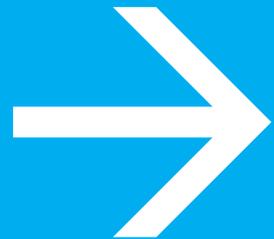


A  
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## Media Training



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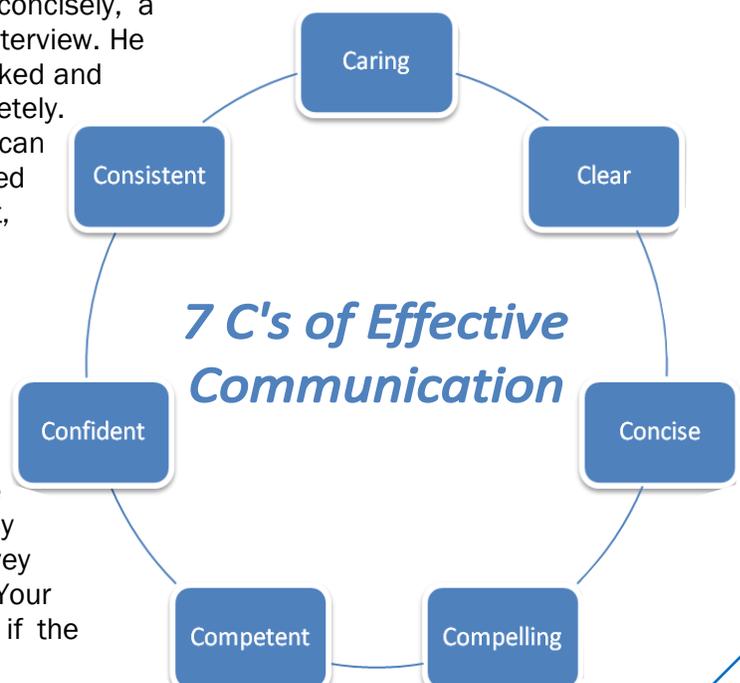
## Does your organization have one or more media trained spokespeople?

You're there to express your point of view. The reporter is there seeking information for his or her audience, often by posing tough questions. The reporter is a conduit to reach your audience, whether it's elected officials, regulators, the public or all of the above. Media training will help you understand how to utilize the conduit so your message is delivered accurately to those who need to hear it.

Non-verbal communication is as important as what you say. Sometimes, body language speaks louder than words. Crossed arms, leaning away from the interviewer, frequently shifting eyes or a nervous voice may hide or distort your message. In media training, you'll learn how to sit, stand, dress and compose yourself during an interview.

## The Seven C's: How to be an effective communicator

1. **Caring**—When addressing the media, it is critical for a spokesperson to convey that he or she—and the organization—sincerely care about the audience, as well as those who may have been harmed. Neither the media nor the public will look favorably on an organization that appears uncaring and unconcerned.
2. **Clear**—A spokesperson must speak in a language that ordinary people can understand. Industry jargon can confuse or annoy the public, and result in the perception you are “talking down” to your audience.
3. **Concise**—When working with the media, saying more than needed can often lead to a whole new line of questioning, which you may prefer to avoid. If a spokesperson does not communicate the major points briefly enough to fit in a reporter's writing space, the reporter will choose which statements to use and discard everything else.
4. **Compelling**—When identifying your key messages, you must ask yourself, “Why does this matter to the audience?” Your job is to talk about what matters to the audience, not just to you.
5. **Competent**—In addition to speaking slowly and concisely, a spokesperson should always be prepared for an interview. He or she should identify the questions that will be asked and be ready to answer them—accurately and completely. Approaching an interview with the belief that you can just “wing it” is asking for disaster. Unexpected questions can lead to misstatements and conflict, and present an image of incompetence.
6. **Confident**—You must show your audience that you know what you're talking about. If you are not confident in your knowledge and abilities, your audience will not be confident in your organization's ability to address the issue at hand.
7. **Consistent**—A spokesperson should give the audience information based upon verified facts. By doing so, you, as well as the organization will convey consistency and will not need to backtrack. Your organization should speak with one voice, even if the situation requires multiple spokespeople.



## What are the common mistakes when dealing with the media?

- *Burying your head in the sand.* Are you hoping it'll go away? Besides, who cares? So you do nothing and say nothing. You don't prepare; rather, you think you'll have time to react when and if necessary with little to no preparation.
- *Waiting too long to respond.* If you don't fill the void with your story, it may instead be filled with speculation or the guilty-sounding "not available for comment." This is particularly true in this age of digital communication.
- *Letting your reputation protect you.* You have a relationship with the media or a specific reporter. You think that he/she won't ask tough questions or publish anything that would hurt you or your organization. Think again.
- *Treating the media like the enemy.* Whether a reporter is out to get you or not (most are not) is irrelevant when it comes to utilizing the conduit. You don't get to choose who covers the news. Your job is to do your best with whomever is there.
- *Reacting rather than acting.* You take a call from a reporter and let the reporter know what you think without having the facts.

## How do you handle an aggressive reporter?

- *If a false statement is made, correct it.* Reporters may ask questions based on false premises or errors of fact. If you let this part of the question go unchallenged, the media as well as your audience will think that it is factual. Before answering such question, a spokesperson should always identify the inaccuracies of the statement and explain why.
- *Clarify confusing questions.* When reporters ask questions in one long, quick breath, the interviewee can be overwhelmed. Pick out questions to which you have the best answers and let the reporter move on or ask other questions.
- *Don't let them put words in your mouth.* The reporter asks you a question and you answer. They then summarize with "so what you're saying is..." while adding false or mistaken information to what your statement. You must challenge such inaccuracies immediately and provide clarifying statements.
- *Defuse the bomb.* Exert as much self control as you can muster. While the question may be argumentative, it is up to you to defuse or contradict their assertion. You are there to address the issue at hand, not engage in speculation or debate.
- *Answer the question.* Always provide clear, concise and positive answers to a reporter's questions.

## What are the essential qualities of a good spokesperson?

- *Superior communication skills.* A spokesperson must have superior written and verbal communication skills. He or she must be able to quickly craft clear, logical written statements, and be able to express those statements and answer questions.
- *Exceptional organizational skills.* The spokesperson should excel at multitasking and prioritizing.
- *Able to work under pressure.* A spokesperson must always remain calm under fire.
- *Prime interpersonal skills.* Spokespersons should be gregarious and outgoing with others—whether in the office, dealing with the media or addressing other stakeholders.
- *Able to grasp complicated issues.* Being able to "translate" complicated issues into simple, easily understood answers and statements enhances your ability to positively influence your audiences.

