most embarrassing, uncomfortable questions you think the press may ask. Better safe than sorry.

1 month ago • Like



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • All of the information presented is excellent. However, it all seems to be based on the fact that the encountered with the media will be planned and organized. This is not always the case. I use to work for a trade association and its primary mission was to lobby the state legislature. Therefore, after a bill was approved or defeated, the media would descend upon my people. I taught them to say I don't know or we will have to review the bill with its amendments. In cases like this, the people who may be asked have

to be kept up to speed on a constant basis. They have to be taught not to speculate, not to ab lib and to remember nothing is off the record.

Secondly, most of the attention seems to be directed toward television press conferences. People concentrate on this because what you say will be on the evening news. Newspapers should not be forgotten, this especially true now that so many newspapers are owned by chains. A reporter you have known for years representing one newspaper may suddenly be representing the entire chain. Newspapers can devote more space to a story that a television station can devote time. Also, the printed word is there forever. Granted with the internet and other technology also has an extended lifetime, but it is still easier to photocopy an article and hand it out if the comments of your people are of interest (good or bad) to some group.

Do not let your people get in a debate with a reporter. They are going to lose. If there is an ongoing exchange, have your person remarked, I have answer your questions. If you wish to pursue the issue further please see me after the press conference and we can arrange a meeting. I have used this approach and it works.

Sometimes you can have pre arranged sound bites that may be beneficial. Usually this requires a lot of research. Tell your people to stay on target and avoid remarks they think are humorous -- usually they are offensive to somebody else.

Finally, if you are dealing with a crisis situation, be it an explosion at a chemical plant, or an embezzlement scandal, the first response should be that the primary goal is to protect workers, (investors) families and community. I had faced refinery explosions and major oil spills--the people impacted have to come first.

1 month ago • [Like](#)



[Follow Ian](#)

**Ian Harvey** • One last cliché...the microphone is always on.

1 month ago • [Like](#)

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[Follow Mark](#)

**Mark Berger** • Focus on the non-verbals such as wearing no jewelry. This gives the talker something to latch onto and play with during the interview. That's BAD because the reporter can see that as a sign the talker is hiding something. Never say no comment either. If you don't know the answer, then respectfully say that you will get back to the reporter on that--then do exactly that.

1 month ago • [Like](#)



[Follow Keith](#)

**Keith Bernhardt** • Role play and dance. I know the dancing part sounds bizarre and lame, but it helps people "loosen up", be themselves and not be intimidated or stiff. Make the media training fun and interactive ! Cross promote with an aerobics class if nothing else.

1 month ago • [Like](#)



[Follow Robert](#)

**Robert Craig** • Holly, Thanks very much for posting this discussion, which has provided me with a plethora of great ideas!

1 month ago • [Like](#)



[Follow Perry](#)

**Perry Bishop** • Ian makes a good point, but it's not only the microphone that should be considered always "on," but the camera as well.

1 month ago • [Like](#)



[Follow Larry](#)

**Larry Wall** • Also, the mini tape recorders and the pens and pencils are constantly moving. Everything is heard and recorded in some way and sometimes confusing. Many years ago my editor and I were covering a city council meeting. After various views were presented, some with extreme passion, another councilman remarked that we did not have to accept either what X or Y and said as wholly "such as being the complete answer -- or perhaps he was saying "as holy" like written in stone. I chose the latter, my editor disagreed. We never did find out what the councilman meant. He remarked that both interpretations sounded good to him. Moral of the story--be concise--explain what you mean.

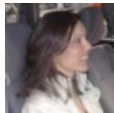
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Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • All great advice..... and I like the role play and dance! That might loosen folks up so that they aren't so nervous. I could tell them that they "need to think quick on their feet". Thanks everyone!

1 month ago • Like



Follow Maria

**Maria LoScerbo** • A few more tips:

Remind your spokespeople that nothing is ever off the record and the interview isn't over until the cameraman leaves the room with his camera -- never tell a reporter anything you wouldn't feel comfortable seeing in print/broadcast.

Beware the "pause" as savvy reporters will occasionally let you answer a Q, then make eye contact with you and say nothing, with an expectant look on their face. You become uncomfortable with the silence and continue talking, often digging yourself into a hole. You have two options: 1) sit and wait for the reporter to ask another Q; 2) Talk about one of your key messages.

Know how to bridge back to your key messages. Transitioning is easy if a) you know what your messages are; b) you use the following words or phrases: a) AND another point we should note is.... b) HOWEVER, the issue of most concern is.... c) BUT let me go back to something I mentioned earlier...or what I can tell you is....

Be quotable. Use pithy sound bites, predictions, comparisons, numbers, examples and trends.

29 days ago • Like



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • Maria is correct about nothing is off the record. The scenario she outlined is one example. The other is the telephone interview, where something triggers a side conversation that leads to a comment that is irrelevant to the story, but manages to get into the lead.

Secondly, do not ever speculate. You either know or you do not know. If you do not know, do not be afraid to say so. If the question is relevant, offer to find the answer later, but do not guess at it.

Again, what Maria mentioned applies more to on camera or recorded interviews. I am an old print reporter. Thus I was less interested in soundbites, because I had all the space I wanted to report the story and was not limited to a 30 second or 1 minute spot on the evening news. Therefore, print reporters will keep you talking longer and the longer you talk, the more likely you are to mess up. Also, print interviews are not always planned. The phone rings, the reporter is on the other end and he has a question. If you can answer it then please do so because it helps to build a good relationship. However, if you cannot answer or someone in your office is better capable of answering, tell the reporter that you have to get back to him, shortly--no more than 20 minutes--with either the answer or someone who can answer the question for you. Then, get on the other extension and if necessary steer your person in the right direction if he starts going off on a tangent. This is a real problem when using technical people to answer questions. They know so much about the subject, they want to share it. Sharing is not always good.

Finally, do not ask to see the story before it runs. First, they are not going to show it to you. If they do show it to you, they are not going to take any your advice and if they make a mistake, you can always ask for a clarification, correction, retraction or write a letter to the editor. (People would sometimes ask me to see stories. I allowed it twice on feature stories. One person was a Nun and would get in trouble with her Mother Superior. They only asked for one minor change. The other was a good friend of the paper--she ran the city archives and we were always going to her for background. I did it as a courtesy. She asked me to remove one quote about her late father. It was colorful but not vital so I did. Remember, I was working in a small market and sometimes you just have to bend a little.

29 days ago • Like

1



Follow Dave

**Dave Carstens** • Just to drive home Maria and Larry's point, while shooting tv news in Los Angeles, some of my reporters would have me roll camera surreptitiously and we definitely 'burned' some folks. Print reporters are even more dangerous. Did they deserve it? maybe. I do know it was easy pick-ins.

BTW, this discussion has become quite a knowledge base for media training. Kudos to Holly.

29 days ago • Like

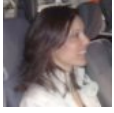
**Robert Hoskins** • We develop something called a Message Map, which basically a condensed message diagram developed in conjunction with a Frequently Asked Question sheet. The FAQ helps steer a reporter in the direction that you want the interview to go.



Follow Robert

The Message Map is a high level overview of all the topics that your PR person thinks might be asked during the interview. The main talking point will be in a circle in the middle of the page. Surrounding the main circle message will be ancillary points in smaller circles. Each circle will also have lines that are sub-talking points for each message point. Having a document to scan is always helpful for executives during an interview. Most reporters will close by asking the executives is there anything that they didn't ask. A quick scan of the message map is a good way insert one more topic that sometimes will lead a follow-up story. And like everyone has said, practice on camera with somebody asking you the tough questions you might not want to answer on camera.

29 days ago • Like



Follow Maria

**Maria LoScerbo** • I sat in a couple of interviews this week with CEOs and have some observations/tips:

Some CEOs take media training very literally and are often one extreme or the other: too tense and paranoid going into it, or they are too relaxed.

If you're asked a question by a reporter, answer it briefly for heaven's sake and try to weave key points at opportune moments so they look and feel natural, not disjointed. You shouldn't sound mechanical.

For print stories in particular where interviews tend to be longer, if your executive is too "on-message", it can sometimes sound canned. At the same time, if he/she is too coy, they'll risk alienating the journalist. As the PR consultant, it can be painful to sit there listening to a CEO sidetrack deliberately because he thinks he's being clever. He's just being annoying. I'm thinking to myself, "This isn't a curve-ball or difficult question, just answer the question and BRIDGE to your key messages!!".

Lastly, if your executive feels stuck, s/he can use an example or human angle story to illustrate their point. This is usually a safe place to go because they sound natural telling a story or anecdote they know well (as long as it supports your key points).

29 days ago • Like



Follow Dick

**Dick Pirozzolo, APR** • Asking to review a story before publication is still against the rules -- for the most part. In a crisis situation with pressing deadlines asking is a waste of time. But every situation is different. And there is asking and then there is asking.

With highly technical matters it is acceptable to say you will be available to go over those details specifically. Reporters covering the BP spill don't want to report on a "coffin dam" when the term is "coffer dam," for example. Offer to be available to review by phone rather than asking to see a copy of the story. Reporters feel more comfortable reading a paragraph to a source that could be inaccurate than sending the actual copy.

Be sympathetic, "I know I threw a lot of information at you, please take my cell phone number if you have anything you want to clarify and here's the number of our head engineer as well. Call any time day or night."

The offer can get you a second bite at the apple.

28 days ago • Like



Follow Roger

**Roger Drake** • It's referenced above but if you have to get back to a reporter regarding details, ask them their deadline and let them know you will respect their timing/availability--You will win them over every time

28 days ago • Like



Follow Donna

**Donna Mitchell** • Be very specific when broaching story ideas. If you are approaching a business magazine, which is already a more narrow subject area, don't pitch a story on 'personal finance' or 'retirement'. It's too broad, and the idea will get lost in the shuffle of a busy newsroom.

27 days ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great advice everyone! Thanks for your contributions, I hope you are enjoying this discussion as much as I am. Have a great Monday!

25 days ago • Like

**Debbie Albert** • Please, tell the truth.



Follow Debbie

25 days ago • Like



Follow Willy

**Willy Gilder** • Avoid jargon, acronyms, complexity, marketing-speak. Keep it simple. Oh, and when you send out a press release then don't be surprised if when a radio station calls you back they might want you to talk on air. If I had a penny for the number of times people aren't available.....

23 days ago • Like

1



Follow Trish

**Trish Sweeney** • I'd suggest: be polite. It sounds obvious but courtesy can go a long way. If you enjoyed the interview and the reporter forwards a copy of the article, a note of warm thanks is a nice touch. Reporters and editors making an extra effort should be acknowledged for doing so.

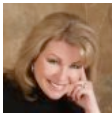
22 days ago • Like



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • I would just add one point to Sweeney's comment. Be open minded. Do not go into any interview or briefing with an antagonistic attitude—reporters can sense that, will think you are trying to hide something and be all over you. I use to be a reporter—I know.

21 days ago • Like



Follow Ann

**Ann Willets** • Holly, I have a great power point presentation you can use that highlights all the points mentioned by our group. Please reach out directly to me and I'll be happy to share it with you.  
ann@utopiacomunications.biz

21 days ago • Like



Follow Kathleen

**Kathleen Mc Andrews** • I'd also add that it's important to be engaging and don't bury your good traits. If you are passionate about something it is OK to allow that to show when it's appropriate. Good luck with this!

21 days ago • Like



Follow Karen

**Karen Martin** • I agree with all above comments. I would like to add "never repeat the question(s)" as they were more than likely negatively asked. To have it come out of your or your media representative's mouth would make a good sound bite for the interviewer, but a terrible soundbite for the company. Also, have three key phrases that you keep circling back to and repeating. If the soundbite contains some "sensationalism" words like "guarantee, definitely", and other cliches, they are sure to be aired as sound bites and they are exactly the bites you want to be aired. Good luck!

21 days ago • Like



Follow Marie

**Marie Gentile** • This is going to sound really basic but be sure to practice integrating the company name in your responses. Sound silly? I once had a client who got a nice guest spot on Good Morning America. The interviewer did not provide the company name during the introduction, and the client had almost 5 minutes of interview time during which he could have mentioned his company's name several times, but never did! Such an opportunity lost!

21 days ago • Like



Follow Joe

**Joe Troxler** • Hi Holly:

I've done this kind of work (Media, MR and MT) training for years. I currently have 'some' time between contracts. If I can be of service in some way (i.e. a second set of eyes) kindly let me know at kljt@rogers.com

I'd also like to receive your latest PP on the subject....Joe

21 days ago • Like



Follow Susan

**Susan Pepperdine** • Marie, we're on the same page about being sure to use your company's name in your responses to the media. I had given this tip early on in this discussion, and appreciate that you've given an example of how important it is. I first used it years ago when giving interviews for a humane organization I co-founded, and it helped our name recognition.

21 days ago • Like



Follow Nick

**Nick Brough** • Before starting try to know if each person to be trained actually wants the session. It is not always the case - it can be an unwelcome imposition from on high, "taking up time better spent getting on with the job". If the client does not recognise the value of the training make it a priority to change his/her views as early as possible. One way is to put the client into an apparently freindly/chatty interview with a skilled journalist/trainer who procedes to get them into a mess. When, in the debrief, you point out the simple rules that would have saved them they are likely to change opinion very quickly and value the training.

20 days ago • Like

1



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • I have found the biggest obstacle to in-house media training, is that the boss is always right—even when he is very wrong. For my money, you are better off bringing in someone from the outside, who can counter the boss' claims without fear of losing his job, being demoted or being ignored in the future. For example, in my last job, I would like news releases, keeping the lead simple and direct. A former boss always wanted to add more details to the first two paragraphs about the company, which was not necessarily the main thrust of the release. It was not until we hired an outside PR firm to help with a special campaign, that the boss got the idea, when the firm offered its first assessment—with no input from me—that press releases and other written material was too complicated and taped interviews showed that management had to learn how to stay on point.

My boss got the message and he changed his ways.

20 days ago • Like

2



Follow Shirley

**Shirley Linde** • Tell the truth and don't cover up. Or else it will come back and bit you bigger and worse.  
Shirley Linde, Editor  
www.smallshipcruises.com  
www.medicalinformationcenter.org

19 days ago • Like



Follow VINCE

**VINCE CARRABS** • Larry Wall is on the ball with this, I usually hire outsiders who have relevant and current industry experience. It's difficult to argue with the pros. I should also point out that we do use real scenarios, that our clients identify with and reviewed mechanisms to ensure that they learn from the experience. Of course, the old adage of staying on point is one that escapes some. Our job is to keep reminding them.

18 days ago • Like



Follow Shirley

**Shirley Linde** • When I set up the Information Services Department at Northwestern University Medical & Dental Schools many moons ago I spent the first month just going around and meeting with the head of each department, explaining the philosophies of public relations, the far-reaching ramifications and the advantages, and asking how I might do something for them (instead of telling them what I needed from them). Once I had some excellent story placements it was easy to bring others on board. I also organized a seminar When Doctors Meet Reporters with nationally known speakers to discuss various aspects of science stories and the institution's obligation to the public.

Shirley Linde  
www.medicalinformationcenter.org  
www.smallshipcruises.com

18 days ago • Like

1



Follow Stephanie

**Stephanie Smith** • Always prepare your 2-3 talking points and go over them with someone before talking to the media. You have to remember that you have control over the interview. I also find it helpful to video people as they practice and then watch them as a group and talk about the good and bad points.

17 days ago • Like

1





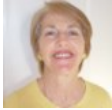
Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great comments - I do like the idea of bringing someone in from the outside, I may work on that.

I have to say this conversation has been really great. I just noticed that I posted this three months ago and I'm still getting feedback - now at 300 comments.

Thanks again to everyone that has posted, please keep the comments coming, it's really helpful and it's been a great learning experience.

17 days ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • Holly and all - this has been a very interesting discussion and points to best practice. To that end, I am in the process of establishing a research project to look at the media training market in North America and what demand there might be for a media training "academy" - where trainers and PR practitioners can further their skills and experience as trainers. How to maximize training, understanding learning styles, how to run a media training business, coaching spokespeople, accreditation, Master Classes (more than bridging!) are just some of the areas that we are considering. If anyone in this group would like to participate in the research which is being conducted by Berkeley business students, please let me know. If nothing else we will establish what the media training market/industry looks like in the US. We will, of course, share the results. If you are interested in this venture or talking further about accreditation please email me - jane@janejordan.net. All ideas are welcome. And, of course, it will be confidential.

17 days ago • Like



Follow Donna

**Donna Luley** • I believe this is an idea long past due. Even new professions (i.e. grant writing) have training and certification courses with appropriate associations. I would be most interested in participating in the research. I am sending my email as requested.

17 days ago • Like



**Patchen Barsz** • Regarding bringing in someone from outside to do media training: It's true that a consultant might have an easier time telling the boss, "You're doing it wrong." (That's a paraphrase, of course.) But I've also seen many scenarios where internal capacity to train and prep has been undervalued in deference to a fascination with outside opinions. This can lead to other issues of staff disgruntlement, (and might be part of a separate conversation on internal communications).

Regarding training the trainers: It's a good idea - teaching, training and mentoring are of course separate skillsets from those required to actually do media. Are you looking at what's already being offered via groups like the IABC?

In any case, if you extend your research to Canada, let me know - I'd be interested in getting involved.

17 days ago

1



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • Patchen, I was the person who made the comment about the boss. I also agree with you. Again, as I have said in other discussions, it depends on the situation you are facing. Some companies have Public Relations Departments with several staff members. I was a one man shop who did a lot of other things. People heard and frequently ignored my suggestions everyday, because PR is just common sense. If you are fortunate enough to have a staff, where you can divide responsibility and have a media communications expert, then you probably can do the training in house. In cases like my situation, my management needed to hear what I was saying, but just worded different and from a different person.

As far as training the trainers, there are some basic things to know, but I have been to a few seminars where the trainers only wanted to concentrate on crisis communications, which is important. However, the non-crisis comments can also cause you problems if not handled properly. It boils down to experience, your particular situation and the person who is going to be the face to the media.

16 days ago • Like

1



Follow Helen

**Helen Slater** • Interested in your comment, Larry, about the focus on crisis comms. That's something I have found as well - people want training in crisis communication but I structure my training in two modules and people can't do the crisis training without doing the first module, unless they've already had in-house media training. The first session concentrates on understanding the media, developing your relationship with journalists, how they work and how to work with them, and training on day-to-day situations with journalists. You're right, it is often the little things handled badly that end up as issues and that's what I help my clients understand. Then they have a much better appreciation of the crisis comms training.

16 days ago • Like

1



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • Helen, it sounds like you have developed a good system. I have known PR firms to concentrate first on crisis situation and secondly on television coverage and maybe at the very end will offer a few minutes about normal communications and dealing with newspapers. I know television is immediate and will be there forever, However, the written word is also powerful and as we have seen in our own history, the written word can be with us for centuries. The electronic word is not always recoverable. How many of you have access to 8mm projectors, laser disk players or eight track tape players? VCRs are getting harder to find and the fight of Blue Ray over DVD only creates more problems. I know I am partial to print because of my background, but the printed word is what is quote in campaigns, in other articles, term papers, PhD thesis and so on. Please do not underestimate it or the impact it can have on a situation.

15 days ago • Like

1



Follow Helen

**Helen Slater** • Because I was a radio, then newspaper journalist, I do put some emphasis on these media. It's tempting to focus on television as the 'glamour' medium, but in fact, newspapers can be in some ways more damaging to reputation, simply because there's more room to editorialise, and to get other perspectives into the story that can be damaging. I get my colleague to share the interviewing (she is a former TV journalist) and when she interviews, I will write up what I'd write as a newspaper journalist, and give them the headline and intro. This often shows that for an ordinary situation - often for marcomms purposes - they can come across as dull as ditch-water. For me, the camera is useful to show body language and how they come across, but I remind them that their body language isn't just about the viewing audience, that it tells the journalist a lot as well, whether for print, radio or TV. Radio is another difficult medium for interviewees too, because it all rests on voice - pitch, pace and tone - and that can be a challenge to get right for the everyday situation, let alone a crisis.

15 days ago • Like

1



Follow Scott

**Scott McAfee** • 1. Write out the three most important talking points and help your staff figure out ways to bridge back to those points, no matter the question.

2. Have your staff go through actual videotaped mock interviews so that they can see themselves on camera. They won't like it but having them experience the situation, and then analyzing how they did, is a necessary part of the training. I regularly mock interview my senior staff on camera. It's a good tool for continued improvement not just from a word-smithing standpoint but also from a camera-presence standpoint.

15 days ago • Like

1



Follow Cindie

**Cindie Leonardo** • Prepare for the interview! Anticipate potential questions from the interviewer and practice your answers. If possible, know the interview style of the journalist. Videotaping is great for body language and voice issues. If a TV interview, be well groomed and wear TV friendly colors such as dark blue, green or black. Contrasting colors work well too. Relax and understand the interviewer is on the line to get the story right!

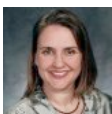
15 days ago • Like



Follow Kimberly

**Kimberly Hilsenbeck** • I just conducted an interview with a state agency media rep. spokesperson wearing a journalist hat (my background is communications/PR). She took my cold call right away, didn't hesitate to answer my questions, promised to follow up with something she didn't know enough technical details about, and in general provided good info. She was not on the defensive and didn't approach me as if I was calling for a 'gotcha' moment. Overall, she gave me a great interview with solid quotes and details. I'd rate her high on the list of how to handle a call from a reporter. She was prepared even though I hadn't set up the interview in advance. Now that's a good media relations pro!

15 days ago • Like



Follow Michelle

**Michelle Tennant** • Here's a link to an article I wrote for PR News. You'll have to download it so just email me at michelle@publicityresults.com if you have trouble downloading it. It discusses the importance of education versus promotion  
[http://www.storytellertothemedia.presskit247.com/how\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_media\\_superstar](http://www.storytellertothemedia.presskit247.com/how_to_be_a_media_superstar)

15 days ago • Like



Follow Joanne

**Joanne Benteler** • You have gotten a lot of great advice. I have a little more to add. Train them to speak clearly without jargon and acronyms. Often overlooked is counseling on what not to wear. Avoid stripes, which wreak havoc on the eyes. If your interviewee is female, tell her not to wear clunky jewelry, especially if she is animated. You can hear it rattle. And if the person is animated, direct them to limit gesturing, which is very distracting.

15 days ago • Like



Follow Krishna

**krishna muthaly** • This is Krishna from Malaysia and I am now a PR adviser after 25 years as a journalist  
Here is my opening for my media relations...my email krishnamuthaly@gmail.com

#### HOW TO FACE THE MEDIA AND INCREASE PUBLICITY

**Objectives** The interactive lecture on media handling tips is aimed at countering bad publicity and seizing the opportunity to get good publicity by writing effective press releases.

It is also aimed at training participants how to use the media by intelligently answering media queries.

The course will familiarize participants on angling (spinning) the story to be in sync with the company's mission and vision.

The hands-on course is a two-day experiential workshop that will enable participants to handle with ease and confidence facing the media in different media interviews and press conferences.

By the end of the workshop, participants should be able to:

- After attending Face the Media programme participants will be able to face the media. They will be empowered with new techniques on how to answer media questions. Through the enhanced understanding they will be confident in facing the media in future and seize the opportunity to publicise their company activities when the media calls them.
- Every individual is unique, therefore personalised coaching with tailored solutions to suit individual communication styles, the message and the media at hand, is invaluable.
- In addition to confidence, the participants would have mastered charisma, pronunciation, intonation, body language, picking up cues from the media, maintaining control and focus, diplomacy, political correctness and cultural sensitivities specific to the media event.
- Through a better understanding of how the Malaysian media organizations operate, their objectives and their expectations, participants will be given useful media handling tips to ensure that every media interview achieves the objectives intended.

14 days ago • Like



Follow Stephanie

**Stephanie Hampton** • I've found that it's always better when you incorporate your key messages on a specific situation into the media training. Then the executives can apply their learnings immediately. It never fails--they have that "a-ha" moment when the material is something that relates to their real world.

14 days ago • Like



Follow Bruce

**Bruce McNab** • After a 20+ year career as a media trainer I would have to agree with almost all of these comments, except Paul's final one (above)... Do not repeat the question if it's negative... using the phrase "cost cutting" (for example) gives it legitimacy. I tell people, "Don't tell me what it isn't - tell me what it is!"

14 days ago • Like

1



Follow João

**João Santos** • Use interesting ways to perform some of the actions already talked here. For instance, to give them a sense of the time to answer in TV or a journalist in general ask them to light a match and explain you what your company do. Its ice breaking but something that they will remember (if the interviewee performs good, you can have a smaller matchbox for the next question, just to have a laugh). I also suggest, besides normal prep, include extreme actions that journalists sometimes have (answering mobile during the interview, changing interviewee name, ask questions that have nothing to do with the company, others) warning them previously that everything you do is intentional. Most of all I like to maintain the rule of: be clear, be short, be concise answering the Media

13 days ago • Like



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • I commented on this earlier, but I thought of one additional step. Role Playing can be an important key. I took part in an exercise, that was aimed at lobbying, and was taught by a former congressional aide. You would simply create a situation, where your public relations plan was put into place. Two or three would have to be the media reps who would then question over and over the company spokesman in a crisis situation, or would badger a PR person over information that he knows but cannot release. Taking part is informative and watching it can also be beneficial. Go through several scenarios and

rotate the roles. It will be useful in the future.

12 days ago • Like



Follow Ian

**Ian Harvey** • Role playing is very important. They need to know what it's like to have a group of people shouting questions at them with cameras rolling and jumping on every statement to throw it back at them and then to see or read the story, at least the lead which would have resulted.  
I have played the role of reporter for clients training their own clients and I have conducted media training exercises for my own clients.  
The most telling thing is that when you debrief and ask them how they felt when put on the spot, they say their heart beat increased, their mouth went dry and they felt pressure.....all of which is good because going into these things you prep with key messages and that's why key messages are so critical to have because when you are pressured you can get pushed off track.

12 days ago • Like

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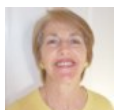


Follow Rob

**Rob Brown** • From Soledad O'Brien's keynote at PRSA conference, Orlando: Media training should be, at its core, finding a way to get your client/spokesperson to speak from the gut, from the heart, from the soul -- rather than brand brand brand (boring boring boring).

12 days ago • Like

2



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • Rob - I couldn't agree more. As I say and coach - it's about the head and the heart coming together. If a spokesperson lacks authenticity then they will be judged and harshly.

Ian - horses for courses. You are very good - I know this first hand! But training also needs to be realistic or people will be turned off doing media, full stop. I have conducted many remedial sessions where people have come in very wounded from very bad media training and we have had to build their confidence, and start from scratch.

The best trainers are those who not only have the prerequisite media experience but are also trained in adult learning so that they understand how to get lasting results in the training room.

The debrief is the the one of most important elements in training, and needs to be managed carefully. Praise Instruct Praise is a good rule to follow, when debriefing.

What a great discussion this has been (and continues to be.) Well done Holly for asking the question in the first place.

11 days ago • Like

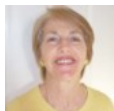


Follow Rob

**Rob Brown** • Jane -- My mother-in-law (a couple of marriages ago) was a theater director, and I watched her giving "notes" to the actors after rehearsal, and after performance. Actors are the primo communicators, of course. We, the audience, believe their performance (or don't) because good actors -- competent actors at the very least -- are not merely "engaged" with their characters; they inhabit them. We are compelled, we believe, we are moved because the acting comes from the heart and soul and gut. The guy playing Hamlet never steps out of character to tell the audience that he's doing Shakes-peare.

11 days ago • Like

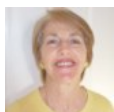
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Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • To add to Harry's comments - better still have the trainees fill out a form that gives you some idea of their experience, their strengths/challenges, the skills they want to gain/practice/refresh and also their objectives. We also ask for a topic and ask our participants to rank their training skills.

11 days ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • Rob - I agree totally! Love the points you have made. I am always saying - you are the "paid actor on the stage" for XYZ (company) so learn your lines, and you had better believe them too! Thank you for sharing. Just love the last point about Hamlet - so true, we certainly would not expect an actor to step out of character.

11 days ago • Like

**Ian Harvey** • Your point is right on of course Jane, but I'd note the staged press



Follow Ian

conferences were among their peers so there was a little bit of team building going on and we kept it fun and threw in a couple of "inside" curveball questions...while the bulk of the role playing was serious, we make sure no one is embarrassed or humiliated...that would be wrong of course.

Each group has a "communications manager" whose job it is to play ring master, then the two "spokespeople" to whom questions are directed. The mob are their colleagues if the group is large enough.

Otherwise I play the role of journalist and then give them feedback. More recently I've been working with the Communications Manager of a consulting firm for her folks and it's been a good experience.

11 days ago • Like



Follow virginie

**virginie harnois** • from a frenchie...In France journalists have the same habits than everywhere else i presume! just to add a little thing to all the great informations above : first of all, prepare the key messages, your core communication, what you absolutely want to express whatever the topic of the interview is. And go around it. This can take more time than one can expect.....

11 days ago • Like



Follow Patricia

**Patricia Andrien** • Never assume the reporter is going to report on the message that you want to relay. Reporters and media have their own agendas. Try to anticipate what topics the reporter could be interested in, and be prepared to address those topics. Assume all of your comments are on the record, even if you tell the reporter they are off the record.

11 days ago • Like

1



Follow Grant

**Grant Peacock** • • Holly, a couple of very quick points from the viewfinder position - I'm the PR cameraman in team training sessions :

1. Body language - I do a case-by-case assessment, but if the trainee appears comfortable and capable, I will eventually get them to sit slightly forward of the back rest of a non-swivelling chair - this to give a vertical or slightly forward-leaning position.

This will convey interest, focus, attentiveness to the story at hand

2. Get used to the idea of makeup. If there's push-back, let's get started with 'practice' applications right now

3. Some pressure can be introduced gently with minimal lighting, and gradually ramped up in intensity as the person gets more adept. I'll eventually run at least 500 watts of soft key and perhaps some backlight too. It also makes for a more interesting and flattering critique in the playback monitor

4. For most people - earth-like tones for clothing, natural fabrics if possible, and avoid fine patterns in shirts and ties unless you've done a prior camera test.

5. A glass of warmish-slightly hot water can be used to relax the muscles used to speak. Sips

6. Finally, and especially for the nervous : "Hey, this in the end, is just a conversation". I try to get them adapted to the imposition of the gear, and at the same time have them ignore it. This is a balancing act. I'll use a little humour wherever possible.

Good luck!

11 days ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Again, thanks to everyone for taking the time to post. I'm really enjoying the discussion that is happening between the "posters". Great information continues to be shared - thanks and have a great day!

10 days ago • Like



Follow Josh

**Josh Moscov** • These days, since the media is so blitzed with press releases, pitches, etc., it's really important to really have an idea of what they cover and how they liked to be contacted. If, for example, they want all communication through email, send your data, and if you really feel that your story is powerful, call. Only call once and leave a message. Only leave one message. Try again the next day, but don't leave a message.

Just remember this: the media always remember. Clients come and go, but reporters do move around and may not want to deal with you if they had a bad past relationship.

One more thing: When calling a reporter, show respect and ask if they are on deadline

and if you can have one minute of their time to make the pitch. You must be ready and to the point.

10 days ago • Like



Follow Larry

**Larry Wall** • Josh, your point is excellent, especially about reporters moving around. I worked for four different newspapers, the first three in about the first three years after I graduated, then for 13 years at the last paper where I worked.

This has been a great discussion but I think everything boils down to a few points:

Your Situation: PR Agency, In-House PR Person, Freelance PR person

The story: Major expansion that will create jobs, major layoff, promotions, new production introduction, reaction to a lawsuit or alleged violation, etc. each situation will require a slightly different approach. Some stories will take on a life of their own, and your news release may only be used as a source of background material and as a point of contact. For others, it may generate an original story.

Your market: Small town news is different than big city city. A major expansion of a factory or some other facility in a small town will push the President of the United States off the front page. In a big city, a crisis half way around the world can send your story to the second section way in the back and be completely ignored by television.

Your personality and your relationship with the reporters. The stereotype PR person is the one who talks a mile a minute with a string of superlative adjectives that overwhelms the reporter. Those people do exist--I am not one of them. I am more of an introvert--not the best qualification. So I call reporters before I need them to introduce myself. If they have a good byline story, I will call or e-mail if I cannot get them and tell them I really enjoyed the story and then mention who I am and that I may be calling upon him.

Your management: Sometimes the best laid PR plans can be scuttled by management. If you can talk to your management in a frank and straightforward way as I could for most of my PR career. If some barrier exists between you and the management, then you may have problems.

There are other factors and if you look hard enough you can find many that I would not think to mention. I only wanted to summarize so that no one, especially someone new to PR and reading this forum gets the idea that one size fits all. It is like buying clothes off the rack--they are all made of similar materials, but the style, workmanship, size, appropriateness, price and durability will all impact your decisions on whether to stop and purchase or to look elsewhere.

10 days ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Great points Josh and Larry! Thanks for taking the time to post.

8 days ago • Like



Follow Sean

**Sean Claes** • I know I'm late to the show.. but I thought I'd pitch in.

Speaking from the experience on the media side. Do yourself a favor and don't send e-mails with attachments. If you'd like to give them something to download, upload it to your own site and provide a link. Especially photos. I don't know how many times I get a 5MB+ file a week.

Now, if it's the attachment of a Microsoft Word version of the press release you're sending, that's not terribly bad.

8 days ago • Like



Follow Duncan

**Duncan Matheson** • Others have offered good advice about having messages ready, but a technique I teach hand in hand with that is to reframe the question if you don't like it, for example if the tone doesn't feel right or it is overly negative. Do this by simply reframing the question then answering it. i.e.: If you are asking me (insert reframed question) then I would say (insert answer) Keep in mind that all the reporter is usually looking for is a good 10 second clip. This will give him or her that, and at the same time will often serve you better than answering the question as asked.

8 days ago • Like

**Warwick Partington** • As a professional broadcast skills trainer and former investigative journalist, I am horrified by the "Let's have a go at media training - anyone got any good ideas and tips?" approach that started this discussion.



Follow Warwick

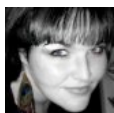
Your corporate reputation and the individuals career prospects may hang on the results when they face a journalist. The first thing that you need to do is source a qualified professional trainer who has the right level of experience in both various forms of media interviews and in coaching individuals who will have different learning styles. Needless to say that their understanding of these issues should be current & not 'has-been'

My advice when sourcing good media training is avoid anyone including ex-journalists or PRO's who claim to deliver media training - unless they are also hold proper qualifications in coaching or training. Individual personal communication skills may vary according to all sorts of issues from childhood, schooling, military service and other personal experiences that 'have a go trainers' may unwittingly uncover and not know how to deal with. The results that I have seen from such training is people who have taken a real beating in confidence and been left without any support. I've seen grown men cry under cross questioning and others destroy their careers in front of colleagues.

I have no axe to grind as I'm not offering my services - just some real advice from a seasoned professional who has had to pick up the bits .....

And if you still don't believe me and need a good example of ineffective media training - watch BP's former CEO Tony Hayward's deposition to the Congressional Inquiry into the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster on You-tube.....

7 days ago • Like



Follow Roxanne

**Roxanne Marais** • Hello Lady and Gentlemen

Warwick, I think you raise very pertinent points especially when you advise on soliciting the services of a specialist media coach. The facts are that in PR and communication, unless you represent organisations that are the centre of media focus, or impact largely on the social, economic or environmental conditions of their audiences; chance are that your exposure to the media and how to deal with them effectively are slim. This lack of exposure to the media environment is reason enough to incorporate a specialist media coach when training any and all staff.

That being said, I have met many seasoned journalists and PRO's that have concrete advice on how to deal with these matters, and they should not be dismissed for a lack of "proper qualifications". Their "school of life" provides them with analytical skills that a newbie with qualifications simply could never know, or be expected to.

Another perspective that I would like to add to your comments is that companies such as BP have adequate communication staff that are no doubt trained on these matters. The clip you refer to is of a deposition, not a media interview; which the spokesperson would have been able to navigate with the relevant skills. CEO positions very rarely double as spokesperson roles, because these individuals play a very different role in the organisations, and at time of crisis do not have the time, nor the resources to deal with external pressure. A PRO or spokesperson is trained as the gatekeeper of information because internal issues and strategies (be they crisis communication) are being dealt with by the key decision makers.

All of my points above reinforce Warwick's message about contracting a professional. In our communications profession, we should know a bit about everything, specialise in our passion, and advise when we know specialist knowledge is needed.

7 days ago • Like



Follow Willy

**Willy Gilder** • It's certainly true that I've interviewed several people who told me they felt quite confident until they were media trained....

7 days ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Warwick and Roxanne raise good points - let me add this.... what if you work for an organization that does not have the funding to hire an outside media training company/individual and you have to depend upon internal employees for training? Working in the public health field usually means that someone within the organization will need to talk with reporters at some point - most often during an outbreak situation. In a time of being asked to "do more with less", how would you approach this issue?

4 days ago • Like



Follow Warwick

**Warwick Partington** • On the subject of funding you have two potential approaches - the first is that what you do resonates with a media skill trainer who is prepared to give their time to help or to do the training for a reduced fee - for example I do some work with injured ex-servicemen on the basis that if they are prepared to lose their limbs and lives in Afghanistan on my behalf, I'm prepared to give them something back. But if you don't ask you won't find out - so get in touch with trainers who you'd like to deliver the training and

ask.

The second approach is that if you can see the value of media training for your organisation, you can persuade someone, somewhere of that value. In a public health organisation, that may be you can get the training sponsorship from a pharmaceutical company or other supplier - or if it is in preparation for an outbreak, the local civil authorities, mayors office or federal health protection authorities.

My final thought is that for a day long session with an experienced, qualified trainer is only around \$3000, it's not particularly expensive anyway..... but if you really can't find the cash, if your organisation is preparing for a public health outbreak, I'd ask other agencies who you'd be dealing with in that situation if you can piggy back onto their media training sessions - (assuming they are professionally run ones).

3 days ago • Like



Follow Chris

**Chris Myers, MCIPR** • You can still role play! Seriously, you will find it useful and worthwhile.

We've all watched interviews in action and have some idea what to expect. We can all learn from our mistakes. I suggest giving it a go, with video and or audio support and then to review critically.

Also, try some PR consultancies – some will offer pro bono support for charities and voluntary organisations.

Chris Myers

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From:

2 days ago • Like





Follow mark

**mark rouson** • Like all effective training, media training works best when the participants understand what is required - involve a journalist in your training to explain what they want from an interview. This has the added bonus of introducing the unknown and scary journalist persona as a human being to your participants who have probably never met a journalist before.

In your media training don't neglect any of the aspects that your participants may come across, including telephone interviews, live radio interviews and, in particular, crisis communications.

When your people are giving interviews they should have one prime objective and that is to get a specific message across. Media training should focus on techniques to allow them to do that.

1 day ago • Like



Follow Michael

**Michael Bernard** • One thing I have emphasized in media training is the importance of checking the journalist's understanding throughout the interview, particularly where the journalist is a generalist rather than a specialist in the area being discussed. This can be done through occasionally repeating or summarizing a point or even asking if the speaker has made herself/himself clear (without sounding wooden or patronizing.) Good reporters are excellent at asking questions, which some execs might mistakenly assume indicates a reporter's knowledge or understanding of a subject or issue.

A couple of other points to add to the excellent ones already made:

- \* some execs harbour very negative views of the media that you may not be able to alter in time for an interview. You may be better off to pass over that person and find another to speak rather than risk the interview or ongoing relationship with the media;
- \* many execs try to cover the waterfront in an interview leaving the reporter to sort through and make sense of a massive amount of seemingly unrelated info in what is usually a ridiculously brief period of time. They often don't succeed. Keep it simple for reporters by bridging back to key messages rather than following new threads in an interview;
- \* always, always be available to the journalist to clarify things after the interview and before broadcast or publication. It can literally save a story.

1 day ago • Like



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • Thanks everyone for the continued dialogue!

1 day ago • Like



Follow Eithne

**Eithne Treanor** • Holly & colleagues on this chat -

I think everyone has enjoyed and learned from the dialogue.

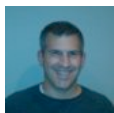
Let me add my 2 cents : in the event you might feel the reporter does not fully understand your business, or focus or message: Go into EXPLAIN mode.. suggest that some of his/her readers might not be fully aware of the implications of XYZ.

As a former reporter, I was occasionally thrown into a topic matter far from my expertise.. few media outlets have specialty reporters any more.. so never let the opportunity pass if your CEO, interviewee feels that the reporter may not be on top of the story. Remember, the reporter is but the messenger : give us an unfocused and unclear message & guess what we'll report! So think of your audience, the viewers, the listeners, the readers .. what do you want them to hear & remember and maybe take action on.

Also remember, there's no such thing as a "stupid question." Every question is an opportunity to engage & explain & just make sure you never deliver a "stupid answer."

1 day ago • Like

1



Follow Michael

**Michael Shmarak** • I wrote an article for PR NEWS' Media Training Handbook on the "Five C's of A Good Interview." Can I send you a link or copy of it?

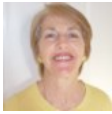
1 day ago • Like



Follow T. Dianne

**T. Dianne Edwards** • I also have great notes and tips from past media training with my Baan/SSA Global team when Edelman and others facilitated...will share. Basically used the DiME approach...Dilemma, Imagination, Message and Example. Why should I listen to you, what are the core messages, provide examples. Bridging thoughts and not talking down are included in my notes. (using Pad so excuse typos).

1 day ago • Like



Follow Jane

**Jane Jordan-Meier** • Diane - the DiME approach sounds very interesting. We have simialar methodolgy. I wonder if it is proprietary? The point to be made is that you have to COMPELLING - I always ask SO WHAT WHO CARES to focus people on their message.

1 day ago • Like



Follow Dennis

**Dennis Nealon** • I have always advised trianees of one very important aspect of working with media, which is -- "you will read what you say." This is cautionary of course but it also serves to help interviewees focus on what it is they want to say and how they'd like it to sound.

1 day ago • Like



Follow Laniece

**Laniece Williams M.S.** • I agree with Paul. Make sure your staff understands that the mic, recorder, or camera is ALWAYS on. What they may say when they think the reporter is not paying attention may very well appear in their story and can damage a reputation or credibility.

1 day ago • Like



Follow Dennis

**Dennis McGrath** • This was a fine discussion with lots of expertise offered but it's become really tiresome and has gone on ad infinitum. Can we please move on to another topic?

1 day ago • Like



Follow Chandler Thomas

**Chandler Thomas Wilson** • Know the demographics. From there look to frame the proper context. Further make sure your organization has consistent language for key issues. In today's media environment it's vital to controls what dialogue is used.

16 hours ago • Like



Follow T. Dianne

**T. Dianne Edwards** • not proprietary and used with other PR firms....otherwise I would claim it as my own!:-)

15 hours ago • Like



Follow T. Dianne

**T. Dianne Edwards** • Its early in Atlanta, but I wasnt horrified by the question at all! Most execs have had some sort of training, otherwise we are talking about a very green team. There also is adequate solicitation for business here...to provide the training. I chose not to do that since she didnt soecifically ask for it! Sorry, but I hail from HSV, AL and this really isn't rocket science! (excuse typos, written wit Pad).

15 hours ago • Like



Follow Julia

**Julia Tanen** • Wow - this is an amazing wealth of information. We should catalog all of this and email it out to everyone. Does anyone have the knowledge to pull all these comments w/photos in one doc? we could then turn it into a PDF and have it available as a download! This is an all in one PRIMER here!!

15 hours ago • Like

1



Follow Holly

**Holly Crane-Watkins** • I would love to capture this discussion, it has been really helpful. So if someone knows how to pull this into one PDF, please let me know, Thanks everyone!

5 hours ago • Like



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