**Media Training 101**

Media training is a lot like riding a horse. Once you do it with a little success, it is easier to mount up and try again. If you practice media training (or worse yet, go on a real interview) with low success, you will be all the more intimidated to try it again.

This is really a normal, human thing. Most people don’t enjoy speaking in front of a group. Likewise, the idea of speaking in front of a live camera feed can make some folks downright nauseous. But, like all skills, this can be practiced, improved, and for some dedicated people, even mastered.

If you or a member of your business have been or might be asked to speak to the media (radio, print, broadcast, blog, or other “social” channel), we recommend you seek professional media training. These services come in all sizes, shapes, formats and costs. Pick the one that is right for you. They don’t have to be high dollar to be high quality.

Today we’d like to share a few highlights of media training. Let’s call this your media training “sampler.”

**Who is Your Spokesperson Posse?**

Who will speak for your brand? Your company needs to identify two to three folks to be spokespeople for the product, service, cause or organization for everyday speaking events, responding to media inquiries, pitching positive stories to the press, or dealing with publics in a crisis.

This does not have to be the company “Big Cheese” or always the PIO. Sometimes the best person to talk on a topic is the source expert, someone from HR, or a sales manager. This all depends on the situation. But do tap talent that has low media/public speaking anxiety.

**Everyone Needs Time in the Saddle.**

Recognize who needs some (or more) media training. Sometimes the CEO or president “thinks” she is great at media interviews, but she is easily led off topic or sways nervously. Help identify the folks who not only should be spokespeople, but also those who need more media coaching. Training can focus on messaging, body language, delivery skills, conveying your topic through shorter “sound bites,” or preparing for tough questions. Usually, good training covers all these areas.

In addition to coaching your staff on delivery, an in-house communicator at your company (or a PR professional contractor/firm) can help your leadership/sales/front-line ambassadors be more polished in delivery with other tactics. These might include, but not be limited to: Q&A prep, drafting messaging in your authentic voice, helping establish processes for media responsiveness, planning an ideal area at your business for on-site interviews, having helpful images/graphics and understandable statistics ready to convey your new project/event or stakeholder story. Prep may even include tips on wardrobe, grooming, and when/where you interview.

**Get to Know the Lay of the Land.**

Learn more about the media “process.” This topic demands an entirely other PR article, but suffice it to say here that if you understand the way the media works, what their needs and objectives are, and how you can help them do their job – then you will have a big step up to communicating your business’s messages and news effectively.

We also recommend your coaching include “videotaping,” playback, critique and “round two” elements. As you get more versed in the area of public speaking and responding to media representative, you can take your skills up a notch.

**Practice Makes Perfect.**

A second round of media coaching should optimally include strategies such as: bridging back to your message, avoiding negative language, learning to avoid industry jargon, speaking in visual stories, controlling highly challenging interviews, and attention grabbers. We call this level Media Training 201. All official spokespersons should reach this level of instruction and refresh on it annually.

When you are ready to groom your brand’s media rodeo star, he should be encouraged to participate in the summit of media planning: crisis training. Or, something we would refer to as Media Training 301. This should be part of a larger initiative in your business, the Crisis Plan.

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. Go back to the analogy of riding the horse. Plan your long-term course, prepare your wardrobe, check your tools, refresh on the objectives of each ride, warm up, be confident, and send out your top riders.

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