

PRNews



**MEDIA
TRAINING**

GUIDEBOOK

- › Messaging
- › Crafting Sound Bites
- › Pitching
- › Camera Readiness
- › Bridging Techniques
- › Social Media
- › Crisis Communications

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Publisher's Letter



“Think before you speak!”

Someone probably pounded that advice into your head over the years. Never has it been so true. The media is not only a reporter at a major newspaper or Web site, an editor at a magazine or reporter with a TV program. The media could be Bobby the DJ who freelances as a tech blogger or Sally the stay-at-home mom who is one of the most influential mommy bloggers.

Thinking *differently* before you speak to the media is at the core of this year's PR News Media Training Guidebook. The few key messages you want to convey will travel at the speed of light, oftentimes making its way from the reporter's home base to social media before you've had a chance to even evaluate your performance. So it's imperative that you or your spokespeople know how to harness the best media training tools and tactics so you start to look forward to the next interview, rather than dread it.

The contributors to this PR News Guidebook have offered some of the industry's best thinking on the topic of media training, PR and media relations. You'll find hundreds of tips on how to leverage your brand's message on social media.

Kellyanne Dignam of Rasky Baerlein Strategic Communications, in her article, reminds us that “You are the master of the tweet unsent; once tweeted, it is the master of you.” You'll learn quickly that social media has become the digital press conference, a round-the-clock opportunity (or risk) to be heard by everyone, for better or worse.

In this PR News Media Training Guidebook, you'll learn how to build better relationships with journalists, so when they come calling you have banked considerable goodwill. You'll get tips that may seem second nature but can make a big difference in your success with a media interview, such as: “Listen to your mother: sit up straight.” As Nancy Vaughn of the White Book Agency noted with this advice, if you're slouching during an interview, experimenting with a new style or forgetting to smile during an interview, then you are hurting your chances of favorable coverage and positive public perception.

Our Guidebook authors show you how to tell a great story, which might result in positive or fair coverage, an increase in customers and sales, more social media followers, and more media interview requests. First, though, you need to know how to collect stories about your brand, and authors such as Paul Smith of Procter & Gamble, will detail those steps and ideas for you.

If you've been involved in any media training, you know to mind your ABCs during an interview: to Answer, Bridge and Conclude. We go deeper and show you how to do this. Media training is no longer optional, and it's not a luxury, either. It's an imperative for any PR professional and for those who are in the public eye. The good news is that after reading this book, you'll not only be ready for the next interview, you'll become a better storyteller at a time when we need more interesting, memorable stories.

Let us know what you think about this Media Training Guidebook, and please share with me your stories of success.

Sincerely,

Diane Schwartz
 @dianeschwartz

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The Boss Should Hear You...Why?

By Jim Lukaszewski

There's something about us public relations people that makes us act as though we were anointed to save the boss's job just about every day. The problem for most of us is that these "clients" rarely listen to us closely, and when it seems that they do, they take a different approach or act on only a fraction of what we suggest.

Self-Exam

Those who are really successful at moving the boss—and their bosses—to do things, think things and take action have a tendency to put themselves through a self-examination exercise. This keeps them focused on helping their leaders do a better job each day. So continuously ask yourself these questions:

1. Why do I want to be heard by my boss?
2. Why should the boss listen to me about anything? What's in it for him or her?
3. What's not working right now, and why?
4. There are clearly some risks if I do punch through and get heard by the boss; am I ready for those?
5. Am I ready to start being more brutally honest with myself first?
6. Can I train myself to focus on what really matters from the perspective of those who run the place?
7. How willing am I to change myself to have the kind of influence I seek?

I hear the following from people all the time: "There are things my boss should be changing right now that I've been harping on for weeks, maybe months. What am I doing wrong, and how can I get her to do the things that I think should be done?"

Whenever I'm asked these questions, I always ask a question back: "Is your boss doing something immoral, illegal, unethical, utterly stupid, risky or dangerous?" If the answer to any of these is yes, you may have to make a career decision before they make a decision to follow your advice.

Move On

So how do you get the boss to follow your advice? Don't nag. Stop harping at the things that you want them to do after about two weeks. Five days would be even better. If the boss is not going to do something that you suggest promptly, he or she is probably not going to do it at all. Move on to something else, promptly.

Just remember whose bus you are traveling on: theirs. You are along to be a helpful passenger, but the directions and decisions are always theirs. Don't like the ride, direction or other passengers? Catch another bus, or get your own.

Be More Important

We communicators have new ideas all day long. All of us, in fact, throw ideas away every single day because we have so many and too few places to put them into action. Drop the burden of pressuring and whining at someone who is clearly going to do something else or nothing.

If the boss is not going to do something that you suggest promptly, he or she is probably not going to do it at all.

Make yourself more important within the organization by following this rule: Always make fewer but far more important suggestions to move the business forward. The goal is to always say things that matter. Here are five test questions to ask yourself before making a suggestion:

1. Does the idea you're about to suggest help the boss achieve his or her goals or objectives?
2. Does that suggestion you're about to make help the organization achieve its goals or objectives?
3. Even if the answers to questions 1 and 2 are yes, is it something that really needs to be done, anyway?
4. Does it make, save or preserve money, and resources?
5. What will fail, or fail to proceed or succeed, if the idea you are about to suggest is ignored or remains undone?

This last question is vitally important to the process of thinking through how you suggest things to leadership. Stop being the first person to raise your hand unless you're the only one in the room. Say things that matter, write things that matter, suggest things that are genuine and important options for the boss to consider.

Always make fewer but far more important suggestions to move the business forward.

You'll know you've succeeded when:

- People hold up meetings waiting for you to arrive.

- People remember what you say and perhaps quote you in other places or venues.
- Your stories are told and shared as though those stories belong to the person telling them.
- Others seek out your opinions and ideas, and/or share their agendas and beliefs with you in the hope of influencing you to influence the behavior of others.

And one more thing: Remember the YOYO rule. Having an important, interesting, successful and influential PR career is up to you. You are on your own (YOYO) to achieve it. **PRN**

Jim Lukaszewski is president of The Lukaszewski Group, a crisis communications agency based in Minneapolis.

Break the Communication Barrier: 5 Tips to Put Training in Perspective

By Lisa Ross

As PR practitioners are well aware, the task of media training is a bit like trying to instruct someone to write in reverse. If your trainees did not already have longstanding preconceptions about which direction the letters of the alphabet should face, and which way the words should run along a line of print, teaching them to do it the other way might not be so difficult.

The point is this: most business executives consider themselves skilled in the job of persuasion and the closely-related art of communication. Effective outreach to customers, employees, partners and vendors is, after all, a key element in the unscientific equation for bottom-line success.

Communicating with the media, however, is an entirely different kind of ability—one that is often taken for granted by those who take pride in their deal-making talents. The thinking sometimes goes like this: “If I can negotiate a complex transaction, explain its terms and convince others of its merits, then I can certainly talk to the press and get my point across.”

Unfortunately, some of the very communication strategies that work in a business setting are grounds for failure when the media come calling. Technical explanations, complex references to supporting documentation, a reliance on terminology embraced by those in the know—all of these tactics may work when making a B2B sale, for instance, or when delivering a speech at an industry conference, but they forecast the death of a message for the media spokesperson.

Arm the Spokesperson-In-Training: 5 Tips

Keeping a message alive and well within the confines of an interview is no easy task. As a result, being an effective spokesperson requires learning, practice and discipline. The mission of the PR professional is to help clients, or co-workers in the case of in-house PR staff, overcome their preconceptions by providing the learning, encouraging the practice and emphasizing the importance of discipline.

By arming the spokesperson-in-training with the following five simple tips, we can set the stage for a successful media preparation program:

1. The Power of 3: It may not sound natural in the context of everyday conversation, but effective communication with the media must highlight well thought-out sound bites, and those sound bites should consistently emphasize descriptions arranged in groups of three. Why three? Simply put, four is too many and two is not enough. By harnessing the power of 3, the spokesperson can craft sound bites that are concise, insightful and colorful.

Interviews, of course, can take a number of forms, from the brief phone contact with a newspaper reporter seeking a single good line to a half-hour talk show or panel discussion. While the type of interview will determine the amount and nature of preparation involved, a good spokesperson will have sound bites ready to go regardless of the forum, and those sound bites will always be animated by three essential descriptors.

Some of the very communication strategies that work in a business setting are grounds for failure when the media come calling.

2. The Call to Action: A business meeting may take time to reach the point where “next steps” are discussed or action plans are reviewed. In a media interview, the spokesperson must get right to the point: Include a call to action. Whether it is a suggestion to visit a Web site, make a phone call or attend an event, the call to action should be mentioned early, repeated often and delivered as a recap at the end of the interview. The repetition may seem disconcerting to the spokesperson-in-training, but if the call to action is to have its day in print, on the Web or on TV, the repetition is essential.

Remember, the call to action gives meaning to the message for the interview subject. It is the driver of sales, the

generator of leads and the power of PR—so include the call to action.

3. The Brand Name: Reports indicate that an increasing number of business executives work for the mega-conglomerate corporation known as “We.” According to these stories, “We” has launched a series of new consumer products, enhanced its IT platform, and consistently outperformed the competition, which coincidentally has also adopted the moniker “We.” Readers interested in learning more can research “We” online, but their results may vary.

Alternatively, to help clarify things for the audience, the media spokesperson for the company or organization should, and in fact must, mention their brand name repeatedly during any interview. “We” did not organize a new food drive and donate hours of service to the community; Company X did. The spokesperson for Company X must be reminded that when discussing Company X and Company X’s accomplishments or developments, it is critical to use the more unnatural sentence construction that features the Company X brand name—over and over again.

We all know how to talk,
but not all of us know how
to talk to the press.

4. The Rehearsal: Media training exercises invariably emphasize the importance of preparation. The spokesperson should plan an agenda for an interview of key issues that relate positively to the interview topic. Three to five key message points should be determined; these messages should be clearly thought out, and sound bites should be developed for each. Interesting facts should be gathered to back up the messages. The interviewee should develop a set of worst-case negative questions that may develop, along with answers that steer the topic back to the positive messages.

To complete the preparation, the spokesperson should rehearse out loud exactly what they hope to say. Only by rehearsing can the messages become focused, and the delivery targeted.

5. The Headlines: A useful way for a spokesperson-in-training to understand the media communication dynamic—and how it differs from the business commu-

nication style they know—is to think in terms of the headlines.

By envisioning the headlines they hope to read or hear after a press call, along with those that they would rather not see, potential interviewees can easily understand just how severely they need to simplify their language, just how much they need to repeat their key messages and brand name, and just how frequently they must edit their tendency to digress. “Spokesperson Generates On-Message Headline” is a headline PR professionals would like to see.

One of the greatest challenges facing the PR professional who is managing a media training program is to convince their trainees that what they are doing matters—that communicating with the media is a skill that stands apart and an art that must be practiced. We all know how to talk, but not all of us know how to talk to the press.

There are, of course, various ways to make this point clear. There are hours of taped interviews gone bad, piles of images of squirming spokespeople on the spot, miles of bad ink, and strings of disappointing media headlines. These illustrations can help explain how unique the media dynamic is, and how important it is to be prepared. But to make sure the spokesperson-in-training is on key and on message, these five simple tips are a good place to start. **PRN**

Lisa Ross, president and partner, rbb Public Relations, creates new relationships for rbb and oversees the strategic development of client campaigns to ensure that meaningful results are achieved. Consistently ranked among the nation’s top 100 firms, rbb is a four-time “Agency of the Year” and recognized as a “Best Place To Work.”