

## **StreetSavvy Marketer**

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### **Selecting a Media Training Consultant**

*"In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." -Andy Warhol*

*"A journalist is a kind of confidence man, preying on people's vanity, ignorance or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse." -Janet Malcolm in The New Yorker*

While Warhol's vision of the future is exaggerated, and Malcom's comment to my mind seems very unfair, the marketplace does put a premium on your ability to clearly articulate your messages to your stakeholders, clients, prospects, and— not coincidentally—the media who provide them with news about your investment process, products, professionals and firm.

That's why investing some time in news interview and media spokesperson training is so important. That's why it also pays to make sure the media training consultant you hire has walked in the shoes of the media you are likely to deal with.

After all, you wouldn't hire a surgeon who has never spent a day in the operating room any more than you would hire a financial planner who has never balanced a checkbook. Here then are some of the things you should keep in mind when hiring a news interview and media training consultant:

A great training program doesn't just happen. Select a trainer who can do more than "talk the talk." Choose a consultant who has actually worked as a print or broadcast journalist at a major media outlet...the kind of trainer who has a track record of working effectively with major league print and broadcast journalists.

Select a trainer who has the capacity to move quickly past the cosmetics of presentation to the substance and techniques that are needed to ensure your marketing and business messages are not only sharply focused, but rebound to the credit of your company.

Since most press work is actually done over the phone—and often under the pressure of immediate deadline—select a media trainer who incorporates an effective telephone interview component in his workshop. [Tip: Before you hire a media trainer, ask him or her where you should stand when you do a phone interview—really!]

You should also select a media trainer who is going to take a personal interest in your success...the kind of trainer who is not going to be "too busy" to provide follow-up advice to you unless he or she is on the clock.

It's important that the media consultant you choose also have experience dealing with senior and mid-level executives and investment professionals. The last thing you need is a trainer who lacks the confidence, tact and diplomacy to speak up when someone needs to be told he or she is doing something wrong.

Equally important, your media trainer must be a quick study. He or she should already know or have the ability to learn your business quickly—before the training workshop—if they are going to be able to make an immediate contribution to your media relations success. Otherwise, you may find yourself paying more for the trainer's learning curve than his or her advice is worth.

And what about the program itself? Is the trainer going to provide a one-size-fits-all, off-the-shelf program or is it going to be custom designed? We interview every workshop participant before they ever step into a StreetSpeak workshop to ensure that we understand their marketing messages, how they are positioning their firm, and what they hope to accomplish – in the context of what is happening in the industry and the markets. This is done so we can develop custom print and broadcast interviews that are as close as possible to what they will actually experience.

And what about training handouts? If there are none, or if they look like something a first grader cobbled together, move on to another trainer. It is likely to say a lot about the quality of the content you are going to get and how much sweat equity the trainer has in your success.

Speaking of handouts: Remember a good workshop is not just about technique, delivery and messaging. The trainer's handouts should also speak to the rules of the road, so that you walk away with a comprehensive understanding of interview ground-rules in terms of what's allowed, what's not, and what the reporter's expectations are likely to be—again, before you start the interview.

Good trainers will videotape your workshop interviews so you can see what you're doing right, what you can improve and what kind of progress you've made over the course of the day. If you haven't made significant improvement over the course of the day, ask for your money back.

How many people are expected to participate in your training workshop? A media trainer who fills a workshop with more than five or six participants is playing a numbers game and is more concerned about generating a fat fee than providing the kind of individual attention you deserve. [Tip: Open enrollment workshops where participants come from different companies and professional backgrounds are fine, but on-site company workshops with professionals with the same background are more effective because they are more focused.]

Your media consultant should also have the capability of providing on-site technical resources, including videotape capability. Let logistics be the consultant's concern, not yours.

And lastly, your consultant should have a deft touch, sensitivity, uncommon common sense and a good sense of humor. Media spokesperson training is serious business, but it should also be fun.

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