

Can you effectively articulate your differentiators? There is training for that!

By [Lesley Rencontre](#), issued by [DUO Marketing + Communications](#)

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While businesses have typically engaged in some form of media training in order to familiarise their key stakeholders with having to deal with journalists and tell the brand story, changes in the media industry means that training has had to evolve too. Now, there is a critical need for training to take on a more consultative role, to inform decision-makers about these changes, what it means for their business, and how they can best respond.



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Media training is essential for key leaders at organisations that are looking to grow. Previously, this had tended to focus on equipping spokespeople to interact with journalists from newspapers, magazines, online publications, TV and radio. However, with the explosion of digital channels, there has been a marked shift, including the rise of the paywall, and decision-makers need to take a more holistic approach to get their message across.

Most importantly, training provides a platform for the agency to interrogate the 'why?' and make business leaders and other company spokespeople more aware of the crucial need to answer this question. It doesn't matter that some news is great for your organisation – they need to be able to highlight why their news is important and why anyone reading or listening should bother.

Media training should also be made available to all key stakeholders within the business, whether they will be media facing or not, and ensures that they are well-prepared for not only media engagements, but also content interviews, which translates to a higher quality of content. This ensures that company leaders who don't prefer direct media interaction can still contribute to brand elevation by bringing their knowledge and expertise to the fore.

Considered, coordinated communications

There will always be a place for public relations, driven by quality content, though it now needs to be seen as part of a broader multichannel communications effort. Currently, PR, marketing and digital are usually operated in silos, and modern training needs to help business decision-makers understand the positive impact of a coordinated communications effort, as well as the need to use different channels, depending on the type of content or topic.

It also doesn't all have to be written content, as has been the case in the past, with a growing preference for video or podcasts. In essence, those who undergo training should come out knowing that there are options beyond what was traditionally available, and a strategy that combines editorial, advertorial and advertising is needed in order to get the widest possible reach.

For those who are more confident in handling interviews with print or online journalists, or even for broadcast, this training helps them better plan and prepare so that they can get their key messages across without overselling. As an example, doing research ahead of time allows them to identify real-world examples that they can use to make their message more relevant and relatable – also known as news jacking.

This is especially challenging with broadcast interviews that are time limited, and here spokespeople can be equipped with the right tactics to steer the conversation so that they can get their key messages through and showcase the difference that their organisation makes in a more relatable manner.

On the topic of broadcast interviews, training further ensures that you have multiple spokespeople available with the

knowledge and authority to take advantage of opportunities in the media. The reality is that your organisation is always unavailable to comment to the media, they are unlikely to come back to you, and it will become a struggle to get your brand back on broadcast media.

On the other hand, it also prepares them for the volatility of the local media space, especially in TV or radio. Angles are changed at the last minute, or programmes are cancelled completely, while journalists can also approach key spokespeople at the last moment and enquire if they are able to provide a quote of a particular topic. Beyond these critical elements, training can look at something as simple as what to wear when you go for a TV interview.

Ultimately, media training allows agencies to address what is usually a relatively negative perception of the media within organisations. This helps change the mindset of key stakeholders, and equip them so that they are able to use the media to their advantage instead – by showcasing their brand, the stories of their people, and how they are making a meaningful difference in the lives of their customers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lesley Rencontre is the account director at DUO Marketing + Communications.

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