

# HOW TO CREATE A MEDIA SKILLS MATRIX TO IDENTIFY THE BEST SPOKESPERSON FOR EVERY MEDIA SCENARIO



# NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Not having enough spokespeople is a risk.

You may not have anyone to tell your story when there is good news to share.

And you might not have anyone to defend your reputation when you are in the media spotlight for the wrong reasons. But keeping track of who has had recent media training, when they were last interviewed, and their strengths, weaknesses and confidence levels can be a challenge.

That is why we have created a media training needs analysis matrix to help you easily keep tabs on your spokespeople, their training needs and their strengths and weaknesses.

It has been put together by members of our team who used to work as comms managers and who know how tricky it can be to make sure you always have well-trained spokespeople available across the different departments of an organisation.

If it looks a bit daunting at first, don't worry. This accompanying eBook will guide you through exactly how to use it, how to convince others in your team of the value of media training – we know it isn't always easy – and how often you should review your matrix.

It is not, and I can't stress this enough, some form of league table or scoreboard.

I'm sure you will find it useful and if it does identify some media training needs, you know where to find us.



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# UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANISATION'S MEDIA TRAINING NEEDS IS CRUCIAL

While it is essential all staff have a basic awareness of the media, it is important that proper planning is used to identify those who need full media training.

This will not only ensure that you only train those who are realistically going to face the media. It also means that those with priority needs are not missed.

It will also mean that if your organisation operates from several different offices or countries, you know you have enough trained spokespeople in those different locations.

Of course, we know that training budgets are often stretched and that a lot of competing demands are placed on them – all of which undoubtedly have merits.

And we realise these may be even tighter as the working world looks to find ways to bounce back from the coronavirus crisis.

But, if you don't have enough well-trained media spokespeople, then you are unlikely to be able to secure crucial proactive media coverage that could highlight your organisation's work to millions.

And your organisation will be exposing itself to huge risk, by not having spokespeople who can defend it properly when it is in the spotlight because something has gone wrong.

So, if your organisation thinks media training isn't top of the priority list, consider how much it would benefit from being put in front of the eyes and ears of millions of customers, through positive TV, radio and newspaper stories.

And think about how it would cope with a crisis that generates 24-hour news coverage, unhappy customers, employees asking questions and falling share prices.

# MATRIX

Keeping tabs on whether you have enough media spokespeople, their strengths and areas they could improve can be tricky.

To help we have created a media training needs analysis matrix, which will allow you to see at a glance when your spokespeople have been trained, when they were last interviewed, the subjects they are best suited to talk about and their location, together with their competence and confidence levels.

Complete this now and it will help you identify your risks and areas where you could be exposed. For example, it may show that you don't have any media-trained spokespeople at a particular site, which raises questions about how you would handle media interest at that location.

It may reveal that you have a shortage of confident or competent spokespeople who could discuss an important area of the organisation's work.

Or it could show that a key crisis spokesperson hasn't been interviewed by a journalist or had any media training for several years.

# MATRIX SCORING EXPLANATION

Name	Proactive media training	Reactive/crisis media training	When were they last interviewed?	Interview types, confidence and capability rating										Likely interview subjects	Overall level <small>(These cells autocalculate and provide an average of all the scores you have entered to give an overall rating average)</small>	
				Telephone print		Face-to-face print		Radio studio		Radio telephone		Radio live			competence	confidence
				competence	confidence	competence	confidence	competence	confidence	competence	confidence	competence	confidence			
Joe Blogs	Yes 2018	No	Dec-19	1	2	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	IT		
Maru Smith	Yes 2019	Booked for Q3 2020	Feb-20	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	HR		

[Click here to download your copy of the media training needs analysis matrix](#)

## KEY

- 1 - Highly credible spokesperson
- 2 - Credible spokesperson
- 3 - Safe pair of hands
- 4 - Poor - needs high level of support and additional training
- 5 - Poor - needs training

- A - Extremely high confidence
- B - High confidence
- C - Confident
- D - Nervous
- E - Extremely nervous
- F - Distrusts media / journalists

If you look at the full matrix we have put together, you'll see we have included a couple of examples to show you how to use it.

If we take Joe Bloggs first, he feels confident talking to print journalists and represents the organisation well. But as we move into the broadcast formats – for example radio interviews - that confidence starts to fall away, particularly when it involves live interviews.

And as we move into TV, it is clear he is not currently best suited to that format and needs more training.

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[Click here to download your copy of the media training needs analysis matrix](#)

Mary, on the other hand, generally feels confident and positive about doing media interviews, whether they are print, radio or TV, and is a credible spokesperson.

But if we look a little closer at the information, her confidence falls away when she is talking to someone she cannot see, during a telephone print interview, telephone radio interview, or down-the-line television interview.

So maybe, you keep her away from those formats or book a bespoke course that looks specifically at improving her skills and confidence levels for remote interviews.

You may also find that you have a spokesperson with high confidence levels, but who is lacking the skills to be an effective spokesperson. This is something you are likely to be aware of anecdotally, but placed on to a matrix, the danger would become a lot starker.

# HOW SHOULD YOU USE THE MATRIX?

The first thing to make clear is that this is not some form of league table where you only use the spokesperson with the highest level of confidence and competence.

And it is something that needs to be handled sensitively.

But it is a great way of identifying training needs, ensuring your budget is used where it is needed and should form part of your long-term strategic communications plan.

Let's use Mary again as an example.

Looking at the matrix, she's confident, credible and represents the organisation well. There is no need at this time for her to have general media training.

However, she could benefit from more targeted training aimed at improving her confidence and skills in remote interviews.

Bob, on the other hand, is good with print interviews but would benefit from a course aimed at improving his ability in broadcast interviews.

But the matrix goes further than this. Let's say, it shows that Mary is your only spokesperson from HR with the skills for a live TV interview. What will you do if Mary is on annual leave and you need a spokesperson from her department to put forward for a proactive interview or address a negative story?

Let's say Mary is a couple of months away from her well-deserved retirement. What is the succession plan? Who will be your spokesperson for HR issues?

The matrix could show that you have plenty of spokespeople you could put forward in a crisis situation at your Reading and Newcastle offices. However, maybe there isn't anyone with the right confidence levels at your Sheffield plant. If something goes wrong at that site and the media start gathering at the gates, who are you going to put forward to talk about that issue?

## SO, WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Well, your matrix should help you to identify both your immediate and longer-term media training needs and ensure your training budget is used where it is most needed.

A specific part of the business or a location with no media-trained spokespeople should be identified as a priority, whereas an area with lots of recently trained team members can perhaps wait for their next session.

It should also be used to help set a timescale for completion of the training and, we believe, it can be used to track progress.

For example, if in a year you have more credible and confident spokespeople at your disposal, you should see more media coverage and requests for interviews – journalists like to use those who they know will contribute to a story. And this, ultimately, will help you to bounce back from coronavirus quicker.

Another important step is to prepare those you want to train. Some are likely to be enthusiastic. Some will understand the benefits but may feel nervous. And some may have a negative view of the media and journalists.

It is important to remember that media training, like all training, is voluntary and works best when the delegates want to learn and feel it is relevant to them. So, make sure your delegates understand why media training is good for them and the organisation.

Media training techniques are incredibly transferable skills and those who engage with the media and establish themselves as an expert in their field, tend to climb the career ladder quicker.

And make sure the training is included in their personal development plans.



# SO, WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Training means that your delegates have learnt – or have refreshed – their skills.

Practice will help to hone and sharpen them further. Some delegates may have immediate opportunities to put their skills to the test. But others could have to wait a while. So, consider how you can ensure they get to test their skills. An interview with the internal comms teams for an article in the staff newsletter or intranet site could be useful, for example.

Finally, we recommend that you review your matrix at least every three months to ensure it is up to date and that training requirements, opportunities and risks don't slip through the net.

# ABOUT MEDIA FIRST

Media First has been delivering bespoke media, presentations and communication training across the world for more than 40 years.

Our unique, tried and tested approach to communication training has been delivered to some of the world's biggest organisations and brands.

Whether we are interviewing a delegate in one of our radio or TV studios, door-stepping them outside your offices or putting them through their paces with an online down-the-line interview, participants will develop their skills in a real-life setting.

Every course is delivered by current working journalists to make your training realistic and best prepare you for real-world media challenges.

[Get in touch](#) to find out how we can help you.