

**WHAT YOUR FTSE 100
COMPANY NEEDS TO KNOW
ABOUT CRISIS MEDIA
MANAGEMENT AND TELLING
MEDIA FRIENDLY STORIES**

INTRODUCTION

Companies in the FTSE 100 are rarely out of the news.

They have a prestige and fascination.

They are also some of the most scrutinised brands on earth.

So, it is perhaps not surprising we are increasingly asked to deliver media training and crisis communication training to companies in the UK equity market's premier index.

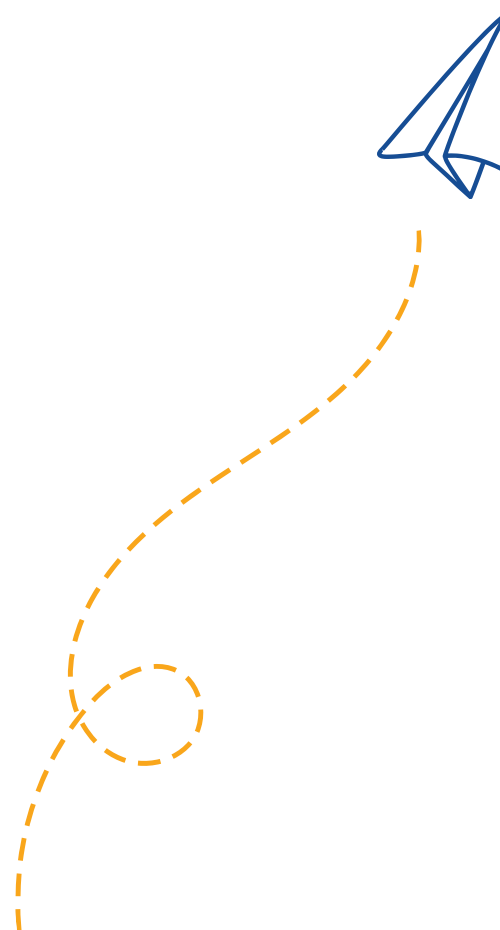
We've worked with almost half of the FTSE 100 – as well as big-name brands across the globe -preparing their CEOs and senior spokespeople to make the most of proactive media interactions.

And ensure they are best prepared for when things go badly wrong.

We've been doing this for 40 years.

And we thought, 'Why don't we share some of this knowledge and experience in an eBook?'

So, here it is.



CRISIS COMMS

Shall we start with the bad stuff?

No one wants to see their brand in the spotlight for the wrong reasons.

But a crisis can strike any company at any time.

And there are many potential causes.

Your company's next crisis could be caused by poor financial performance, the behaviour of senior leaders, product flaws, tax affairs, supply chain investigations, a workplace accident or a data breach, to give a few examples.

How that crisis is handled can impact your company's reputation, credibility, share price, employee retention and investor relations.

Are you crisis-ready?

CASE STUDY

Let's put this into perspective by exploring a case study.

We don't want to cause embarrassment, so we've chosen to explore the crises that hit a big-name brand on the other side of the planet.

Optus, the second-largest communication company in Australia, suffered a massive network outage that left people without phone or internet connection for 14 hours.

The disruption is estimated to have impacted 10m people, as well as hospitals, public transport networks and businesses.

The company - and its CEO Kelly Bayer Rosmarin – were widely criticised for their response to the crisis. The Australian Chamber of Commerce labelled it a “clown show”. And a specific part has been described as a “PR disaster”, which seems like a good place to start our analysis.

Optics matter during a crisis.

CASE STUDIES

So, the decision by Ms Bayer Rosmarin to proceed with a photo shoot at her lavish mansion just hours after the outage struck was ill-advised.

The Daily Mail reported “luxury items like throws, shrubbery and furniture” were seen arriving at the property for a photoshoot for the architect who renovated the home.

The CEO was not present.

But it did not look good. Her husband, Rodney Rosmarin, admitted the timing was “unfortunate”, which raised questions about why it was not stopped.

Here’s what the media made of it:

Optus CEO Kelly Bayer Rosmarin's \$15m Vaucluse mansion is the scene of an elaborate photoshoot while Australia grinds to a halt due to massive internet and phone outage

Daily Mail

'PR disaster': Optus CEO slammed for holding glamorous photoshoot at mansion during national network outage

Sky News

SPEED MATTERS

When a crisis strikes, you must act and communicate quickly, even outside of office hours.

It's no longer a golden hour – brands may have as little as 15 minutes to start communicating.

The Optus outage began at around 4 am. Yet, the first response from the company, in the form of short, bland, social media posts, didn't go out until 6.47 am.

That's a long time for rumour, speculation, narratives, frustration and negative impact stories to build.

And it was hours later that we heard from the boss.

She eventually spoke to the ABC radio station – ironically via WhatsApp because her network was dead – but provided little new information or insight.

And the story had already run away from her.

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

You must keep communicating during a crisis.

It is better to say too much than too little.

Having cut much of Australia off, you'd think the company would be keen to keep everyone informed.

Yet it seemed reluctant to communicate or make getting information particularly easy, despite Communications Minister Michelle Rowland urging it to be “transparent and timely” in providing updates to “frustrated” customers. “Consumers are hungry for information,” she added.

The lack of communication was raised during the ABC interview, and Ms Bayer Rosmarin sounded defensive and appeared to blame the media.

“I think it would be great if the media could help direct people to our messages,” she said.

“We do have messages out there. We are being very clear with our customers. It would be great to continue to direct people to our website and the My Optus App, where it is very clear what our customers need to do.”

That advice seemed somewhat flawed when people can't access the internet, as the presenter pointed out.

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

The CEO said: “There are definitely places where people can connect to Wi-Fi. There are plenty of organisations that offer Wi-Fi. Our stores have connectivity. Our messaging is still working through the My Optus App. So, we hope customers are taking advantage of all those other avenues during this period where our service is being restored.”

She subsequently defended her company’s “front-footed” communication, saying there had been several updates and media interviews. And she claimed the only message people want to hear is that the network has been restored.

We would argue that they want constant information. Even if little has changed, keep reminding them you are working to restore the service.

People were unable to call emergency services and critical helplines – you have to make sure they know you are doing everything possible to tackle the crisis. Telling people you are doing the right things is almost as important as doing the right things.

There also needed to be more of a strategy for the media appearances.

Rather than carrying out a few random interviews late in the day, would it have been better to hold a press conference remotely – as the company did during an earlier data breach crisis – to reach as many media outlets as possible across the country?

Or try to get on as many breakfast news programmes as possible to try to control the narrative?

IF YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN IT SIMPLY...

There was little information about what caused the outage.

Optus called it a “technical network issue” and said it could not say more until investigations were carried out.

What was even more jarring was that the CEO also claimed the issue was too technical to explain.

She said: “It’s a very technical explanation for what happened. There is no soundbite that is going to do it justice, so we want to really bottom out the root cause and when we have that very clear and in a digestible form, we will be forthcoming.”

That lacks the transparency needed in crisis communication, suggests there is information it does not want to release, sounds arrogant and can create the impression the company does not know what went wrong.

It reminded us of a famous quote from Albert Einstein.

“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.”

Again, it also creates an information void. And technical experts queued up to share their thoughts on what went wrong. Worryingly for the brand’s reputation, it adds to the impression it is not fond of transparency – the company had not made public a Deloitte review into its earlier data breach.

As the service was gradually restored, Ms Bayer Rosmarin appeared to try to play down the significance of what had happened.

IF YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN IT SIMPLY...

Speaking on Melbourne's 3AW radio station, she said: "All telcos occasionally have outages, and we hope our customers will understand how hard we've been working to restore services as a priority."

Having been at the centre of a nationwide blackout lasting several hours that caused chaos and confusion, this came across as a clumsy attempt to suggest the issue was not as big as people think – not a good crisis communication approach.

She also went on to suggest Optus customers get great value for money.

"I believe, at Optus, we are a customer champion, and we go to great lengths to give our customers great value for money, excellent service and coverage and unique features they can't get anywhere else," she said.

That was said in response to a question about whether the company would face an exodus of customers.

But was it the right time for this sort of self-congratulatory message?

It feels a bit tone-deaf and desperate to discuss value for money and excellent service when people have gone much of the day without being able to use it.

It may have been better to apologise (again), show you understand the impact of the outage, stress services are being restored and talk about needing to win back the trust of customers.

LEARN FROM PAST MISTAKES

Optus had endured another massive reputational crisis only a year earlier.

While Ms Bayer Rosmarin won some praise for her emotional reaction in a press conference and during a media interview, which helped to show her human side, the company also endured plenty of criticism.

It was slow to act, taking four days to inform all impacted customers of the data breach. It also initially tried to reach customers solely through the media because it was the “quickest” way to inform.

And it positioned the breach as a “sophisticated attack that penetrated multiple security layers” – a claim dismissed by cyber security experts and government officials.

So, you would think it would have learnt lessons from that debacle and improved its crisis media management.

Yet, similar issues undermined its response a few months later.

LASTING DAMAGE

How a crisis is managed can make or break CEOs.

Ms Bayer Rosmarin resigned as the chief executive of Optus in the wake of the nationwide outage.

She said that having had time for “personal reflection” she had “come to the decision that my resignation is in the best interest of Optus moving forward.”

Optus subsequently confirmed the outage was due to a configuration issue with more than 90 Cisco routers and indicated changes had been made to prevent the same problem from happening again.

A new chapter with a new CEO? Time will tell.

TAKE C.A.R.E

So, we've shown you how damaging a crisis can be.

How can you ensure your company responds better and avoid the type of fallout we've just seen?

The way your company communicates is vital.

Communicate well, and you can develop some control of the situation and shape how it is reported.

Get it wrong, and your reputation could be in tatters.

Getting your messages out quickly, even if initially through a simple holding statement, will show you are aware of the situation, are taking it seriously and are in control.

It will prevent the spread of rumours and speculation. You don't want to be on the back foot responding to questions from journalists.

TAKE C.A.R.E

Holding statements – and all your subsequent crisis communication – should be based on CARE.

It is an acronym we use during our crisis communication training for FTSE 100 companies.

It stands for Compassion, Action, Reassurance and Examples.

COMPASSION: Show the audience (your customers) you understand the severity of what has happened and the impact it has had.

ACTION: It's vital you show people you are doing the right things to improve the situation.

REASSURANCE: Put the incident into context and show it is isolated.

EXAMPLES: Use examples to illustrate the key message you want to get across.

SPEED

When crisis strikes, you must respond quickly.

But just how quick is quick?

Well, current thinking suggests you may have around 15 minutes before you need to start communicating. That's a daunting figure, and good preparation is the key to meeting it.

During our crisis communication courses, we always stress the importance of organisations planning for a crisis.

Part of that planning process involves preparing several holding statements that can be used at the start of a crisis with just a few tweaks.

Do templates written in advance work?

The crucial thing to remember is that when the worst happens, social media users and journalists will not expect you to have all the information at your fingertips, so these holding statements do not need to go into great detail.

But they will expect you to show you are aware of the incident, acknowledge that something has gone wrong and show you are trying to resolve the situation.

A good holding statement will allow you to do this while buying you time to get a better understanding of what has happened before you issue something more detailed.

Responding quickly will also enable your organisation to position itself as a trusted source of information and help control the narrative, rather than letting rumours and inaccurate information set the agenda.

RISK REGISTER

As well as holding statements, another good form of crisis preparation is to plan for the unexpected.

You are unlikely to be able to predict the exact scenario you will face. But you can look at your company, anticipate its vulnerabilities and forecast potential storms on the horizon.

What could damage its reputation?

Identify your company's vulnerabilities and create a risk register.

Many companies already have them but don't involve the comms department.

If that sounds like your company, you must ensure comms is included.

For those who don't have one, an example of what a simple version could look like can be found on the next page.

RISK REGISTER

Event	Person responsible for risk	Comms lead	Risk rating (1-9 – higher number equals higher probability)	Action taken	Next review
New website launch	IT Director	Joe Bloggs	7	Lines to take prepared	
Results of Health & Safety Executive investigation	HE Director	John Smith	9	Call made to Executive to check timing of report and any media activity	

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CRISIS COMMS SPOKESPERSON

Who would you put in the media spotlight if your company was in crisis mode?

It is a question often explored during our crisis communication training.

There is often an assumption that the CEO is the crisis spokesperson.

But they may not be the best person to put in front of the media.

You need someone who can demonstrate compassion, authority and honesty and be able to connect with the audience.

They need to have a detailed understanding of the company and its sector, and it is essential they have previous media experience and recent practical media training with current working journalist tutors.

Strong body language and a professional appearance are also important.

Of course, there will be situations where the boss needs to be there to show they care and are accountable.

But let's say your crisis is a large IT failure, leaving customers unable to access your service.

Would your IT Director not be better placed to lead the media response? If the problem escalates, then bring the chief executive into play.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CRISIS COMMS SPOKESPERSON

When TSB was gripped by a major IT failure, for example, CEO Paul Pester was visible and quick to apologise.

The problem was that as the bank was unable to fix the problem and the crisis persisted and worsened, TSB had no way of escalating its response.

Mr Pester stepped down after the incident. And while we are not saying taking a different approach would have ensured he survived, there is an argument being less visible would have prevented the crisis from being so closely associated with him.

You will also need to consider having more than one spokesperson. If the crisis is expected to last several days, you will need to ensure you have more than one spokesperson trained, engaged and available to meet the demands of the media.

TAKE TESTING TIMES

Once you are familiar with your company risk register - or have devised your own - and have identified your spokespeople, you must test your crisis communications plan against those risks with role play and desktop exercises involving realistic and fast-moving scenarios.

We have organised many crisis testing exercises for companies in the FTSE 100.

We stress test plans in a safe, 'behind-closed-doors' environment, expose weaknesses and enable team members to learn from mistakes.

The exercises also help organisations develop and modify holding statements and anticipate the media questions you could face.

Here are the questions we think you are likely to face in the initial stages of a crisis:

- What happened/went wrong?
- Where did it happen?
- When did you become aware of the problem?
- What action have you taken?
- Who is affected?
- Were there any warning signs?
- Who's to blame?

THE SOCIAL MEDIA COMPLEXITY

Social media has brought us many communication advantages.

But it can create additional complications in a crisis and lead to an incident reaching the mainstream media much quicker than before.

The key with social media is to stick to the essential crisis comms principles - respond quickly, provide regular updates and communicate with compassion, concern, honesty and empathy.

Social media can be used effectively in a crisis to provide resources to the media, and it also offers a great opportunity for your brand to communicate directly to its customers and provide them with information first-hand.

DON'T FORGET YOUR PEOPLE

In a fast-moving crisis, it can be all too easy to focus on your external message and forget about your internal comms.

But a company's employees are its ambassadors and can be strong advocates. Make sure they are aware of what the company is doing to deal with the situation, be honest and ensure visible leadership.

An engaged workforce is less likely to give potentially damaging information to a journalist or post something unhelpful on social media.

It is vital internal comms colleagues are involved in your crisis communications. It is also crucial to carefully consider who else in the company could be exposed to the media in a crisis.

Staff, receptionists and security are highly-visible members of the team and easily accessible to journalists.

Investing in media awareness training for these colleagues is essential so they have a basic understanding of what to expect from the media and know how to escalate any interest from journalists.

This level of training does not need to be face-to-face and can be delivered through a webinar or a conference.

THE CRISIS COMMS GOLDEN RULES

We cannot stress enough how vital it is for your company to prepare in advance for a crisis.

Here are our golden rules to help you get that preparation right:

- Identify and understand your organisation's vulnerabilities
- Develop a crisis communications plan
- Create a crisis team
- Identify and train your spokespeople
- Test your plan, team and spokespeople
- When crisis strikes, move fast and communicate, communicate and communicate some more

IT'S NOT ALL BAD

FTSE 100 companies like yours don't just need to engage with the media when things have gone wrong.

Experts are needed by the media to offer insight and discuss new products, services and ideas, particularly at a time when technology is bringing rapid changes.

To ensure your organisation gets more media coverage, it needs to be able to tell more media-friendly stories.

How do you do that?

Well, to start, you need to know who you want to tell your story to.

Without knowing who your audience is, your message will fail, and you will not succeed.

Think about who you want to hear and see your message.

Then, put yourself in their shoes to gain an insight into what they need to know about you and what they want to hear from you.

It helps to understand the audience profiles for different media outlets.

In the following pages of analysis, we'll focus on television channels, radio and national newspapers. It will help you begin to identify the most appropriate media outlets to reach your audience.

WORDS AND PICTURES: THE FIGURES BEHIND TV NEWS

When it comes to news consumption, television is still the most widely used media platform, according to figures published by Ofcom.

70 per cent of adults in the UK report using TV as a source of news. And it increased to 75 per cent when on-demand content is included.

TV news is less popular among younger people (age 16-24), with fewer than half reporting that they use TV to access news - they are far more likely to use social media.

BBC news remains the most used news source, followed by ITV. Facebook takes third spot.

One in five adults also name BBC One as their 'most important' news source.

RADIO – ON YOUR WAVELENGTH

Radio doesn't have the glamour of TV or the funkiness of the internet and neither does it often create the storms a strident newspaper headline or opinion piece can generate.

And yet, it can grab people's attention like nothing else.

Who hasn't stopped still in the kitchen because of something striking and perhaps moving that they've heard on the radio?

Or waited in their car that little bit longer before going into the house or office to hear the rest of an interview? As we say, the best pictures are on radio.

And more people are listening to radio than ever before. According to RAJAR – the organisation measuring UK radio audiences - 50 million adults tune into the radio each week. That works out as 89 per cent of the UK adult population.

Additionally, the average listener tunes into more than 20 hours of live radio a week.

Most radio stations only provide short bulletins once an hour. But it is worth noting that both BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 2 – mainstream music stations – feature in the top 20 sources of news, according to Ofcom.

Flagship news programmes continue to perform well. Radio 4's Today programme has 5.6 million listeners a week. Nick Ferrari's LBC breakfast show has 1.4 million weekly listeners. For Radio 5 Live's breakfast programme, the figure is more than 1.2 million people.

But BBC local radio, where regional content has been cut back, has seen a 10 per cent decline in its weekly reach year-on-year. That figure now stands at 4.8 million people.

The statistics also show that 33 per cent of adults listen to podcasts at least once a month, again highlighting the growing importance of the format. Global's The News Agents podcast, fronted by three former BBC journalists, surpassed 24 million downloads in 2023.

BLACK, WHITE AND STILL READ ALL OVER?

Print interviews continue to be a crucial component of our media training courses.

But do people still read newspapers? When was the last time you bought a paper?

Has print become a niche medium serving a rapidly shrinking audience?

Circulations have fallen and have been steadily declining for years.

But rather than dying out, newspapers have evolved and attract millions of readers online – alongside those who still want a newspaper in their hands - where their trust and prestige continue to appeal.

More than 24 million people read UK news brands – a term used to reflect how newspapers now reach their audiences – every day. That number swells to 39 million every week and 45 million every month.

And news brands appeal to the young, with 24 per cent of 18-34-year-olds consuming them daily.

So, there is still plenty of life in the old dog.

One of the things we notice during our courses is that it can be easy to put all newspapers – and their digital versions - into one basket.

But their readerships are different, and this may impact who you target and who might cover your story.

BLACK, WHITE AND READ ALL OVER – A GUIDE TO UK NEWSPAPER AUDIENCES

THE SUN

The Sun was the country's best-selling newspaper for 40 years. That changed in 2020 when it was overtaken by the Daily Mail amid changes in how newspapers report their circulations. The paper's owners have opted to make its circulation figures private. But before that decision, it had similar figures to the new market leader. The Sun says it reaches more than 31 million people across digital and print every month. A common misconception about The Sun is that it is the paper of choice for 'white van man'. But 32 per cent of its readers are from the ABC1 socio-economic group - the group made up of people with more education and better-paid jobs. And more than 400,000 readers have a family income of over £50,000.

THE DAILY MAIL

A paper that is controversial and popular in equal measure. It is now the country's best-selling paper. Like all newspapers, its circulation was hit by the pandemic. In March 2024, its circulation was just over 700,000. Circulation on Saturdays swells to over a million. Its digital version, Mail Plus, has a monthly average of more than 80,000 "actively viewed" copies. The Mail's website continues to be a big draw, with its mix of news and entertainment ensuring it has 24.7m monthly unique visitors. It is also the only national newspaper with more female readers than male (a 54 to 46 per cent split). The average age of a Mail reader is 56. And more than 80 per cent of Mail readers are believed to be homeowners, with 69 per cent owning their homes outright. The Mail also owns the popular This Is Money website.

BLACK, WHITE AND READ ALL OVER – A GUIDE TO UK NEWSPAPER AUDIENCES

METRO

This free morning newspaper had the largest distribution of any UK newspaper before the pandemic struck. With fewer people travelling to work, it has taken time to rebuild those figures. In March 2024, it has an average circulation of 950,000. There is success online, with more than 18 million unique visitors a month. The publication remains uniquely neutral on the big political issues and has no leading articles, opinion pieces or a Westminster reporter.

DAILY MIRROR

The workers' paper and the Labour party's most loyal supporter, the Daily Mirror was overtaken by The Daily Mail several years ago. And it has long since stopped being competitive with its old rival. Its circulation is now around 230,000. The picture is better online, with the website reaching more than 20 million people a month.

EVENING STANDARD

The iconic London title has fallen on hard times and its owners have announced plans to drop its daily print edition and go weekly later in 2024. The paper had become free of charge in 2009. But its circulation has dropped from 850,000 to 275,000 in the past five years, and it has lost £84.5m over the latest six years. Twelve million people access the Standard's digital platforms every month, with half of that traffic coming from outside London and overseas.

THE TELEGRAPH

Telegraph readers are more likely to be Conservative, male and wealthy. YouGov research carried out in 2023 said 69 per cent of the paper's readership is male and that more than a fifth are affluent. It also says that almost half the readership (49 per cent) identify as Conservative Party voters. It is another publication that now chooses not to publish its circulation figures. But the last public figure, in December 2019, was 317,000. The paper's focus is now on paid subscribers, and in 2023 it exceeded its target of reaching one million subscriptions.

BLACK, WHITE AND READ ALL OVER – A GUIDE TO UK NEWSPAPER AUDIENCES

THE FINANCIAL TIMES

The 'pink 'un' was one of the first newspapers to introduce a paywall. And it hit a milestone in 2019, announcing it has one million paying readers, with digital subscribers now accounting for more than three-quarters of its circulation. Print circulation is now just over 100,000. But the publication says it reaches more than 22 million readers every month – seven million in the UK. Despite the complexity of some issues it covers, the FT has a reading age of around 12-14. Men make up an astonishing 81 per cent of its readership. More than 30 per cent of its readers are C-suite executives, and 75 per cent of readers work for international companies. The average reader income is £221,000.

THE GUARDIAN

The paper of choice for the intellectual left, healthcare workers and those in local government. It made its circulation private in 2021 when it had fallen to 105,000. Press Gazette estimates that if it followed industry trends, print circulation would now be 60,000. According to PAMCo – the audience measurement for publishers - The Guardian is the most-read quality news brand in the UK, cross-platform, with an average of 22.4 million unique visitors monthly.

THE TIMES

It is more than a decade since The Times put its online content behind a paywall. Now, The Times and The Sunday Times have more than 500,000 digital-only subscribers. While it has not revealed its print circulation figures since 2020, the paper says it reaches 840,000 readers Monday to Saturday. According to the British Business Survey, The Times is the number one daily newspaper for business readers and reaches 50 per cent more decision-makers than the Financial Times or the Daily Telegraph. Millennials make up a healthy fifth of its readership. Times readers have a mean family income of £55,885.

THE EXPRESS

A paper with a seemingly endless supply of Princess Diana and health-scare stories (it is sometimes referred to as the Daily Diana Express), the once-mighty tabloid continues to be a fading force. Circulation has now dropped to around 150,000. Its remaining audience is elderly and is mainly based in the north. It is still right-wing and Eurosceptic in its outlook. Migrants, pensions and the weather continue to be regularly covered stories.

BLACK, WHITE AND READ ALL OVER – A GUIDE TO UK NEWSPAPER AUDIENCES

DAILY STAR

The paper that takes a lighter-hearted look at the news and looks to lift the gloom from the news agenda. It describes itself as not being anti-Conservative or anti-Labour, but “anti-idiot”. The paper has a circulation of more than 130,000, and screengrabs of its eye-catching front pages often go viral on social media. The paper achieved great success with its ‘who will last longer’ comparison between Liz Truss and a lettuce – a battle won by the lettuce.

CITY AM

Launched in 2006, City AM covers the latest financial, business and political news and had a circulation of around 85,000. Before the pandemic, it was distributed from 400 commuter hubs around London and the home counties and at more than 500 offices in the City and Canary Wharf areas. Its print operations returned as people came back to the office, and it now has a circulation of around 68,000. It reports its daily readership is just under 400,000. That readership is dominated by men, with a 60/40 male and female split. Readers have an average income of £85,000. More than 65 per cent of its readers are under 55.

i NEWS

Still the new kid on the block – as the short-lived New Day quickly passed into newspaper history – its circulation is around 125,000. The paper started life as The Independent’s little sister but is now owned by the owner of the Daily Mail, who bought it for £49.6m in 2019. It is aimed at readers with limited time and attracts younger, metropolitan types, including students and those in their first job. Its website has more than nine million monthly visits.

INDEPENDENT

The UK’s first national newspaper to give up print and go online-only, The Independent attracts more than 22 million monthly UK website visitors. It received more than two billion page views in 2023. Its bold move away from print has returned it to profitability as it has removed the costs of print plants and paper distribution. It has now recorded six years of profit in a row. It also runs the Indy100 website.

WHAT ABOUT THE SUNDAY PAPERS?

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Like most Sunday newspapers, The Mail on Sunday relies on a mix of exposés and publicist-placed celebrity stories. Features about health and beauty are also prominent. Its current circulation is 600,000 – about half of where it was in October 2017. But it remains powerful and its coverage can often set the agenda for the week.

THE MAIL ON SUNDAY

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THE SUN ON SUNDAY

The phoenix that arose from the ashes of the News of the World, The Sun on Sunday has seamlessly inherited the older, London-based male audience of its predecessor. It no longer makes its circulation figures available, but the last published statistics showed a readership of just over one million. Press Gazette estimates that the figure would now be 600,000. Celebrities, exposés and football are still very much the order of the day.

THE OBSERVER

Stories about social injustice feature prominently in The Observer alongside extensive arts coverage. Its last circulation published circulation was 136,000 in July 2021. It is estimated that if its readership followed the trends of the rest of the industry, that figure would now be 80,000.

WHAT ABOUT THE SUNDAY PAPERS?

THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

With a reputation for being more conservative than its weekly counterpart, it is perhaps not surprising that almost half of the Sunday Telegraph's readers are in the 65 and over age bracket. Its most recent circulation figures, published in December 2019, stood at 244,000. It is estimated that the figure would now be 125,000. Alongside investigative stories are features about the countryside and issues affecting the middle classes. Its business coverage is well respected. And its comment pages are favoured by the intellectual right.

THE SUNDAY MIRROR

The Sunday Mirror is another title with a worrying circulation fall, now standing at 175,000, falling below 200,000 for the first time in 2023. In 2000, it had a circulation of two million.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

Founded in 1881, the Sunday People is one of Britain's oldest Sunday newspapers. But its circulation has now fallen to 57,000, which is below that of City AM in London. The paper also now shares the same editor as the Sunday Mirror. And the two publications share the same content, with only front pages and pages four and five changing.

ONLINE NEWS

As you can see from our newspaper guide, while circulations are dropping, there is massive demand for news online.

In fact, figures from Ofcom show online sources are the second most used platforms for news behind broadcast TV and are used by two-thirds of UK adults.

And more than 80 per cent of 16-24 year-olds consume news online. They tend to find that news via social media rather than going directly to websites.

Related to this, TikTok has been growing in popularity as a source of news, reaching 10 per cent of UK adults.

The BBC website has the highest reach among those using online sources for news, according to Ofcom.

Press Gazette lists Reuters and Forbes as the UK's most popular websites for business news, reaching 3.8 and 3.4 million people respectively.

They are followed by The Financial Times. Insider Inc (2.9m), Bloomberg (1.8m) and Investing (1.2m) also rank highly.

Are they media outlets you target?

TRUTH

Once you have identified the audience, you need to put yourself in the journalist's shoes and understand what they are looking for in a story. We describe it as the **TRUTH**:

Topical, of the moment, and something people are talking about

Relevant to a specific audience

Unusual. Not what people already know or expect

Trouble. Show how you are solving a problem. Or, if your story is not strong enough, a journalist will look for their own trouble angle

Human interest. What is in it for people? What impact will it have on your customers and the journalist's audience?

If a story includes at least four of the five elements of TRUTH, you have the basis of something which could attract the interest of the media and become impactful.

The human aspect is absolutely crucial. The most common phrase you will hear in a newsroom is 'so what?' Journalists will look at a potential news item and ask 'so what does this mean for my audience?'

At the very least they will want to know who the people are behind the story. Take a look at any newspaper, news website or news programme and you will find all the stories have a human angle.

The reason is simple – people are fascinated by stories about people, not policies, initiatives and protocols. So, try to include the human factor in your story and, if you can't, consider how what you are saying will impact your customers.

Facts and figures are also vital. They help to illustrate and strengthen your points.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Every business, no matter how large or small -or how well they are performing in the FTSE 100 - could face a crisis.

And they must prepare thoroughly and fully test their crisis plans, to protect their reputation and minimise the financial impact.

Getting this right now and considering the unthinkable ensures you don't panic when you are in the spotlight for the wrong reasons. Equally, every business has a story to tell.

Tell it well, and you win hearts, captivate minds, evoke emotions and raise and maintain your company's profile.

Whether you have a fully developed media strategy in place or are at the early stages of looking to boost your media profile, media training will help.

During training, we often find different strategies, messages and approaches emerge as our training is delivered by working journalists and television presenters who have a unique understanding of what makes an audience tick.

Some big companies are still cautious about engaging with the media.

But journalists are not the enemy. They are vital in ensuring your story is heard by as large an audience as possible. Engage with them and think like them by putting yourself in their shoes.

Think of it as a mutually beneficial relationship. The media needs stories to fill space in newspapers and airtime on television and radio; you need the media as a facilitator to get your message out to your audience.

WHO HAVE WE WORKED WITH IN YOUR SECTOR?

Here is a small selection of the organisations we have worked with in the education sector.

“Thank you so much for organising my media training yesterday. It was probably the most productive day’s training I have ever done. I can highly recommend it to others.”

Carolyn Taylor, Clinical Research Fellow, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford

“I just wanted to drop a line to say thank you to everyone involved for a really good day of crisis media training. Most of the attendees were very nervous about the day, and although quite tired by the end, they all got a great deal out of it, and their confidence in dealing with the media has grown massively. The tutor’s flexibility came into its own when we had to change the second part of the crisis scenario at the very last minute. I’m extremely grateful for their adaptability and calmness in dealing with this – they are true professionals and their expertise shone through.”

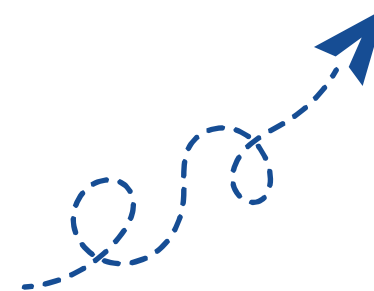
Rowena Walters, Compliance and Communications Officer at Northern Education Trust

“Media First provided an excellent day of bespoke media training for our communications team. The trainers on the day were fantastic, their experience shone through and all of the team came away with increased confidence in not only speaking to the media, but also in public speaking.”

James Durrant, Press and Public Affairs Officer, UCAS

“I thoroughly enjoyed the day and found it very helpful. I can honestly say that I feel much more confident.”

Lisa Edwards, Policy and Communications Officer, University and College Union Wales



ABOUT US

Imagine how good your media interviews could be if your spokespeople were trained by the experts who have been teaching senior executives from the country's biggest companies for the past 40 years.

Whether you have a positive story you want to get out there or want to ensure you can handle the media scrutiny in crisis mode, we are the training partner you are looking for.

We have unrivalled training expertise, knowledge and understanding for you to tap into.

Our current working journalist tutors – reporters you have seen present the news on television -will ensure you always excel in the media spotlight.

And we've got bespoke course options to meet the toughest time constraint of your senior leaders and your budget limitations.

Our account managers are always available to discuss your comms requirements and challenges and devise training programmes to help you overcome them.

[Chat with them now.](#)